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**ARCR's English Language Magazine**

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# El Residente



**FIFTY YEARS AGO  
IN COSTA RICA**

**Also in this issue:**

Alternative Medicine

Gliding Eagles

Bookshelf

Ferias, Fiestas, & Festivales

The Community at the End of the Road



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in the 2019*



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## Check our blog on our Facebook site.

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

It's Check Out Time!

Do you want to help some deserving children in Costa Rica hospitals have a better Christmas? Check out the Tree of Hope ad on the facing page. Your gift will be used exclusively to brighten some child's holiday.

Like to read? Know someone who does? Christmas is just around the corner and what better gift than a book? (Even if it's for yourself, you can always pass it on.) Check out the annual Bookshelf article in this issue; there are some excellent reads there, including some new additions.

If you are looking for something to do with your free time? Check out Club Corner in this issue; there have been some new groups added. Opportunities to contribute to our host country abound and, at the same time, improve your life.

Want to give something back? Would you like to help the Cabécar indigenous improve their lives? Check out the "Making a Difference" article elsewhere in this issue – then donate.

OK, now you're all checked out!

The staff of El Residente magazine wishes everyone Happy Holidays. We'll see you next year!



## CONTACT INFORMATION

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Published by:</b>         | ARCR Administration                                      |
| <b>Email:</b>                | <a href="mailto:service@arcr.net">service@arcr.net</a>   |
| <b>Managing Director:</b>    | Rómulo Pacheco   |
| <b>Editor-in-Chief:</b>      | Allen Dickinson  |
| <b>Associate Editor:</b>     | Bob Brashears  |
| <b>Graphic Design:</b>       | Eduardo González   |
| <b>Advertising graphics:</b> | Eduardo González   |
| <b>Office hours:</b>         | Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.                        |
| <b>Main office,</b>          | Av 14, Calle 42, San José, Costa Rica                    |
| <b>San José:</b>             | (506) 2220-0055, (506) 4052-4052                         |
| <b>Mailing address:</b>      | P.O. Box 1191-1007 Centro Colón,<br>San José, Costa Rica |

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Advertising and Publicity:</b> | <a href="mailto:service@arcr.net">service@arcr.net</a>                  |
| <b>Insurance Office:</b>          | <a href="mailto:insurancearcr@gmail.com">insurancearcr@gmail.com</a>    |
| <b>General information:</b>       | <a href="mailto:service@arcr.net">service@arcr.net</a>                  |
| <b>Caja account info:</b>         | <a href="mailto:service@arcr.net">service@arcr.net</a>                  |
| <b>Residency info:</b>            | <a href="mailto:legal@arcr.net">legal@arcr.net</a>                      |
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# ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

**SECURITY UPGRADE** If you haven't been by the office lately, on your next visit you will notice the outside gate is now closed and there is a camera and intercom box next to it to request entry. This is a security upgrade that has come about because the security guard, Braulio, has retired. Rather than replace him with another person, ARCR has opted to go "21st Century" and install electronic measures, including closed circuit cameras, to assure that only authorized employees, guests, and members are allowed inside. To enter, simply press the button on the intercom box and you will be allowed in. Braulio will be missed, but the added security for members and the office staff is welcome.

**INFORMATION SOURCES** How do you get information and answers to "everyday" questions in between issues of El Residente if you don't "follow" social media? Here are two really good ways:

- 1) Check out the new Frequently Asked Questions page on the ARCR website, [www.ARCR.CR](http://www.ARCR.CR) (scroll down to the FAQ button) and browse through the 56 questions and answers posted there.
- 2) Post your question on the IO Groups site, Costa Rica Living: <https://groups.io/g/CostaRicaLiving>. This more than 20-year-old group has thousands of subscribers with hundreds of years of combined experience, and someone there can answer almost any question about life in Costa Rica. Joining is free and the service invaluable. (This is NOT a Yahoo Group and is NOT being eliminated.) Check it out.

**WINDOW STICKERS** Own and drive a vehicle? Have more than three official stickers on the windshield? If you have old, expired inspection and/or marchamo stickers still stuck to the glass, you might want to remove them, leaving only the valid ones (the current marchamo, the current inspection, and the license plate sticker) displayed; Riteve and the Transito (national police) are requiring all the old stickers be removed to avoid confusion when the police take a glance at a passing vehicle. Riteve can fail the vehicle for extra stickers (or any other unofficial [stickers] inside the area swept by the windshield wipers as a windshield view obstruction), so why take a chance?

The ARCR Staff and Board of Directors wish everyone safe and Happy Holidays. To see what days the office will be closed, check the Important Dates listing inside the back cover.



**ARCR Board of Directors:**

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



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## 6 FIFTY YEARS AGO IN COSTA RICA

by Steve Johnson



### Two Choices to Travel to San José

An interesting aspect of living in southern Costa Rica in 1968 was how to get to San José. It wasn't easy. I went to San José about every five or six weeks to talk to my boss in the Peace Corps office or to see Costa Rican government officials. It also gave me a chance to take a hot shower, see a picture show, and get away from the oppressive heat down in the jungles.

The transportation options were:

- 1) By air, a single-engine Cessna, directly from my village to the La Sabana airport.
- 2) By land on the Tracopa bus.

Option one was quick but expensive. Option two was eleven excruciating hours on the Pan American Highway, most of which was unpaved. The Peace Corps paid my way no matter which method I used, so you would imagine I chose the plane every time. Not so. Regardless of the mode of transportation, when I finally reached San José I swore it was the last time I would use that method.

The problem with flying was that it was scary. Those little Cessnas were very light and the pilots flew low over the mountains. By about eight or nine in the morning, updrafts formed over the slopes. Years later I flew on Nature Air and Sansa airplanes. Some were single-engine and some twin-engine, but in either case they were much

heavier, they flew higher, and the flights were smoother. The little Cessnas, however, were like leaves in the air and we bounced around incessantly. It was unnerving to say the least. A few times I was sure we were going to crash.

Dry season was particularly rough. Rainy season was calmer, but during the peak (September-October) the planes frequently did not fly at all because visibility was poor and did not have sophisticated instruments. At times the highway was blocked by landslides, and with the planes not flying, we were completely cut off from the rest of the country.

As luck would have it, two times I had to make emergency medical trips during the peak rainy season. One time we flew only as far as Palmar Sur and set down on the little runway there. In front of us was a wall of black clouds. After waiting a half hour the pilot pointed to a tiny patch of blue directly above us and told us to get back on the plane. We circled and circled until we went through that little hole of blue and came out above the storm. To the north we could see 12,500-foot Mt. Chirripó barely peaking above the clouds. We headed for the mountain and then crossed the Talamanca Range over onto the Caribbean side. It was clear and we came into the Central Valley through Turrialba and Cartago, the opposite of our usual route.



Frequently there were only two or three passengers and sometimes I was the only one, so I often sat in the copilot's seat. Once we made a stop in San Vito de Java. As we approached the airport the pilot pointed at the altimeter and told me he could land the plane without descending in altitude. I thought he was crazy. I watched the altimeter as we came in and sure enough we did not descend. I asked him how that was possible. He said the runway was built on a slope, and he knew the exact altitude, so all he had to do was descend to that elevation and then fly straight at the runway and it would rise to meet us.

On my second medical evacuation we reached Ciudad Cortéz and were again met by a wall of dark clouds. We hooked a left, reached the mouth of the Térraba River and then ducked down under the clouds. From there we flew up the coast, maybe 100 feet above the surf. The rain was intense and visibility poor. The pilot was calculating our position using his wristwatch, our air speed, and the compass. After passing what he thought was Playa Esterillos he headed out to sea, then hooked around into the Gulf of Nicoya, or at least what he hoped was the Gulf of Nicoya; the only thing we could see were the whitecaps leaping up, seemingly almost touching the plane's wheels. The pilot was unusually short and although he could see ahead and to the sides, he could not see down. He asked me to look down and tell him if I saw an island. A minute later I saw a small island flash by and he said it was probably Isla Tortuga. Using the compass he turned east-north-east and we flew at treetop level the rest of the way into the Central Valley.

It was still raining heavily when we finally skidded to a stop on the muddy runway at La Sabana Airport. Let me tell you, I felt lucky to be alive!

The bus trips were as long and excruciating as the plane trips were short and scary. The seats were set close together and for eleven hours I had to sit at an angle to keep from rubbing my knees on the seat in front of me. If the bus was full I had to sit facing front and got sore knees. If there was an older person or a pregnant woman, I would give them my seat and then had to stand, literally, for hours on end.

The road was full of potholes and we bumped along most of the way.

As you probably know, the Pan American Highway south of Cartago goes right over the top of the Talamanca Mountain Range. The highest point on the Highway is near a place called El Cerro de la Muerte (The Mountain of Death). Apparently it got its name in olden times when people walked or rode on horseback from Cartago to San Isidro de El General. It was a three day trip, meaning travelers had to spend two nights in the mountains. Many did not dress appropriately and died of exposure.

I was curious as to why the highway followed the ridge line of such a high mountain range. It didn't make any sense to me. One day I was discussing it with a retired army general and he told me the route was selected after the construction of the Panama Canal, in order to provide a land route to the Canal in case of war. To avoid warships shelling the highway it could not be on the coast. Moving the highway inland several miles would require it to cross the hundreds of mountain spurs that came down from the main mountain range, so the most direct route was to run the highway up from Cartago to the ridge tops and then down to San Isidro. From there it followed inland valleys south.

One time I took the bus from San José to San Isidro, where I was going to meet a friend. We left San José in the late afternoon and went over Cerro de la Muerte at night. I had on slacks and a short-sleeve shirt and it did not occur to me to bring any other clothes. It was raining intensely and after going over the top, and before we





reached a place called Villa Mills, we came to a landslide blocking the highway. I was the only one on the bus with a flashlight so the driver and I walked down to the slide and then climbed up on top of it.

Suddenly we heard a roar and I shown the flashlight up on the mountainside. Through the beam of light we could see large boulders bounding down the mountain toward us. We scrambled back to the bus as fast as we could go. The driver turned the bus around and drove up to a place called La Georgina where there was a restaurant and lodging. Without saying a word to the passengers he turned off the engine and then raced for the restaurant. Immediately passengers followed the driver as fast as they could go. It took me a few minutes to figure out that instead of returning to San José we were going to spend the night on the mountain and the quick ones would get rooms. The rest would have to spend the night in the bus. It was the coldest night I ever spent in my life.

The next morning we drove down to the landslide again, and although bulldozers were working on clearing it, the highway was still blocked. The north-bound Tracopa bus was waiting on the far side of the landslide, so we exchanged buses; the passengers from the two buses scrambled over the debris and mounted the opposite buses which then turned around and returned to where they had started.

The irony of my two transportation choices was that if I went by bus, it took me up to 10,000 feet elevation; if I took the plane, it only took me up to 6,000 feet; the buses went over the top of the mountain and the planes flew around it.

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 in an office. I hope they were of use to somebody.

In 1971 my time with the Peace Corps came to an end and I returned to the US accompanied by my beautiful Tica wife, and settled in Branford, Connecticut, eventually moving to Clemson, South Carolina. Regularly, however, we returned to Costa Rica to visit family and renew our love for the wonderful county. In 2009 I was able to retire and we moved back permanently; we now reside in our dream house in Concepción, not far from San Rafael de Heredia, where we pursue our lifelong passion for gardening and birding.

*Besides writing, Steve enjoys digging holes, washing dishes, and splitting firewood. You can contact him at: [johnsos05@yahoo.com](mailto:johnsos05@yahoo.com).*



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by Christine Monteith



## Big Adventures in Small Boats, Part 3

*“Now that I’ve had a taste of it, I don’t wonder why you love boating.” Katharine Hepburn as Rose Sayer after riding the rapids in “The African Queen.”*

As I related in the last couple of issues, I have had several adventures on the Golfo Dulce, riding in a small boat, locally called a “panga.” (A panga is an open, fiberglass boat about 15' long, often propelled by a 25 HP outboard motor. They are the most common type of boat used by local fishermen.)

A few years ago I took a panga trip to a gnarly surf break known as “Da Crack.” Aptly named as the waves roll into the mammoth rock face that is the southern tip of the Osa Peninsula. As we enjoyed a sunset cocktail on the beach, Bobby, a long-time surf buddy of Ben, my traveling companion, pointed across the water to the mountain of land that edges the Pacific and said, “Let’s

surf there tomorrow.” His comment was directed at Ben; I had yet to learn how to surf. It looked very far away – as in about ten miles of open water – far away.

Being a spontaneous trip, Bobby had some difficulty finding a boat and captain available for hire. When he finally located one, and as he was chatting in Spanish on his cell phone, my only question was “Does it have life jackets?”

His response was a noncommittal sort of noise.

“Trust!” I said to myself. I’m always game for an adventure and I didn’t want to be a killjoy over the lack of safety equipment.





The next morning we arrived at the beach and the boat was up on the sand with no motor. Hmm! Interesting start, I thought. I soon learned that because there are no docks or moorings along that part of the coast, all the fishermen pull their pangas up on the shore by their houses. Our captain, Juan, who looked about 16 years old, met us with a winning smile and hustled off to a wood shack to retrieve the motor and fuel tank. While he was gone I looked the boat over; no life jackets, no paddle. Further, all four of the upright awning supports were broken and had been duct taped in repair. But there was an anchor. The 25 HP

outboard motor was to take us across mostly open ocean water, so I mentioned the life jackets again. This time my “shipmates” joking response was, “Well we have our surfboards!”

My feigned indignant reply was, “You have surfboards, and all I have is a boogie board that’s broken in the middle!”

Ben warmly smiled saying, “It floats.”

It was a crystal clear blue sky morning and the sun was cresting over the palms as the guys maneuvered the panga into the gentle swell. It was high tide with low surf breaking on the beach. We all waded into the water up to our knees and jumped aboard. That time of the morning is great for fishing; I learned that you look for pelicans diving into the water indicating a “fish ball.” The rods were made ready with bait on the hooks and the lines let out as we slowly cruised away from shore. In a short time Bobby had reeled in a good-sized snapper; ocean-to-table dining at its best.

I was marveling at how amazing this all was, though it did make me somewhat nervous when Juan had to pump the gas line feeding the engine about every 20 minutes or so, and was constantly bailing water that collected on the bottom of the boat. Then I remembered my teen years, I had learned to drive an outboard motor boat similar to this when I was six years old. At the age of 12 I was strong enough to pull the starter cord and tilt the motor to bring







the prop out of the water. My parents taught me how to navigate, and the rules of water safety. Granted, my classroom was a placid, freshwater river in Central Canada, but by the time I was Juan's age I was a confident and reliable boat driver. With the thought that Juan had years of experience in these waters with his father, I decided to sit back, trust, and enjoy this one-of-kind ocean experience.

Arriving at Da Crack, Bobby, who had surfed and lived in this area for 20 years, surveyed the break, the swell, and the direction of the waves. The swell was really big that day and he directed Juan to move in closer so that his paddle to the premium place to catch a wave was relatively short, without putting the equilibrium of the panga in jeopardy. Ben, who hadn't surfed for about a year demurred his opportunity and opted to wait until we went to the next spot, Backwash Bay. He and I sat in the panga watching Bobby careen towards the vertical rock face as the swell rhythmical lifted us up and down about eight feet.

The next stop was Backwash Bay. It was midday and crowded with surfers. Juan idled the boat a short distance from the break where Ben, Bobby, and I jumped into the water with our boards to paddle toward shore. I left Ben

and Bobby at the line-up (the queue that surfers make where the waves break to determine who gets the next wave), and I paddled to shore on my cracked board to find a spot on the sand under shade. Surfers are generally a social bunch and with waiting time in the water there is lots of opportunity for chatting. Bobby knows many people around the area and I knew that he was probably catching up with friends.

Sitting near me was a group of young women, sunning. In a short time a tall, athletic, 20-something man walked up to them with his board. One cheerily asked, "How was it?"

He grumpily replied, "There's a bunch of old geezers out there jawing and grabbing all the waves."

I felt like interjecting, "One of those guys is my old geezer, and if you are still surfing when you get to be his age, then you can whine." FYI – my old geezer was 66 years old.

The return trip in the afternoon was timed for the second high tide of the day. At low tide there is a wide ribbon of volcanic slabs running along the coast which looks like a mythical giant set up a massive domino run and had fun knocking it over. Even though a panga can maneuver in



very shallow water, the timing of a beach landing was very delicate in the heavy, late afternoon surf. As we approached the shore, Juan made a 180-degree turn so that the stern was facing shore, threw the motor into reverse, dialed up the throttle to full speed, and barreled towards shore. At the last second, just before I thought that the propeller would hit rock bottom, he tilted the motor, locked it up, jumped off the stern into waist-high surf, and pulled the panga onto the sand. Bobby and Ben jumped out on either side of the boat and hauled the boat in as the heavy surf heaved us up on the beach. It was my turn to demur, staying aboard until we were securely grounded in the dry sand.

Later that evening as the snapper seared on the BBQ, I reflected at how distant this day's experience was from my daily existence of poring over contracts, responding to frantic client calls, and the tiny aggravations of North American life. At those times it had never crossed my mind that one lucky day my thoughts would be more concerned with safe beach landings than chasing after the next big transaction.

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

by Mitzi Stark



## Ferias, Fiestas, & Festivales – Part One

Costa Ricans love ferias, fiestas, and festivales and they are an easy way to get to know Costa Rica without a lot of traveling; there is always one near you. In Part One I will explore some of the more popular fairs, festejos, and fiestas to show the variety that abounds.

The best known ferias are the ferias agrícolas or farmers markets that take place on the weekends in almost every town. Farmers sell directly to customers and you can check out the freshest fruits and veggies at good prices.

There, you can ask about those strange tropical things that you're not sure of by talking directly with the producers, or try a sample to see if you want to buy it.

At this type of feria you can learn more about the Tico diet, and if you shop there regularly, you can make friends with the sellers. Farmers markets can be fun for sightseeing and listening as sellers call out special prices or bargains. "Everything cheap for reason of travel," announced one seller toward the end of the day; he wanted to go home.

Festivales and festejos are another type of feria (the word festejos refers to the feast day of a patron saint) and may be sponsored by a church or a municipality to commemorate a saint's day. They may include a procession in the street or a pasacalle, an informal parade made up of people from the parish donning costumes and clowning around. The bigger the parish the bigger the festejo. At those you may see games and traditions that go back to colonial times, or even to Old Spain.

My friends and I try to attend a lot of the local ferias and have guidelines for going to them: not too far, not too late, and not too expensive; we have family and pet obligations. Because there's always one nearby, we can go to a different one nearly every weekend. They are a good way to enjoy a day without strain on the body or the budget. Most are free, however some charge a modest entrance fee, but at those you will find "free samples" to offset the admission price.

Recently I went to the Feria Verbena, behind the Plaza Real shopping center in Alajuela, for organic vegetables





and bakery, and to take a look at the twenty or so dogs running and playing in the dog park. This coming weekend I am going to the Furniture Fair in Sarchi, which includes an oxcart parade, traditional mascaradas, and a showcase of the fine furniture made in Sarchi's famed factories.

Some ferias are annual events. The very popular chocolate fair is a June event which is held in the national stadium. The entry charge is \$2,500 but you get it back in free samples plus generous discounts on boxes and bags of chocolate. Exhibitors range from world famous Lindt of Switzerland to small family companies in Talamanca. Attending gives one the chance to learn about a product that counts heavily in the Tico economy, comes in many different forms, and is also delicious. Sights and sounds make this a fun fair. One man couldn't decide on which type of chocolate ice cream bar to get so he bought one for each hand and took turns licking them. Look for notices as June rolls around.

There's also the Ice Cream Fair, held last year in the Old Aduana Building in San José. It features many kinds of ice cream, sorbet, frozen yogurt; on a stick, in a cup or cone, or packaged to take home. There were new flavors, old favorites, even a special treat for dogs. And there were some novel ideas, such as cone baskets and cups to replace plastic, being displayed. The entrance fee of \$2000 was worth every colon. This year it was held in January, summertime here, and should be coming up soon.

The International Book Fair is another annual event held at the Old Aduana Building, usually in September. Books, mostly in Spanish but many in English, plus novelties, calendars, exhibits, storytelling, puppets, and more are on display. Books are offered with 20% discounts, plus some with special prices, and you can



pick up enough free bookmarks to carry you through to next year's fair and beyond. And it's all free. Don't be turned off by the Spanish, just walking through to see so many books and buyers is an experience for book lovers. And there's always the food court.

Tops on the Christmas Fair list is the one at the National Museum. This year it will be on Thursday, Dec. 5 starting at 10 a.m. and will include traditions, music, and Christmas workshops. The fair is free with a charge for the workshops (last year they had workshops on making holiday cards and tying packages and charged for the materials).

The second Sunday in March is the Festival de Boyeros, or Oxcart Festival. The oxcart parade starts in Escazú and wends up to San Antonio where it is part of the festejos for the church. There is a plethora of beautiful, matched pairs of working oxen and their owners, who enjoy the tradition and comradery. And yes, women too lead their own yuntas of oxen in the parade. This being

a festejo there is also music, traditional food, games, and handicrafts. The bruja or “witch” is a very old game and popular at this festejo; for a small fee you buy a string with a set of numbers on it. A wheel, like roulette but with a witch figure on top, gets a spin and if it lands on any of your numbers you win a prize. Prizes are cheap but the fun is in playing. Buses from San José to Escazú help avoid the traffic jams.

San Ramon’s festejos are another annual tradition. They celebrate the feast day of San Ramón Nonato, August 30, when congregants from nearby churches and civic organizations parade with their own patron saints on portable altars decorated with reams of flowers. And the band actually plays “When the Saints Go Marching In” as they file into the huge church in the center of the city. Seventy or more altars line the sides of the nave for nine days so that the public can enjoy the scene longer. In the park across the street there are food booths and sales of locally made products, and the museum will have special exhibits. An unusual part of this festejo takes place in the evening of the last night when crowds, including the priest, come out with pots, pans, and spoons to “make noise.”

The holidays are just around the corner and soon we will see notices for Ferias Navideñas, or Christmas

fairs. Lots of them, as many communities, parishes, and organizations all seem to sponsor a fair, some with handicrafts and art, others with a range of products for gift suggestions. Check listings.

How do you find out about fairs and festejos? A page on the internet, [www.viralagenda.com](http://www.viralagenda.com) lists all activities, by category, with dates, location, and contact information. Facebook also lists “events” and by clicking on “like” you receive reminders of when and where the events will take place. Also, local museums, civic and cultural centers post agendas that list events, and news programs on radio and TV have cultural agendas (agenda cultural), although the information comes out the day before – and my friends and I like to plan ahead.

A word of advice. Many of these events take place so that they span one or two weekends. If you plan to go on Sunday, go early; the after church and lunch crowd can make it difficult to see exhibits – and sometimes even to walk.

There are many other kinds of ferias: fairs for poetry, music, art, coffee, cheese, wedding plans, cars, orchids, and more. Much more. There’s even an onion fair each year in Santa Ana. In Part Two, I will cover some of those other types ferias and festivals.

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by **Martha Rollins**

## The Community at the End of the Road

**I**t was over ten years ago when I made my first trip to Paso Marcos, a small, isolated indigenous community at the end of the only road in the Simiriñak Indigenous Territory. Located on the banks of beautiful but wild Rio Pacuare, this Cabécar community had no electricity, no internet, and very little food. The school had very few supplies and no text books, and there were just a few thin horses riddled with ticks standing in the soccer field.

Since then, through the generosity of many governmental and corporate donors, as well as private individuals, a spotlight has been focused on this community; ICE has provided electricity and internet; MEP has provided computers and training for teachers and children. As a result, the number of children in school has now more than doubled and the kitchen has been modernized.

On Saturday, December 15, 2018, four members of the Association of Residents of Costa Rica (ARCR) Team, accompanied by two medical doctors, once again made a yearly visit into the Talamanca mountains above Turrialba. Also along were two indigenous Cabécar leaders and friends, Gamaliel Molina Diaz (Gama), and Betty Vargas Fernández, niece of former indigenous advisor to MEP, and for seven years, the Directora de Escuela Sikua Ditsö in Simiriñak. Included in the group was Anita Salazar, a veteran of prior trips, her two nieces, and a singer and guitar player from Puriscal.

The purpose of the visit was to celebrate the formation of a new association and the construction of a new gathering place built by members of the community. As in previous years, we delivered supplies and gifts for the children. The doctors came along to examine the children and attend to their critical medical needs.

We were welcomed at Escuela Paso Marcos by Richard Segura, a long time friend and leader of the new association, and Alvin Anibal Mayorga, the director of the school. Also gathered were over 170 Cabécar; a group comprised of peoples from the Simiriñak and Paso Marcos indigenous groups who live in the Talamanca mountains beyond Turrialba. Some families walked for more than five hours through the uninhabited mountains to attend.



After arriving at the school everyone feasted on delicious arroz con pollo, frijoles molido, chips, and té frio. The food was prepared by the school cook, a smiling indigenous woman who giggled mightily when teased about catching a gringo husband with her good cooking!

After the meal, the musician entertained the waiting line of families with children while the two doctors set up shop in a classroom and the gifts for each of 70 school children were distributed.

The 2018 visit was financed by donations from the Association of Residents of Costa Rica (ARCR) and Post 10 of the American Legion. On November 29, 2019 we are again making the trip and are looking for donations for our Cabécar friends. This year's fiesta activities will include indigenous games such as blow dart and mountain racing competitions. It will be another fiesta to look forward to at Paso Marcos, the lovely isolated community at the end of the road.

*If you would like to donate, please contact Martha Rollins at: [rollinsmartha@gmail.com](mailto:rollinsmartha@gmail.com)*

*If you would like to see pictures and read more about the 2018 trip, the story can be found on the ARCR website; [www.arcr.cr](http://www.arcr.cr). Look for El Residente magazine, Jan/Feb 2019 edition. The story, with photos, is on page 34.*

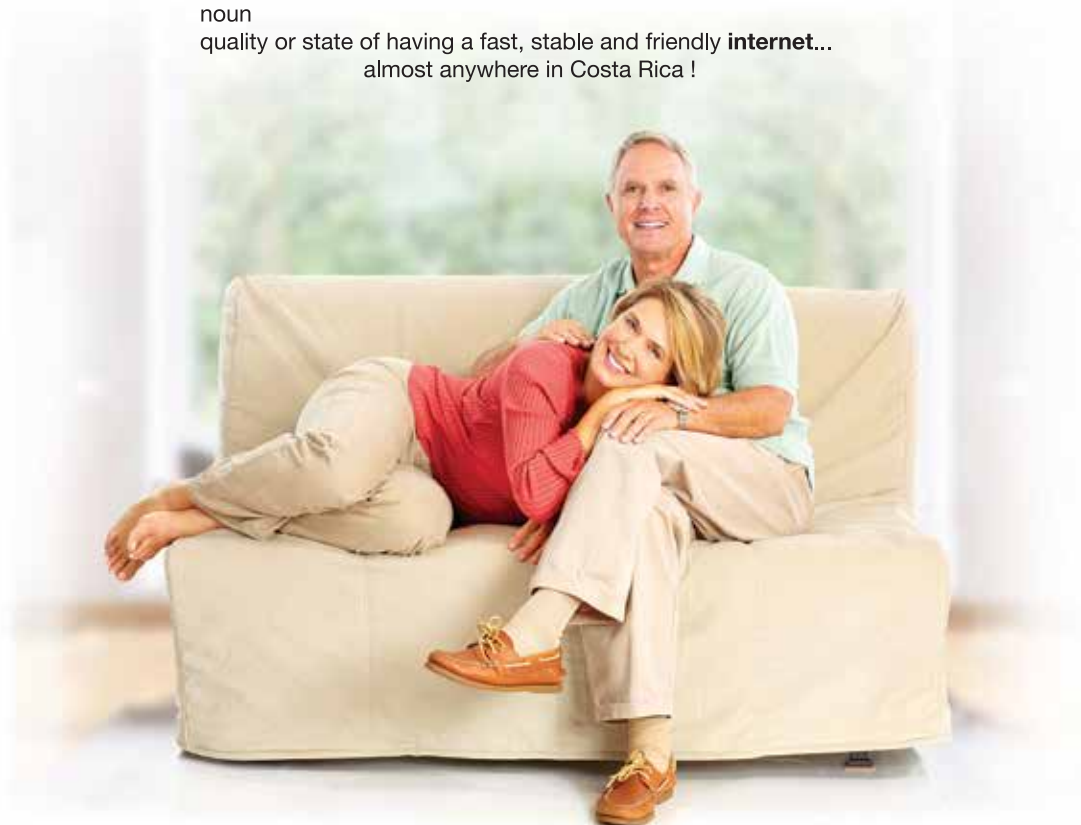


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noun

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# (20) SENIOR LIVING IN COSTA RICA

by Katya De Luisa

## Alternative Medicine

In the past, Costa Rica was composed primarily of small isolated farming communities with limited access to clinics or hospitals. When someone was sick, most families relied on herbal treatments and natural methods which had been handed down through the generations. However, this changed considerably with the creation of a national healthcare system (the CAJA) and the installation of the EBAIS medical clinics in most small towns.

Many Costa Ricans now overuse the conventional medical system. Some common criticisms are that they have overburdened the CAJA hospitals, which creates long waits for surgery scheduling, or that emergency cases can lie for days, sometimes on a gurney in a hallway, waiting for a bed in a ward to become available. Minor illnesses, like stomach aches, colds, and fevers previously treated at home are now brought to the emergency rooms, creating an overload on the healthcare system.

Conventional medicine usually has a strong emphasis on the diagnosis of disorders by symptoms and behaviors, rather than the cause. Treatment typically relies on invasive procedures and synthetic pharmaceutical drugs with a wide variety of potential side effects. The drugs are predominately used as symptom management, which often doesn't address the root cause of the illness. The more invasive procedures, such as surgery, are costly and traumatic. Worse yet, medical specialists generally restrict their treatment only to the area of their particular expertise, not taking into account other factors that might be causing the patient's illness or is keeping them sick.

In the past, the medical community has given very little recognition of the validity of alternative or natural medicine. Luckily the world of medicine is changing, both in Costa Rica and across the globe. Today there is a worldwide focus on maintaining health, and many conventional medical doctors and practitioners are now including alternative methods in their practices. This has fostered a new era where conventional healthcare is beginning to include more holistic methods in the medical system. Even the conventional medical community is beginning to include more alternative

medicine approaches; one of the major private hospitals in the capital city has even included "Biological Integrative Medicine" (homeopathy, electro-acupuncture, neural therapy, and bioresonance) into their medical services.

The term "alternative medicine" covers a multiple of medical therapies which do not fall within the realm of conventional medicine, or which are often regarded as unorthodox by the conventional medical profession. Alternative medical practitioners work using a more holistic approach that considers the whole being. Because there are many factors involved in developing a disease, there are even more factors involved in curing it and restoring health. Here is a quick look at some of the different alternative medicine modalities that are available:

### Holistic Medicine

We commonly hear about holistic health care, which emphasizes the connection of mind, body, and spirit. The ultimate goal is to bring these areas into coherence to eliminate disease and restore optimal health. Rather than focusing on just the illness or specific parts of the body, this approach considers the well being of the whole person.

### Integrative medicine

This combines both conventional medicine and non-conventional (alternative) medicine using a more comprehensive range of evaluations and treatments. Dr. Andrew Weil, a well-known author of numerous books on health and natural healing, stated, "Integrative medicine is healing-oriented and takes into account the whole person, including the aspects of their lifestyle."

### Functional medicine

This modality is built on the foundation of conventional medicine but includes a holistic approach. Functional doctors are licensed medical professionals who focus on the prevention, management, and root causes of each individual's illness. Functional medical practices



combine non-conventional methods, using the most current medical science, while including the patient's environment and lifestyle to diagnose and treat them. Functional medicine treats the person, not just the condition, and must include the open-mindedness of the integrative practitioner.

## Naturopathic Medicine

Centered on the healing power of nature, it focuses on diet, lifestyle modifications, detoxification, and other natural interventions. Many of the practitioners offer acupuncture, homeopathy, chiropractic, and herbal therapies.

The use of alternative medicine and natural health practices is on the rise, and you can find holistic practitioners throughout the country. Restorative retreats, meditation centers, yoga, tai chi groups, and health food and herbal stores abound throughout Costa Rica, and the number of Costa Ricans practicing alternative medical modalities, as well as conventional physicians using alternative methods, is increasing. Most practitioners have web sites and can be found by searching the internet or asking friends whom they have tried and recommend.

During my time in Costa Rica I have lived in the jungle, where anything could and did happen, raising three children who have had broken bones and/or required operations from time to time. Now, at seventy-one years of age, I have had my share of age-related physical problems. I've usually relied on natural medicine and only resorted to the mainstream medical system with emergencies, or when natural methods weren't enough. What I have learned is that just because a doctor has a medical degree, it does not mean he/she is a healer. If a medical professional doesn't provide you with specific information about your condition or listen to your concerns, and their focus seems to be just on your symptoms and not causes or prevention, I would suggest that you consider looking for another professional.

Living in Costa Rica is a beautiful experience when you are healthy. Knowing what medical modalities are available to keep us healthy is an essential part of our life as an expat.

Next issue: Senior Care in Costa Rica

*Katya De Luisa is an artist, author and free lance writer who has resided in Costa Rica since 1980. Contact her at: [kdeluisa@yahoo.com](mailto:kdeluisa@yahoo.com).*

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### Pitfalls of Exotic Investment Strategies

Many people living in lightly-regulated parts of the world receive solicitations from investment advisors selling non-mainstream investment products. These products and strategies are often poorly understood by the average investor and heavily sold by certain investment salespeople because commissions are usually quite high. I can't get into all of the various investment products of which investors should beware here, but I will highlight a few.

**Life-settlement contracts (also known as "viaticals").** Sponsors of these programs approach certain individuals offering to purchase their life insurance policies at a discount. The sellers of life insurance may be people who are terminally ill and would like to realize a cash value from their insurance policies before they die, or they may be people who no longer require life insurance and would like to "cash in" their policies. In certain cases the sponsor enters into a contract with at-risk people without life insurance to purchase a high-value policy in return for a cash payment. The sponsor pays the premiums until death, in return for most of the proceeds at death.

This pool of insurance contracts is made available to investors and usually sold as an asset that is uncorrelated to mainstream investment markets. The profitability of this investment depends on realizing the value of the life insurance contracts in a reasonable amount of time. The gain is the difference between the price paid for the insurance contract and the value of the contract when realized (less commissions, premiums, and other costs, of course).

The little-understood risks of this investment include:

The sponsor may not have much skin in the game: Often the sponsor makes its money from fees paid by investors, not from realizing a gain on the underlying insurance contracts – so the motivation is to get investors, not to make sure the investment pans out.

Legal risk: In the United States and many other countries, the beneficiary of a life insurance contract has to have what is called an "insurable interest" in the insured – meaning that the beneficiary would suffer financial harm if the insured died. Even if the sponsor

figures a way around this provision, there may be the issue of fraud if the amount of insurance is much greater than the insured person's net worth. Recent cases in the US have voided life-settlement contracts and not allowed return of premiums where the amount of insurance was excessive – a losing proposition for investors.

**Privately-traded investment products** These investments can take a number of forms: equity or debt of non-publicly traded companies, real estate, and rights to natural resource rights: oil, gas, timber, or other assets to name a few. The common denominator is that these are investments that are not traded on the public markets. Often these investments are sold as a diversifier to a portfolio of mainstream investments under the premise that private investments are less volatile and not well-correlated to public markets. In fact the diversification benefits are often overstated and stem from the fact that it is more difficult to value privately-held property. Such investments are often only valued once per quarter, or even once per year. If you valued the stock market only once per quarter or once per year it would also be much less volatile and not as well correlated to the same market if it were valued continuously. Privately-traded investments are heavily dependent upon the skills of the investment manager (as compared to publicly-traded investments that owe their returns to demand for the investment itself, in addition to the manager's skill).

Hidden risks include:

**Illiquidity:** There may be a substantial lockup period when the investor cannot redeem his stake.

**Exorbitant fees and commissions:** These eat into investor returns and are often not clearly spelled out or not transparently calculated.

**Opaque investments:** Often the manager has a broad mandate as to how he can invest his clients' money. While this may be desirable for a skilled manager, it makes it more difficult to position the investment within the context of a broader portfolio and to understand the asset class exposure.

This last point is most important because often these types of investments are sold on the basis of the dividends they



are expected to generate. Many privately held real estate funds lured investors in with dividends in the 7% to 10% range earlier last decade but stopped paying these dividends during the real estate crisis of 2008-2009. Investors were locked into a declining asset with maybe only quarterly or even annual redemptions possible, and no dividends.

**Tax risk:** Certain privately-held investments are sold for the tax benefits. This is often the case in the United States with interests in natural resource properties where tax breaks can be realized from depletion and operating costs. While the tax breaks are often genuine, the risk is that the tax laws may change (as happened in the mid-80s with real estate limited partnerships), or that the investor must accept unlimited liability in order to realize some tax breaks (as in the case of general partnership interests in oil wells). Another tax issue could be that the investor might only be able to use tax losses generated from the investment against similar types of investments rather than against other income – in the case where the investor does not have offsetting gains in similar investments, the tax loss may not be realizable.

**Exotic derivatives strategies.** This is a very broad category but usually the strategy is sold as a less volatile investment which still has potential for upside if markets do well. A very simple example is a covered call strategy where the investor owns shares in a company and sells call options on these shares. A profit is realized from the sale of the calls, which mitigates some of the downside if the underlying shares fall in value. If the shares go up in price by less than the value of the calls sold, then the investor still has a profit. But if the shares increase in value by more than the call value then the investor has a loss on the strategy as compared to not having sold the calls.

While many such strategies do indeed mitigate volatility, it is important to consider whether this form of risk control is any better than, say, just holding more cash in a portfolio.

Hidden risks are mostly in the form of poorly-understood costs. For example, while the actual cost of buying or selling an option or other derivative may be minimal, the spread between the option purchase price and sale price (bid and ask) could be substantial – which would be important for a strategy that includes both a purchase/sale and subsequent sale/re-purchase of the same security. Furthermore, management fees for such strategies are often quite high, perhaps a base fee plus a performance fee. The investor may be better served by a simpler strategy that does not involve having to hire a high-priced manager. Having said all that, a skilled investment manager could potentially, in certain circumstances, add considerable value by employing such

strategies. For example, in the case where an investor has a large concentrated stock position, a good hedging program can help not only to mitigate the downside, but also to minimize the tax consequences of hedging the portfolio.

As with all investments; make sure you understand what it is you are buying and how and when you can get out of the investment before you jump in.

*Tom Zachystal, CFA, CFP, is President of International Asset Management (IAM), a US Registered Investment Advisor specializing in investment management and financial planning for Americans living abroad since 2002. He is a past president of the Financial Planning Association of San Francisco. For more information on International Asset Management (IAM) and our services for Americans living abroad, please see our website at: [www.iamadvisors.com](http://www.iamadvisors.com) and contact Peter Brahm, email: [peterb@iamadvisors.com](mailto:peterb@iamadvisors.com).*

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**Square meters** × 10,000 = Hectares

**Hectares** × 2.47 = Acres

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# Bookshelf: LOCAL AUTHORS

*Costa Rica is blessed with a large number of excellent writers, many of whom have published books. ARCR supports these authors and has compiled a listing of some of their works for members to order or purchase for themselves or as gifts. Copies of some can be found in the ARCR display cases in the office and are for sale. Check out the brief descriptions below (there are some new additions) and decide which ones you need to add to your library or share with a friend or loved one. Listed alphabetically by author's surname. Titles in red are new additions to this list.*

## FICTION:

**BLOOD-AXE** Aaron Aalborg (2018) A part satire, part thriller, story about grumpy and bored golfers who start a Viking reenactment group. It spreads worldwide and gets out of hand with the pillaging of an English village. The plot twists and turns through the US and Norway and has a surprise ending in Costa Rica. Available on Amazon.

**COOKING THE RICH, A POST-REVOLUTIONARY NECESSITY** Aaron Aalborg (2017) This spoof recipe book skewers politicians and the under-serving rich with humor and insight. Is it a nasty attack on the fabric of society with malicious intent? Let the reader decide and have a few laughs. Included are hilarious recipes for "Trump a la Mode," "Billionaire Bourguignon," "Murdoch Stew," "Real Windsor Soup" and many more. Available on Amazon.

**DOOM, GLOOM, AND DESPAIR** Aaron Aalborg (2016) A series of darkly humorous short stories to make you think: sex, bloody murders, fierce man-eating animals, fierce man-eating men, suicides, mass extinctions, and the end of the universe are all included. Settings include Costa Rica, Panama, France, the UK, the USA, Heaven, and Hell. Available on Amazon.

**REVOLUTION** Aaron Aalborg (2016) This political thriller opens with the destruction of world leaders in London. Chaotic international revolution spreads to the US and elsewhere. The plotters emerge from being sleepers in positions of power to establish their vision of a "perfect" form of socialism. Counter-revolutionaries fight back. The dramatic ending is totally unexpected and cataclysmic. Available on Amazon.

**SAVE THE BONSAI** Aaron Aalborg (2019) A Japanese, born without gender and rejected by parents and society, lives in angry isolation and modifies plants to kill. Joined by a hacker with a spoof website, "Save the Bonsai," the pair morph into a worldwide protest movement against the forces of governments. Supported by vegans, terrorists, and fanatics, they are pursued by the CIA and a private security organization hired by a Billionaires Bonsai Club. Worldwide mayhem ensues, humanity destroys itself, and, over the eons, intelligent plants come to rule the earth. Available on Amazon.

**TERMINATED - THE MAKING OF A SERIAL KILLER** Aaron Aalborg. two volumes. Available on Amazon

**Volume 1** (2016) Alex, a poor boy from Scotland succeeds against the odds in education, business, and espionage, but his love life is a mess. Under cover, in Argentina, he plays a crucial role, assassinating French technicians during the Falklands War. Following a thrilling chase to Chile he returns as a hero to a stellar career. Fiercely ethical in consulting, he is terminated for opposing corruption.

**Volume 2** (2017) Alex moves on to success in investment banking and running a global company. Pursued by an unknown enemy with horrific results, he is again terminated for opposing evil business rivals and sexual blackmail. He disappears into a Thai monastery, but resurfaces years later in a race against time whilst he is under attack and his enemies are murdered.

**THEY DESERVED IT** Aaron Aalborg (2015) Based on a true story, this is a fast-moving historical and contemporary thriller. Mass poisonings of husbands



in 17th Century Italy lead to panic among men and intervention of an evil pope and sadistic bishops. We move to modern New York, where a divorce lawyer and her female lover dispose of husbands. Fleeing around the world, there are many twists and turns. Available on Amazon.

**CENSUS: WHAT LURKS BENEATH** Marshall Cobb – two books

**Book 1:** (2017) When the tortures of the daily routine of big city life become too much, likely driving him to an early grave, a man moves to a farm in central Texas. But the respite there is short-lived when he witnesses a series of odd, evil events; something is challenging his ranking as the top predator on his farm. Or, even worse, he is losing his mind. A sample copy can be reviewed at ARCR. Available on Amazon

**Book 2:** Pacing (2019) In order to save her life, a woman joins The Colony to serve as a reluctant surrogate mother for alien offspring. The alternative – being consumed alive. She is caught between wanting escape and protecting The Colony from discovery by human authorities, while helping it prepare to repel an attack by a second group of aliens that plan to invade and claim earth as their prize. Available on Amazon.

**RIVER TREE / ARBOL RIO** Marshall Cobb (2018) Beginning with a tiny seed, follow a pecan tree through all the stages of its life. This thoughtful, heartfelt book teaches children to cope with endings and reflects on the beauty of new beginnings. The book is also meant to aid those attempting to learn English or Spanish via the Spanish-language version, “Árbol Río.” A sample copy can be reviewed at ARCR. Available on Amazon.

**THE PROMISE OF THE ORB** Marshall Cobb (2018) A young boy's troubles began with the loss of his mother, something his father never overcame. When their water supply dries up, his brother only wants to escape their hand-to-mouth farming existence for life in the big city. Help comes from an unlikely source, a small glowing Orb found in the dried-up river bed. It claims that the world was once awash in peace and prosperity under its rule, and needs help to regain its power. Joining the quest to help, the boy discovers that there are many different versions of the truth. Available on Amazon.

**WILL OF THE HILL** Marshall Cobb – two books – Children's story.

**Volume 1:** (2017) Will does not like school, his classmate Gertrude, or soap. He does like his best friend Dillon and

their comic-book collection, which they stash under a hedge at school. Gertrude finds the collection and decides to blackmail the boys, unless Will can convince Dillon to attend her birthday party. Will and his classmates are ordinary schoolchildren who want to be liked by their peers and Gertrude's act of blackmail is wholly understandable; she just wants to get her classmates to her party. A sample copy can be reviewed at ARCR. Available on Amazon.

**Volume 2: UP, UP AND AROUND** (2018) Punishment for the Gertrude party meltdown was imposed on all involved; they must join the school's debate team. A mysterious rope dangles behind the school and an elaborate plan is hatched. Can Will and his friends solve the riddle of the rope by using the debate team practice as a cover for climbing the rope and finding out what is up The Hill? It will only work if Will, for the first time in his life, can keep a secret. Available on Amazon.

**EVEN IN EDEN** Albert A. Correia (2014) A young Tico doctor, Gerardo, envisions free medical clinics throughout Costa Rica. His rival, Orlando, wants money and power – and the country's presidency. Thrown together by powerful fathers, driven by strong, beautiful women, they had to clash – and the eruption is felt throughout the Central American nation. Available at ARCR, Libreria Lehmann, and on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

**FUN TALES: SAINT PATRICK'S DAY, IDES, AND APRIL FOOLS' DAY TALES FOR KIDS 12 TO 112** Albert A. Correia (2015) On April Fools' Day, after a coin manages to escape a leprechaun's pot of gold, two youngsters learn the value of money. In another tale, a man unaware of the danger signs all around him, rides into a stormy night during the Ides of March. Plus two other humorous stories! Available on Amazon.

**GREAT NEW AND FUN HOLIDAY STORIES. THANKSGIVING, CHRISTMAS, AND NEW YEAR'S STORIES** Albert A. Correia (2015) A hunter, saved by locals, ends up as a main course for the annual feast; Santa fakes a malfunctioning sleigh to stop and taste a woman's tamales; a movie cowboy asks Santa for a horse. Those stories and more! Available on Amazon.

**LEGEND OF THE OCEAN QUEEN** Albert A. Correia (2018) Grandpa tells the story of a magnificent old ship, which sunk at the start of the Civil War, with a cache of eight-hundred pounds of gold in her hold. Legend has it that Captain Micah Fortnight is still aboard, protecting his precious cargo. Available on Amazon.

**PROMPTS Fun Stories for HALLOWEEN** Albert A. Correia (2018) Includes “The Witching Hour,” which

won first place in A.M. Costa Rica's 2017 Halloween story contest. In another, Frankenstein's monster gets a new brain and goes trick or treating. Eight fun stories. Available on Amazon.

**SEEKING SAFE HARBOR** Albert A. Correia (2015) The Arthur family's sailing vacation in the South Pacific was marvelous...until all communication systems went out. When almost run down by an aircraft carrier they find they have returned to a world – what's left of it – gone mad. Available at ARCR, Libreria Lehmann, and on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

**SEEKING A SANE SOCIETY** Albert A. Correia (2015) In the sequel to "Seeking Safe Harbor," the Arthur family arrive on Catalina Island thinking they would be able to sleep well, but awake to find that a self-proclaimed governor was demanding "taxes" from all the residents and was collecting locals as "slave labor" to work in California's central valley. Although weakened by months of strife, the people fight to bring sanity back to the society of their devastated world. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**SEEKING LIFE AND LIBERTY** Albert A. Correia (2017) Third in the "Seeking" series, communities on Catalina Island and in California's central valley slowly began reorganizing following a nuclear holocaust. Ex-Army Ranger, Zach Arthur, head of the newly formed "state militia," is called upon when families begin being taken to a maximum security penitentiary and used as forced labor. Even for someone with Arthur's experience, rescuing prisoners from a well-guarded prison appears impossible. Available on Amazon.

**ALEX THE WHITE FACED MONKEY** Kevin Fortier (2014) A children's story about a white-faced monkey who comes out of the forest to eat fruit left for him by a young boy. With help from a friend and family, over time, a bond develops between the two. There are disappointments but with love and respect a lifelong friendship is built. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**GREEK GHOSTS** Helen Dunn Frame (2003) A single mother of an unexpected child leaves her son behind and travels to Greece with her dead husband's secret past fresh in her mind. There, stalked by an international organization and encountering fanatics and criminals, she seeks help from a friend who works for Interpol and Scotland Yard. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**SECRETS BEHIND THE BIG PENCIL** Helen Dunn Frame (2014) A fictionalized account of an actual, major scandal. Ralph Carter is haunted by events from his youth which affect his career and personal life. As a buyer for a military organization he finds a domineering boss and an alcoholic associate have sucked him into a corrupt system of kickbacks and defamation. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**WETUMPKA WIDOW** Helen Dunn Frame (2016) An epic romance story fired by murder, sex, greed, and manipulation. Sleuths Jennifer Haslett Vandergriff and Lady Sarah Clarke team up after being recruited to resolve a monumental family conflict. Assisted by Alabama and California police forces, the tale takes their crusade to Switzerland where Jennifer's former lover, an Interpol agent, provides International assistance. Available on Amazon.

**RETURN TO SENDER** Fred H. Holmes (2014) A unique method of time travel sends a traveler back in time intending to change past events in a way that will alter history, all to fit a nefarious present-day plan. One man can stop the events. A sample copy can be reviewed at ARCR. Available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

**ESCAPE FROM HELMIRA** Fred H. Holmes (2018) The sequel to "Return to Sender." A fictionalized version of a daring escape from a Federal stockade where twelve-thousand Confederate POWs were held in a prison designed for four-thousand. The escape is aided by a time traveler sent back to save one prisoner. Available on Amazon.

**MARIPOSA, A LOVE STORY OF COSTA RICA** Bob Normand (2016) Based on the Legend of Zurqui, this is the story of two young indigenous who lived in a natural wonderland called Costa Rica, circa 1000 AD. Each the favored child of a chief, but of different tribes hostile to each other, they fall in love. They face great difficulties overcoming events between their tribes. Their experiences reflect the mystery and spirituality that is Costa Rica. Available on Amazon.

**AVALON THE RETREAT** L. Michael Rusin (2012) Only a million people are left after World War III. A small group who prepared for the apocalypse retreat to a hidden place. Rewritten and available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**AVALON BEYOND THE RETREAT** L. Michael Rusin (2014) This sequel to "Avalon the Retreat"



begins where the first book left off. Available at ARCR and on Amazon

**CALIFORNIA'S CHILD** L. Michael Rusin (2014) A fictionalized account of true events, places, and people. It details the trauma that children, not members of a traditional family, endured in the early forties. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

## NON-FICTION:

**ENGLISH GIRL, GERMAN BOY- World War II From Both Sides** Tessa & Martin Borner (2005) A fascinating true account of two people growing up during WWII in England and Germany. They meet, fall in love, marry, and raise a family in Montreal. The book describes several return visits to East Germany during and after the communist era. Available at ARCR and on Amazon and Goodreads.

**SLOVENIA A LA CARTE – All You Ever Wanted to Know About** Slovenia Tessa Borner & Joze Borstnar (2016) Tessa and Joze first met in 1977 when Slovenia was a republic in Communist Yugoslavia. They reconnected in 2015 and co-authored this book about Slovenian politics, social history, tourism, beautiful destinations, and life under communism. Plus, there is a memoir of Joze's Slovenian National Hero father included. Available on Amazon and Goodreads.

**COSTA RICA KALEIDOSCOPE** Carol McCool (2011) A collection of stories, personal essays, informative articles and charming tidbits by Ms. McCool and other authors (collectively known as the Bards of Paradise) for expatriates, newcomers, visitors, and armchair travelers. It offers a kaleidoscope of their adventures in their adopted country, revealing the joys, challenges, and quirks as experienced by writers with different personalities and expectations. Edited by Greg Bascom and Robin Kazmier. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**BOHEMIAN ROAD TRIP** Paul Furlong (2016) The author takes the reader on a trip as old as the written word; one man's journey to find himself. "For me, racing motorcycles, and being serious about it, requires a rider with faith; faith that success will come before skill or money runs out." Right after Daytona in 1972 came Road Atlanta, where it all ran out. A cosmic adventure. Illustrated. Available at ARCR and on Amazon,

**THE GREEN SEASON** Robert Isenberg (2015) A collection of essays, profiles, and travel stories by a former Tico Times staffer. Isenberg chronicles his first

year in Costa Rica with funny and moving tales about everything from San José traffic to a centuries-old indigenous ceremony. His encounters with taxi drivers, poets, surfers, and survivors of the illegal sex trade offer a broad look at modern-day Costa Rica. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**FOODS THAT CONFUSE AND AMUSE - 1,200 ECLECTIC NAMES DEMYSTIFIED** Lenny Karpman MD (2015) Did you know that mapo tofu is named after the Sichuan woman with the pock-marked face? Or that Cats Pee on a Gooseberry Bush is the name of a popular New Zealand wine? Bizarre names for foods and beverages titillated Dr. Karpman to explore the culture, history, and substance behind them, resulting in hundreds of fascinating details filling the pages. Available on Amazon.

**POLICE STATE USA** Jamie Ligator (2019) The true story of an illegal arrest and extradition from Costa Rica to the US and the subsequent abuses: physical, emotional, and psychological inflicted over a five-year ordeal. The many illegal and immoral acts by US prosecutors and judges are related clearly, along with supporting details of many more cases of innocent people wrongfully accused and condemned to prison and later found to be innocent. The willful actions, by those supposedly whose role it is to administer justice, is clearly exposed. Available on Amazon.

**INTREPRENEWAL: THE SIX STEP RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS** Robert A. Normand (2005) This book details classic management principles that can be employed by small business owners to turn troublesome businesses around and structure them for future profitable growth. Includes concepts in Strategic Planning, Human Resources, Profit and Expense Controls, and Sales & Marketing. Available on Amazon and Smashwords.

**S.O.B.E.R. HOW THE IRRITATING ACRONYMS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GOT ONE DRUNK SOBER** Bob Normand (I.M. Asotte) (2006) Based on a real-life experience, the book chronicles the first thirteen months of a successful fight with overcoming alcoholism. It exposes the typical inner workings in AA meetings and the discovery process a person goes through trying to recover. Available on Amazon.

**THE GOLDEN GRINGO CHRONICLES, A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RETIREMENT IN COSTARICA** Bob Normand (2014) Actual experiences of an expat who moved to Costa Rica, told in three parts:

1) leaving the homeland, 2) surviving in Costa Rica, the early years, and 3) becoming Tico – maybe. Based on over sixty articles published in the Golden Gringo Chronicles monthly newsletter, it covers culture, agriculture, residency considerations, medical concerns, history, and legends of Costa Rica. Available on Amazon.

**LOVE IN TRANSLATION** Katherine Stanley Obando (2016) When a Phoenix schoolteacher buys a one-way ticket to Costa Rica, she expects adventure, but not a decade-long affair with the country's sly and hilarious street slang. Ms. Stanley presents this ingenious and soulful phrase book that portrays a Costa Rica most tourists never see. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**THE HUT** A trilogy by Rich Sulzer

**THE HUT** (2016) Book One tells the true story of coming of age in the 1950s. Written from the viewpoint of an adult looking back at his youth, it is the story of the author's life growing up in New Jersey and how innocent bravado led to trouble, guilt, fear, and the ultimate growth from puberty to young adulthood. Available at ARCR and on Amazon

**BEYOND THE HUT** (2018) Book Two book tells the story of how the author's evolution in high school led from his rebellious years of driving his prized '56 Ford Sunliner with a Lucky Strike hanging from his lips, to the meeting of "the prettiest girl I had ever known," who later became his wife. It covers the years when he quit school, found a job at the bottom of the economic ladder, and how the times that followed led him to return to the site of the now destroyed Hut. Available on Amazon.

**THE REMAINS OF THE HUT** (2019) Book Three continues the story with a description of the disastrous and traumatic wedding that took place between a 17-year-old, pregnant and distraught bride and a clueless groom. It relates how over the following years the young couple experienced many trials, including being harshly discriminated against for housing and having to move five times in their first year. It concludes with a description of the tragic events that led to the dissolution of the marriage. Available on Amazon.

**CRAZY JUNGLE LOVE** Carol Blair Vaughn (2017) Based on a true story. A multi-millionaire hedge fund manager comes to Costa Rica with his ingénue wife and the dream of creating their own nature reserve. Things go to hell in a hurry and John Bender ends up dead of a gunshot wound to his head. His wife is

left penniless and serves jail time for John's murder. Did she do it? Read the book and decide for yourself. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN** W.D. Woods (2019) True stories by a Northwest Indiana detective of how, over his 28-year career, he investigated some of the most horrific crimes against women imaginable – and brutally describes the details of each one. This may be the most bloody, bone chilling, and disgusting book you have ever read and is not for the faint of heart. These true stories will take you on a ride so repulsive and sickening you can't stop reading – even if you want to. Available on Amazon.

**PROHIBITION MADE THE MAFIA** T. Warren Wyndham (2019) A recollection of 40 years in the liquor and wine industry forms the background for true stories ranging from the Roaring Twenties and Prohibition, to the growth and success of one of the offspring of the illegal importing sale of liquor, wine and beer by the Mafia and other gangsters. Along the way, the author shares his many personal experiences from his start in the business to his retirement, brushing shoulders with known gangsters and legal and illegal business experiences. Available on Amazon.

## TRAVEL, RELOCATION, COSTA RICA CULTURE:

**POTHOLESTO PARADISE** - Living in Costa Rica Tessa Borner (2001) The author describes her journey in creating a new life running a bed and breakfast in Costa Rica, including all the do's and don'ts of living in a new culture. Part diary, part travelogue, part advice column. Available at ARCR and on Amazon and Goodreads.

**TO THE STARS: COSTA RICA IN NASA** Bruce Callow and Ana Luisa Monge Naranjo (2019) An introduction to 12 Costa Ricans who were hired by, or have worked at NASA. The book, in interview format, tells how these exceptional Ticos achieved their NASA dreams as engineers, technicians, oceanographers, and a world famous astronaut. Published by the Costa Rican Institute of Technology's Press, a digital version can be purchased at: <https://ebooks.tec.ac.cr/product/hacia-las-estrellas-costa-rica-en-la-nasa-to-stars-in>

**COSTA RICA: FOLK CULTURE, TRADITIONS, AND CUISINE** Jack Donnelly (2014) The book addresses Tico folk culture such as la Nigüenta, la Yegüita,



agüizotes, legends, and more. A lengthy chapter deals with national traditions and there are four chapters on food – it's better than you think! An invaluable resource for English-speaking tourists, students, and residents. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**RETIRING IN COSTA RICA OR, DOCTORS, DOGS AND PURA VIDA** - 3rd edition Helen Dunn Frame (2017) The adventures of the author in Costa Rica. Information about how to make decisions about retiring, investing, or living here part-time. Contains questions to ask, resources for answers, suggested books to read. Covers some of the things that can make the difference between a mediocre experience and a wonderful adventure. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**RETIREMENT 101** Helen Dunn Frame (2017) A booklet which addresses planning what to do with your new found free time – time that could be as much as a quarter to one-third of your life. It helps the reader determine if they want to retire full-time, part-time, or at all. Available on Amazon.

**HOW TO LIVE IN COSTA RICA ON \$1,500 A MONTH** Fred Holmes (2012) Much more than an evaluation of the cost of living, this is a compilation of experiences from over nine and one half years of living in Costa Rica. The book is filled with good information on how to live in Costa Rica on a limited budget. Available on Amazon and other online outlets.

**THE NEW GOLDEN DOOR TO RETIREMENT AND LIVING IN COSTA RICA** - The official guide to relocation Christopher Howard (2017) The updated 18th, 800-page, edition of the perennially best-selling guidebook covers everything you need to know to make the move. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

**FEASTING AND FORAGING IN COSTA RICA'S CENTRAL VALLEY** Lenny Karpman MD (2014) The revised, comprehensive guide to food and restaurants in the Central Valley. An encyclopedia of ingredients, definitions, restaurants, and recipes; there is more about Costa Rican cuisine than most people could ever hope to learn in a lifetime of dining out. Available at ARCR.

**THE REAL SAN JOSÉ** Michael Miller (Updated for 2018) Often maligned, Costa Rica's fascinating capital city has much to offer. Written to introduce new arrivals (and old hands) to San José, this book will help people become familiar with the layout of downtown and find its hidden gems. Descriptions of museums, the Mercado Central, the cathedral, and a tremendous variety of other

diversions and attractions are included. Available at ARCR and on Amazon.

## WORTH SEARCHING FOR:

There are literally hundreds of books, fiction and nonfiction, about Costa Rica, available on Amazon and other online sites in new and used condition. Space prevents including all of them in this list, but here are a few worth searching for.

**THE TICOS: CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN COSTA RICA** Biesanz, Biesanz, and Biesanz (1998) Written with over fifty years of first-hand observation, this social and cultural history describes how Costa Rica's economy, government, education, and health-care systems, family structures, religion, and other institutions have evolved, and how this evolution has affected modern Tico's lives, beliefs, and values. A comprehensive introduction to the country. Available at Biesanz Woodworks in Escazú. Telephone: 2289-4337. Also available on Amazon.

**MARRIED TO A LEGEND, "DON PEPE"** Henrietta Boggs (2011) A rare firsthand account of Costa Rican history. Henrietta Boggs' memoir of meeting, living with, and leaving Don Pepe takes place in the formative years of his brief but profound revolution when the constitution was rewritten and the army was abolished. It also recounts the frustrations of a gringa living in Costa Rica in the 1940s. Available on Amazon.

**OFFICIAL GUIDE TO COSTA RICAN SPANISH** - 3rd edition Christopher Howard This 248-page pocket-size book is the only source for Costa Rican idioms and slang translated into English. It contains survival Spanish for daily situations, pronunciation exercises, Spanish-English and English-Spanish dictionaries, and has time-tested tips and shortcuts for learning Spanish. Available on Amazon.

**CHRISTOPHER HOWARD'S GUIDE TO REAL ESTATE IN COSTA RICA** Christopher Howard (2009) The guide contains 550 carefully researched pages including information for renters. Available on Amazon and in ebook form from: [costaricabooks.com](http://costaricabooks.com).

*If you have published a book and would like to have it included in the 2020 list, send a short email describing the contents (limit 100 words), along with the author's name and year of publishing, to: [service@arcr.net](mailto:service@arcr.net), Subject Line: El Residente Bookshelf.*

**READ! READ! READ!**

# (32) FROM THE EMBASSIES



## ASK ACS

In 2009, Congress passed the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) act, making overseas voting easier than ever before. We encourage US citizens abroad to visit the redesigned Federal Voting Assistance Program website: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov), which has forms and information needed to vote from abroad in US elections. Overseas voters are eligible to vote in all regular, primary, and special elections for federal offices. Some states allow overseas voters to vote in state and local elections depending on the voter's status. US citizens should complete a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) every year, even if they have voted overseas before, and every time they change their name, physical address, or email address. Completed FPCAs should be sent to local election officials. Advantages:

- It's fast: For fastest delivery, US citizens can choose electronic delivery of an absentee ballot from their home state and include an email address on their FPCA.
- It's free: US citizens can return their FPCA or completed ballot to a US embassy or consulate for mail delivery to the United States free of charge via diplomatic pouch. Postage-paid return envelopes are available from: [FVAP.gov](https://fvap.gov).
- It's accessible: US citizens can drop off an FPCA or completed ballot in person at any embassy or consulate during public hours.

The easiest way to fill out the FPCA is with the help of the Federal Voting Assistance Program's Online Voting Assistant. It will walk a voter through the process of registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, and how to submit the FPCA to local election officials. US citizens can verify if they are registered to vote by using their state's online verification website or by contacting local election officials. US voters can confirm that their ballot was received by local election officials by visiting their state's election website.

### **Q: How soon should a citizen send in their Federal Post Card Application?**

We recommend sending in your FPCA on or soon after January 1 of each year and every time you change your name, mailing address, or email address.

### **Q: If a citizen plans to vote absentee from abroad in primary elections, but will be back in the United States for the November general elections, do they have to take any special steps?**

When a citizen fills out their FPCA, they should include a note to the local election officials that they will be returning to the United States. They should include the date of return if known. Once they are back home, they should contact their local election officials to confirm their new US address and their intention to vote in the United States.

### **Q: If it is already within 30 days before an election day and a voter has not yet received their ballot, what can they do?**

US voters who have not received their ballots at least 30 days before an election day can fill out the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Voters can drop off the FWAB at the nearest embassy or consulate as they would a standard ballot.

### **Q: Can a US citizen who has never lived overseas vote?**

Each state has its own residency requirements relating to voter eligibility. Thirty states and the District of Columbia allow voters who have never lived in the United States to use their parents' state of voting residence. We recommend that these US citizens contact the local election officials in the place where their parents last lived, or where they have visited frequently, to find out if they are eligible to register to vote. Embassy voting assistance officers can assist US citizens to contact local election officials.

### **Q: Can a US citizen who has not lived in the United States for a long time and cannot remember their previous address register to vote in any state?**

All voting in the United States is based on a US citizen's residency. Normally, a citizen will use the address where they last lived before leaving the United



States, even if it was a long time ago. If they do not remember that address, they can ask family or friends who may know, check medical, school, religious institution or property records, or contact the Social Security Administration.

### Q: What effect does voting have on a US citizen's taxes?

US citizens have an obligation to file federal tax returns wherever they live. Voting for candidates for federal offices does not affect their federal or state tax liability. Voting for candidates for state or local offices could affect their state tax liability. US citizens should consult legal counsel if they have questions about state income tax liability.



## GOING TO EUROPE AFTER BREXIT?

As you are probably aware, the UK is preparing to leave the European Union on 31 October, 2019. As part of our preparations we are getting the word out to British citizens, both in and outside the UK, about what they need to be aware of if they are planning a trip to the EU after Brexit.

Whether you'll be going as a tourist or business traveller, you will need to ensure that you have the following three documents in order – your passport, travel insurance, and driving documents.

When travelling to the EU after Brexit you'll need to make sure that your passport is less than ten years old AND has at least six months left on it. If your passport does not meet both of these requirements you may not be able to travel to most EU countries or Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

As a general rule, you should always get appropriate travel insurance with healthcare coverage before you go abroad. This becomes even more important once the UK exits the EU, since your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) may not be valid after that happens. It will be very important that you get travel insurance with the right coverage if you have a pre-existing medical condition, as many travel insurance policies do not cover pre-existing conditions.

If you plan to drive while visiting an EU country, you will need to check whether you need an international driving permit (IDP) and, if you want to take your own vehicle, you'll need to secure a "green card" and a GB sticker. Business travellers, that is, people going to the EU for meetings and conferences, providing services (even with a charity), and touring artists or music performers, will need to check on the specific entry requirements for the country they intend to visit.

Travellers will also need to pay close attention to topics like earning money in the EU and rules on taking goods into the EU. We know that this is a lot of information to take on board, so we encourage you to look at this comprehensive page to get more details on what you need before visiting the EU after Brexit: <https://www.gov.uk/visit-europe-brexit?>



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by **Bruce Callow**

## An Interview With Award-Winning Tico Animator Thelvin Cabezas

**T**helvin Cabezas grew up in Cartago and has carved out a career in special effects animation that is perhaps unequaled in Costa Rican history. His film credits include numerous blockbusters such as “The Chronicles of Narnia,” “Beowulf,” “Spider Man 2,” “Iron Man 3” and “Avatar.” In 2010, he received the Visual Effects Society (VES) award for Best Visual Effects for his work on “Avatar.” Cabezas has acted as a technical advisor for the UK/Costa Rica climate change education film “Odyssey 2050,” which featured former NASA astronaut Franklin Chang-Díaz.

I spent some time with Mr. Cabezas who shared insights about his fascinating career path and his Costa Rican roots.

**Q.** Where did you grow up in Costa Rica and what schools did you attend?

**A.** I grew up in Cartago, a few meters away from the Estadio Fello Meza. I attended the Escuela Bilingue Sonny for primary education. Then Colegio Metodista for high school education. After that, I was stuck wanting to study for a career in the film industry, but without a choice to study it in Costa Rica, I ended up studying computer science, which was the closest thing I could get at Tecnológico de Costa Rica (TEC). But after a year I quit and studied at various institutions and events, anything related to visual effects; art drawing sessions, graphic design, sculpting, and a lot of self-teaching. This went on for a bit more than a year, at which point my parents were great enough to support my studies in the USA to study computer animation at the prestigious Ringling College of Art and Design.



**Q.** When did you decide you wanted to pursue a career in the film industry, and what was the first film you worked on?

**A.** That is a tough question to answer, as I don't think it was one specific moment in time — rather, a slow progression toward a realization. From early age, pre-teen years, I was very interested in art-related subjects as well as science. I loved to play with Legos (technics were my favorites), liked electronics, science-fiction movies, and computer games. I loved the idea of bringing characters to life, monsters, dinosaurs, aliens, etc. And that was what attracted me toward visual special effects; the ability to make a creation come to life and get a reaction out of an audience.

Originally, my intentions were to become a stop-motion animator, manipulating real-life puppets or animatronics for films. The film “Jurassic Park” changed that because it started the computer generated image revolution. Same principles, but now the work would be done in a computer and not with real-life materials. From there,





I started self-teaching computer software, then studying at Ringling School of Art and Design, and eventually I got a job at Sony Imageworks where I worked on my first film, “Spiderman 2.”

**Q.** Tell us about the career path you took that led you to work in New Zealand.

**A.** After working for Sony Imageworks for around seven years, I started looking into other companies around the world. I missed Costa Rica – never did quite settle in the USA – and was hoping to find a visual effects company in an area similar to Costa Rica.

This is when I heard about Weta Digital in New Zealand, who was doing some impressive work for the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy. After some research, I found out that not only did New Zealand look similar to Costa Rica, but also that Weta would be working on James Cameron’s next big film, “Avatar.” At that point I applied to Weta for a job and got some help from a previous colleague from Sony Imageworks who was now working for Weta. A few months later I was accepted to join the team and have been there ever since.

**Q.** What was your favorite experience about working on “Avatar?”

**A.** I think seeing the final result in the theater and the huge buzz it created. Working on it was long hours and a lot of stress, and in the heat of the moment it is tough to take a moment to sit back and appreciate the work. Months, even years, pass by in a flash while trying to finish the product without much time to truly enjoy it.

But finishing with a great movie, with great visuals, is the best outcome and definitely my favorite part of the experience.

**Q.** What is the most satisfying aspect of your job and what has been your favorite project so far?

**A.** The moment when an audience sees the result and goes, “Wow!” That moment is what it is all about, to cause some sort of emotional reaction out of someone watching one’s work. It is hard to pick a project – they all had their ups and downs, and each one has something I remember fondly. Perhaps it’s because we finished the project not too long ago, but I really liked working for the live concert visuals for Childish Gambino’s “The Pharos Experience.”

**Q.** What advice would you give young Costa Ricans who are interested in pursuing a career in digital animation?

**A.** Aim high, don’t place walls in front of you, and don’t listen to the naysayers. Stay motivated and chase your dream. Get a good balance of artistic and technical knowledge. Stay passionate and don’t despair; the big studios don’t care for qualifications, nor experience as much as just raw skill and talent. All that is needed is to show those to the world to get noticed. Showing one’s work is easier than ever these days with the internet.

*Bruce Callow is a Canadian communications consultant and teacher who does space education outreach work on behalf of NASA. He is the co-author of the book “To the Stars: Costa Rica in NASA” published by the Editorial Tecnológica de Costa Rica.*

*A version of this article was previously published in The Tico Times.*

# 36 A DAY IN THE LIFE

by Allen Dickinson

## Driving in Costa Rica

**Y**eah, this is a rerun. But every couple of years I like to give those who haven't been here long, and are struggling to learn the culture, a glimpse into some of the unwritten rules of driving that Ticos follow. Hopefully this will take some of the mystery out of what you may not have been able to interpret so far.

This piece is adapted from a New York Times article about driving in Italy, written over thirty years ago. Because it so aptly applies to present-day driving in Costa Rica, it was too good not to adapt and share. Presented with thanks and apologies to the original author.

### ATTITUDE PREPARATION

There is a simple method of achieving the right state of mind for driving in Costa Rica; before you start your car for the first time, sit in the driver's seat, hold the steering wheel, and think the following, "I am the only driver on the road and mine is the only car." It may be hard to accept, especially after you have seen San José streets at any time during a weekday, but many Tico drivers believe it, and so can you. Consequently, a local driver's reaction to any encounter with another vehicle is, first, stunned disbelief and then outrage. You don't have a chance unless you can match this faith. It isn't enough to say you are the only driver, or to think it – you've got to BELIEVE it. Remember, your car is THE CAR – all others are aberrations in the divine scheme of the universe.

### THE LAW

In Costa Rica, as elsewhere, there are laws about stop signs, maximum permissible speeds, which side of the street you can drive on, and so forth. Here, however,

these laws exist only as tests of character and self-esteem. Stopping at a stop sign, for example, is *prima facie* evidence that the driver is, if male, a cuckold, or, if female, frigid and barren. Contrarily, driving through a stop sign is proof, not only that you are virile or fertile, but that you are a Person of Consequence. Every Tico's dearest desire is to be an exception to the rule – any rule. Remember, therefore, that signs, laws, and the commands of the Policía Municipal are only for the lowly.

### THE CITY STREETS

The basic rule of driving in Costa Rican cities is as follows: Force your car as far as it will go into any opening in the traffic. It is this rule which produces the famous Gordian Knot – a four-way deadlock where nobody can proceed. Sharp studies suggest that the deadlock can be broken only if any one of the cars backs up.

That brings up another important point about Costa Rican city driving; you can't back up because there is another car right behind you. If you could back up, however, and did, you would become an object of ridicule, for backing up breaks the basic driving rule and suggests a lack of virility.

The impossibility of backing up accounts for some of the difficulty you will have in parking. Aside from the fact there isn't anywhere to park, you will find that when you try to parallel park by stopping just beyond the vacant space and backing into it, you can't, because that fellow is still right behind you, blowing his horn impatiently. If you point at the parking space, make gestures indicating that you want to park, he blows his



horn. You can give up and drive on or you can get out and go back and try to get him to back up and let you park. This you do by shouting personal abuse into the window of his car. In that instance, one of two things will happen: the Tico may shout personal abuse back at you, or, he may stare sullenly straight ahead and keep on blowing his horn. (If the second happens, you're whipped, for no foreigner can out-sulk a Tico driver.)

The parking problem created by the backing up problem creates the Right Lane Horror. At no time in a Costa Rica city should you drive in the right lane. One reason is that is where the buses stop to load and unload passengers. Another is that Costa Ricans usually drive head first into parking spaces. Thus, every third or fourth parked car has its tail end sticking out into the traffic making the right lane a narrow, winding adventure. Unfortunately, the left lane also has its hazards; the right lane drivers swerving in and out of the left lane as they steer around the buses and the sterns of half-parked and double-parked cars. (Ticos double-park only in four-lane streets; in six-lane streets they triple-park.)

Right-lane driving is further complicated by the Costa Rican style of entering from a side street by driving halfway into the first lane of traffic and then looking to see if another vehicle is approaching. The way to deal with these Lane Swervers and Cross Creepers is to blow your horn and accelerate around them. If you make a careful, polite in-line stop when your lane is invaded, you not only expose your social and sexual inadequacies, but you may never get moving again, since you also mark yourself as a weakling whom anyone can challenge with impunity.

While performing these dangerous gyrations, it is imperative to blow your horn. The more risky the maneuver, the more imperatively you must toot, for all Tico drivers accept the axiom that anything you do while blowing your horn is sacred. (Horn blowing, incidentally, except in cases of serious danger, is against the law in many Costa Rica cities. I mention this because you would never know it otherwise.)

Another thing to remember is that one-way streets in Costa Rica are not really one-way. To begin with, a driver who has a block or less to go assumes that when the one-way signs were erected, they were not thinking of cases like his. He drives it the wrong way, going full throttle to get it over with quickly and to prove that he really is in a terrible hurry. More important, however, is to realize that, to many Costa Ricans, one way streets also have a contra lane; that is, a lane for going the wrong way. It is reserved for taxis and buses and, indeed, it is always full of

taxis and buses, producing the Two-Way-One-Way street, which, in turn, produces law suits, pedestrian fatalities, and hysterical foreign drivers.

A distinctive feature in Costa Rican cities is the rotunda – a circular path fed by as many as eight streets. Costa Rican traffic commissioners have sensibly ordained one-way, circular traffic for most of the rotundas. But the traffic circle, with its minuet-like formality of movement is, to a Tico driver, an exhilarating opportunity to out-bluff other drivers by taking the shortest cross-lane path from their point of entrance to the intended exit, all the while sounding their horn and flashing their lights.

All Costa Rican city driving requires (and soon produces) familiarity with the Funnel Effect. Especially in those cities that preserve narrow pathways as streets; which basically means all Costa Rican cities. You will find that four-lane streets often, after four or five blocks, become a two-lane and then a one-lane street. Since many Costa Rican cities are force-fed with automobiles by an excellent Pista (highway) system, this produces both the Funnel Effect and the Reverse Funnel Effect.

At first glance it may appear that the Funnel Effect is more dangerous and unnerving than the Reverse Funnel Effect. This is not correct. True, the unwary motorist entering a Funnel may get trapped against one side or the other and have to stay there until traffic slacks off around one or two o'clock in the morning, but you can usually abuse your way out of the trap.

It is the Reverse Funnel which produces what insurance companies refers to as "death or dismemberment." Imagine the effect of bottling a number of prideful and excitable Costa Rican drivers in a narrow street for half a mile or more and then suddenly releasing them. It's like dumping out a sack of white rats. As each car emerges it immediately tries to pass the car ahead of it and, if possible, two or three more. The car ahead is passing the car ahead of it, and so on. If all Costa Rican cars were of even roughly the same power, this would simply produce wild, group acceleration. But, in Costa Rica the car engines range from 500 cubic centimeter midgets up through Formula 1 race cars, and the first hundred yards of the Reverse Funnel, before the shakedown, produces a maelstrom of screaming engines, spinning tires, and blaring horns.

## ON THE HIGHWAY

Costa Rican roads, just like Costa Rican streets, change their character unexpectedly. It is not unusual to be driving on a four-lane, modern asphalt highway, then

round a curve and find that you are suddenly driving on a two-lane, sunken road with man-size potholes. In reality however, most roads are somewhere in between these extremes.

The paramount feature of Costa Rican highway driving is el Pasar, which in Spanish means “to pass with an automobile, to go beyond the limits”, or “to smuggle” (as well as other things). To pasar someone is to excel him socially, morally, sexually, and politically. By the same token, to be pasared is to lose status, dignity, and reputation. Thus, it is not where you arrive that counts, but what (or whom) you pass on the way. The pasar procedure is to floor your accelerator and leave it there until you come upon something you can pass. If el Pasar is not immediately possible, settle in the wake of the intended target, at a distance of six or eight inches, blow your horn

and flash your lights until such time as you can pass. Passing becomes possible, in the Costa Rican theory, whenever there is not actually a car to your immediate left, regardless of road width, or lane markings. A pasar, however, can also take place on the right side of the vehicle being overtaken.

When a Tico driver sees the car ahead of him slow down or stop, he knows there can be but two causes.

The driver ahead has died at the wheel, or else he has suddenly and mysteriously become a Person of No Consequence, which is roughly something which, in Costa Rica, hangs over every driver's head. He, therefore, accelerates at once and passes at full speed. If the driver ahead has, in fact, stopped for a yawning chasm, the passer is done for. More often, however, the driver has merely stopped for a stop light. The same thing, naturally, is happening on the other side of the intersection and the result is the Cross-Double-Cross. The instant the light changes, all four drivers obey the Law of Occupation of Empty Space and the four cars meet in the middle of the intersection, followed closely by the cars which are tailgating them. What follows is the Four-Handed-Personal-Abuse in which the drivers of the two right lane cars

usually team up against the drivers of the two left lane cars, but this is by no means a rule. Sometimes those in the newer or more expensive cars team up against the ones in the cheaper, older cars.

In Costa Rica you will see big trucks – huge semis – with cabs seating four abreast. There are no special speed limits for trucks enforced in Costa Rica. As if the very sight of these things was not terrifying enough, the drivers often paint mottos across their cabs just above the windshield, usually religious. It can be nerve-shattering to meet one of these monsters coming down a narrow mountain road at fifty miles an hour, and panic may loom if you see “God is Driving” written on the cab, while “Heart of Jesus, Help Me” does bear thinking about.

## THE PEDESTRIAN

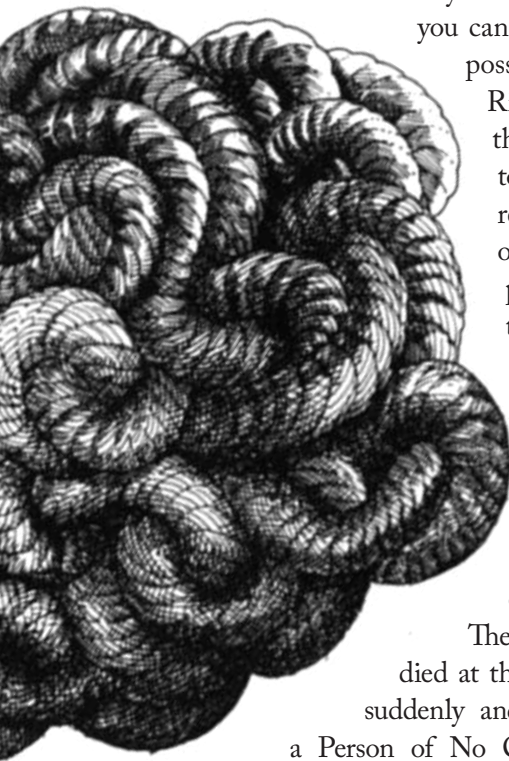
It is gauche to be a pedestrian in Costa Rica; a pedestrian is a Person of No Consequence. The Costa Rican pedestrian feels ashamed of their status and does everything they can to avoid acting like a pedestrian. To cross the street in the crosswalk, for instance, would be admitting they are a pedestrian. To cross the street, the Tico crosses in the middle of the block, strolling slowly through the traffic, trying to make it clear that they are not a pedestrian at all, but a driver who has momentarily alighted from their car. If you treat them like a pedestrian, thus drawing attention to their shame, they will be furious. Do not look directly at them. Do not drive around them. Above all, do not stop for them. If they challenge you to drive within four inches of their toes as if they were not there. Of course, if you drive on their toes they will shout personal abuse and call a cop.

## THE SCOOTER PLAGUE

To get some idea of the Costa Rican Scooter Plague, imagine all the chinks between cars filled with hurtling motorcycles and scooters, each sounding its tinny horn, racing its motor, and emitting a small cloud of hydrocarbons. I used to think that nothing could be worse than the Costa Rican Scooter Plague, but I was wrong. As young Ticos have accumulated more money in their pockets, the Scooter Plague has given way to the Cheap Chinese Motorcycle Menace which is louder, faster, and altogether more surpassing.

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It is at this point the original narrative cuts off. Rumor has it that the author was seriously injured by a motorcycle traveling at break-neck speed while its Tico driver was simultaneously texting his novia about their plans for the evening.





by Ivo Henfling

## Eight Common Condominium Restrictions

**T**hinking of buying a condominium in Costa Rica? Then you should be aware of the bylaw restrictions before you make your decision; there may be some that won't allow you the living comfort you expect.

What are bylaws? They are the rules and regulations of a condominium, and all condo owners are governed by those rules. (They are also sometimes called "rules and regulations," or "covenants, conditions, and/or restrictions [CC&Rs].") In Spanish, they're called Reglamento de Condominio y Administración, or Reglamento Interno de Condominio. Whatever they are called, they describe the rights and obligations of each property owner within the condominium.

Bylaws are very important when you live in a condominium. Actually, they can give you a lot more living comfort than you might enjoy in a normal neighborhood because they are there to protect you against neighbors who don't live by the rules.

Of course, some bylaws are great for some and not for others, depending on the type. For instance, the prohibition of pets can be a relief for some and the reason for not buying a condo for others. That's why you should be familiar with the bylaws before you purchase; to make sure they don't negatively impact your expected life style.

Here are eight of the most common condominium bylaw restrictions.

### PETS

One of the most important condominium bylaw restrictions is the pet restriction; lions, tigers, dogs, snakes, spiders, and crocodiles are usually prohibited in a condominium. Some bylaws restrict all pets; others only concern the size of the pet or those of certain breeds.

If you love pets and want to have one, or several, or if you are allergic to pets, hate barking dogs or are afraid for them, you should check the condominium bylaw restrictions before you purchase.

### NOISE

If you love to party or enjoy listening to your music at full blast (or your kids do), better check the condominium bylaw restrictions. The use of boom boxes, loud motor bikes, even a noisy spin cycle washing machine or other things that create an "intolerant noise level" (like teething toddlers) might not be accepted in a condo.

### PARKING

If you and your family own several vehicles you need to check how many parking spots you're buying with the condo; some have only one space, others have two. Usually it's prohibited to use the guest parking for your own vehicles. If you own an RV, a car, and a motorcycle, you'll run into trouble for sure.

### HANGING LAUNDRY

Most condominiums do not allow hanging laundry, carpets, or towels over the railing of the balconies. Therefore, make sure that the laundry area has a space for a dryer. Also, make sure the area has arrangements for a dryer vent; many condos do NOT have an exhaust vent for the dryer, so a different solution might be necessary.

### BUSINESS

If you plan to start a print shop or a fish market, a condo is not for you. One of the most important condominium bylaw restrictions is that owners are not allowed to operate a business from their condominium. If you have a home office and never have any visitors, other homeowners might not notice it and complain.

### PAINT

Most condos have rules that say you are not allowed to paint your façade or front door in a different color than your neighbors. So, if you're an artsy person, or

you just enjoy being different than your neighbors, I suggest you do not buy a condo.

## FLAMMABLES

Do you like to play with flamethrowers or dynamite? Then don't buy a condominium. An important condominium bylaw restriction is not being able to keep explosives, flammable materials, or toxic waste in your condo. This might sound a little restrictive, but it's necessary to have those rules in place to keep the condo safe for all.

## GUNS

Quite a few condominiums prohibit residents and their visitors from carrying guns. So, if you love your guns and love to show them off, don't buy a condominium where the bylaw restrictions exclude gun ownership.

Of course, there can be other restrictions you might not be happy with. Some condominiums have bylaws that carry fines for violations, others don't. What can happen to you if you want to break the bylaws of your condominium? Ask your lawyer before you break anything!


Where can you find the condominium bylaws?

They are registered in the National Registry when the condominium is constituted. The easiest way to acquire them is to ask your real estate agent, the seller's lawyer, or go to the National Registry yourself.

Do you still want to buy a condominium in Costa Rica?


*Ivo Henfling is a Dutch expat who has lived in Costa Rica since 1980. 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 Go Dutch Realty and can be reached at (506) 2289-5125 / 8834-4515 or at: [ivo@american-european.net](mailto:ivo@american-european.net).*





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by Shelagh Duncan

## Counter Intelligence – Choosing the Right Counter top



It is an undeniable fact that the kitchen is the heart of the home. Many of our homes have an open-plan layout so the kitchen is a visible part of the living area. We can make it less noticeable, so it blends in with the appearance of the rest of the living area, or it can become a feature.

A seamless, linear kitchen design is modern, clean, and very appealing in a minimalist space. The cabinets and appliances can form a wall to visually blend into your larger living area. Your cabinets and counter top will be sleek, spare, and perfectly coordinated. If, however, you want your kitchen to be a separate entity with its own personality, then there are many creative opportunities available, including cabinetry, appliances, lighting, bar stools, and especially the counter tops.

The counter tops are perhaps one of the more challenging decisions in your kitchen, as they have to be more than beautiful – they must be practical too. If you think about

it, your counter top is probably one of the hardest working items in your kitchen!

Even if you are not building new, perhaps you have purchased an existing home, or just need to update your own kitchen; whatever the reason for a change, a thoughtfully selected counter top can give you a “big bang for your buck.” All of the available products perform differently and come with different price tags, so there is often a trade off when you have to decide between the look you want, the cost, the durability, and other features. So how do you decide? Here is a quick rundown on the general features of the most popular products:

### GRANITE

This is the most popular choice. Each stone slab is unique. Heat, cuts, and scratching do not harm the granite, but corners and edges can chip. It is resistant to chemicals and bacteria, and is relatively easy to maintain, if you

seal it once in a while. A polished, rather than honed, finish will resist stains much better.

## LIMESTONE

It's attractive, but impractical in a busy kitchen. Limestone resists heat well but it nicks, cuts, and scratches easily. It is more porous than granite, and staining is a definite problem.

## MARBLE

Is a beautiful, timeless option. It takes on a nice patina to some, but others see it as marred. Small nicks and scratches can be polished out, but marble chips easily and needs to be resealed periodically. It can also stain and etch easily, and like all stone, has visible seams.

## ENGINEERED QUARTZ E.G. SILESTILE AND CAESARSTONE

This is a mix of natural quartz stone and man-made resins that mimic the look of stone but is non-porous. Available in many colors, it is much more durable than stone and requires less maintenance than most other surfaces. This makes it an ideal choice for a kitchen that gets a lot of use. Hot pots, serrated knives, abrasive pads, and acidic stains are no problem for this product.

## POLISHED CONCRETE

The concrete is custom formed, so the quality may vary. It takes on a warm patina with age and has no visible seams. Concrete can chip and scratch easily, and it can develop hairline cracks. Topical sealers can protect it against stains but not heat, and penetrating sealers can handle heat but not stains. It's a unique and trendy option, and adding glass chips or stone to the mix can create a unique look.

## STAINLESS STEEL

These thin steel sheets are fitted to conform to your unique design. Stainless steel is widely used in commercial kitchens as it is antimicrobial and super easy to clean. It will scratch and etch over time, but this is considered part of the beauty of its patina, which offers a fresh metallic glow to any kitchen. Steel is an eco-friendly option.



Granite



Limestone



Marble



Engineered Quartz



Concrete



Stainless Steel



Recycled Glass



Laminate



Tile



Solid Surface



Epoxy Resin

## RECYCLED GLASS

Most recycled glass counter tops are 80% to 90% post-consumer glass, so this offers an eco-friendly and interesting option. Large shards create a bold look, finely ground glass looks subtle. It is resistant to heat, cuts, and scratches, but chips and stains can be a problem.

## LAMINATE

An inexpensive and stylish option with a huge selection of designs and colors. Stains do not damage it but strong heat can. Cutting directly on laminate and cleaning with harsh abrasives will mar the finish. It is generally seamless, but edges may peel because of the high humidity in Costa Rica. Laminate is not typically recommended for this area.

## TILE

This is another more practical and budget-friendly option with a wide selection of sizes, types, colors, and textures available. Stain, scratch, and heat resistant, tile can be very durable. Ceramic tiles may chip, so opt for porcelain,





or touch up and seal chips with like-colored nail polish. Larger tiles are better as there will be fewer grout lines. Seal all the grout lines on installation and clean and reseal them often to prevent bacteria build-up.

## SOLID SURFACING

In 1967 DuPont invented Corian. They were the first in the industry to offer a man-made material with the look of stone. This popular and extremely durable material can be seamed invisibly, and comes in many colors and designs. It is non-porous, stain resistant, and has very low maintenance. It is not as heat resistant as natural stone.

## EPOXY RESINS

Epoxy resins are used to create amazing options for kitchen and bathroom counters (as well as floors), and the possibilities are endless. These counter tops can be customized to the look you want, onyx, marble, leather, the ocean, and so many more. This type of surface is durable, low maintenance, non-porous, stain and bacteria resistant, and has good heat and flame resistance.



Costs do vary among all of these different products of course, but whatever your style, you will be sure to find something that is right for you.

Isn't it great to know that even in our little corner of the jungle we can enjoy the look of high-end designer kitchens?

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 next to the BCR in Uvita. She can be reached at: 506-2743-8323, or email her at: [royalpalminteriors@gmail.com](mailto:royalpalminteriors@gmail.com) Follow her on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/RoyalPalmInteriors>*



  
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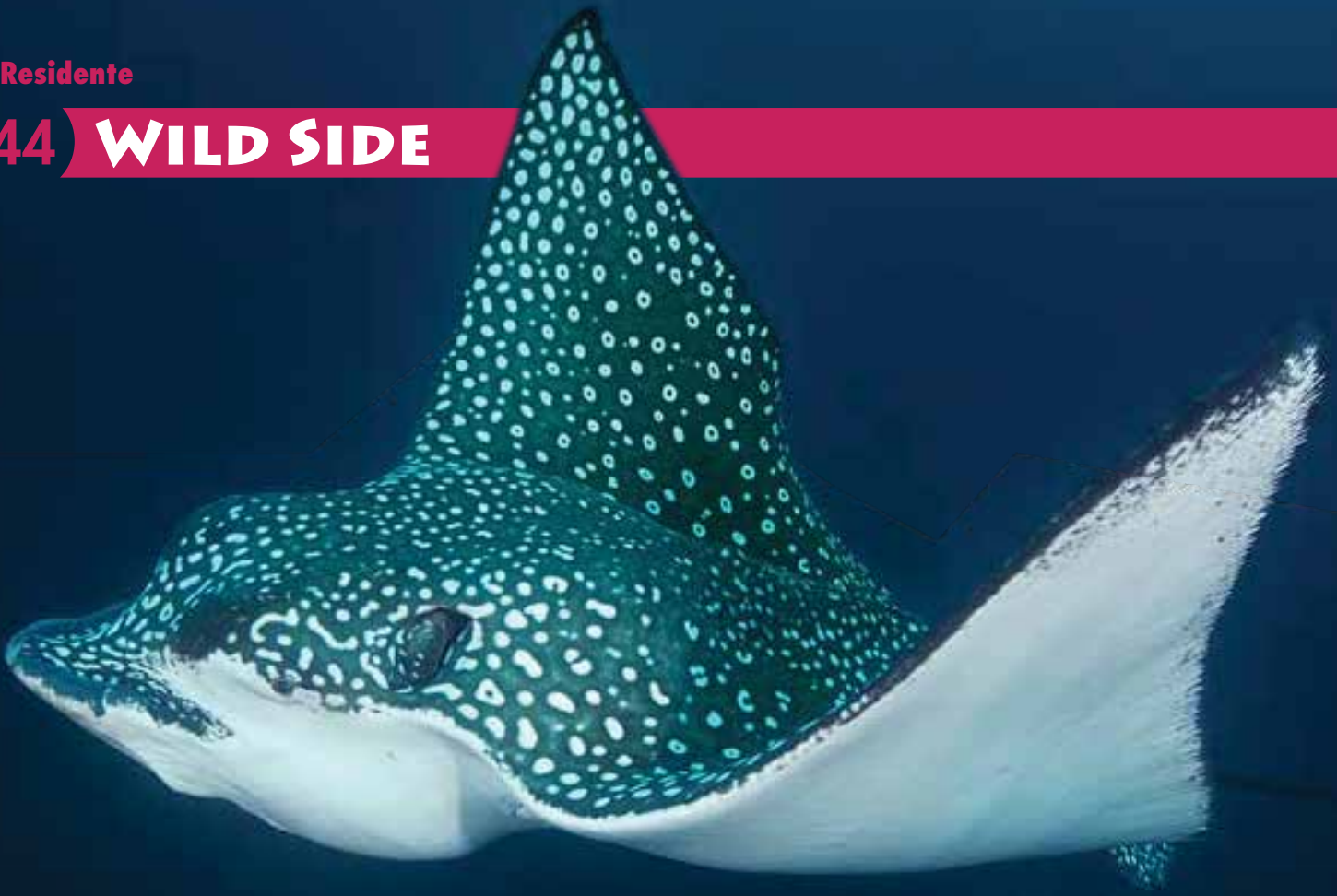
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## Gliding Eagles

John Denver sang, “I know he’d be a poor man if he never saw an eagle fly...” and such words ring true, even deep in the depths of the ocean. Though rays don’t technically fly, their graceful glide through the water certainly gives one the magical appearance of flight. Of the many kinds of rays one can view here, the Spotted Eagle Ray is commonly listed among the top recommendations worth searching out in the national waters.

Called Rayas águila in Spanish, the scientifically named *Aetobatus narinari* is a beautiful diamond shaped creature whose dark top surface is covered with evenly distributed white spots. They have a white underbelly and their flattish bodies can reach up to 15 feet in length, having the longest tails among the rays, and a wingspan up to 10 feet. An adult specimen can weigh as much as 500 pounds.

Spotted Eagle rays enjoy tropical waters around 24-27 degrees Celsius, thus the local waters are the perfect home for these creatures that move with tidal activity. Most of the bays and coral reefs along the Costa Rica coast are inhabited by them, as are the waters around Isla de Coco. They thrive on small creatures such as bivalves, mollusks,

crabs, shrimp, some octopus, and small fish. They have specialized teeth that aid them in getting through the tough shells of the more difficult morsels, such as those of the mollusks.

These rays reproduce up to four pups. The eggs stay within the female and hatch internally after about a year. Each pup is about 7-14 inches in size and they mature over a period of 4-6 years. Though their lifespan remains unverified, it is estimated they live around 20 years in the wild. Several species of sharks are their primary predators, but of course commercial fishing has taken its toll on this near-threatened species.

Spotted Eagle Rays are not a direct threat to man, however it is wise to be cautious and give them a wide berth when viewing as they are members of the sting ray family and carry 2-6 venomous barbs on their long whip-like tails. Though seemingly shy and tranquil, they will defend themselves if they feel threatened. Still, such a beautiful and majestic creature is well worth taking the time and effort to experience; to see them “fly” through the blue waters of Costa Rica.



# PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

45

by Tony Johnson

## Believe it or not, I'm Enlightened

**R**ight now my editor is likely thinking, “WHAT? I’ve read your stuff for years now and you’ve got some good ideas. But, ‘enlightened?’ I wouldn’t go that far!”

And, until recently, I wouldn’t have gone that far either. Like most, I saw enlightenment as some ethereal, otherworldly pinnacle attained by very few, described as:

“A higher level of existence”

“Profound, sublime, transcendent insight into reality”

“Sainthood”

“Being one with the cosmos”

But what if enlightenment is something available to more than the spiritual nobility? What if it’s not an otherworldly journey but seeing what’s right before our eyes; seeing things as they are without illusions? Then maybe someone like me, not extraordinary, not special, can be enlightened. And the exciting part is – you can too!

And it can be done without the spiritual aspects; it can have a more modern, scientific basis and be like the historic shift from the geocentric (belief that the sun revolves around the earth) to the heliocentric (the earth revolves around the sun) view of the solar system, which men had in an earlier time; it was something that SEEMED so obvious and correct at the time, but was wrong. The truth was discovered only after we looked more carefully.

I hope this will help you to look more carefully at where you place your FOCUS!

But, why bother? You probably came to Costa Rica for a new experience of the planet, of yourself, and of life. And hopefully, you have gotten that. So why not now explore an ancient and currently scientific view of reality as well? The country’s beauty makes it a great place for such reflection.

### ENLIGHTENMENT, IN PRACTICAL, CONCRETE, ACCESSIBLE TERMS

My aim here is to explain enlightenment in “user friendly” terms that enable you to not just cognitively grasp it or hear what it’s like for others, to not just know what enlightenment is from “the outside,” but to actually

live it directly yourself; to know it intellectually so you can go on to experience it yourself.

Explanations are helpful pointers to where and how to look, and no explanation, certainly not this one, can capture the fullness of reality. Unfortunately, many explanations use terms and language that just leave us more confused, so my challenge here is to describe clearly enough the meaning of enlightenment to encourage you to look for yourself.

A good place to start would be with the journey of the most well known “Enlightened One,” The Buddha. There’s much to learn about an enlightened view of reality from what The Buddha realized. (Remember “Buddha” is a title not his name, just as “Christ” was not Jesus’ family name, but a title meaning “Anointed One.” The Buddha’s name was Gautama Siddhartha and he was the son of a king.)

His story is well known, but a quick review will help us.

Before his birth it was foretold that Gautama Siddhartha would either be a great king or a great spiritual figure. His father, the king, wanted to ensure that his son would follow him to the throne. To prevent the boy choosing the spiritual path he pampered him with every luxury, every pleasure, essentially keeping him in a golden cage of material excess. He further prevented the boy from having any experience of the painful side of human reality, deliberately shielding the young Gautama from any contact with poverty, sickness, old age, and death. The king believed that if Gautama became deeply accustomed to riches he could not leave luxury for self-sacrificing spirituality and would succeed him to the throne.

But in today’s terms, that scheme “backfired.” Curious about the life he was prevented from seeing, Siddhartha set out on a quest to understand reality, rather than live in the fantasy world of the palace. Early on he was taken to the nearby town where he saw for the first time sickness, old age, impoverishment, and death, and was told, “Yes, this happens to everyone. Including you.”

Consumed with the problem of suffering, he renounced the throne and left his wife and infant son to totally face reality and solve suffering. One of his first efforts involved embracing suffering to overcome it. To do this

he slept on nails, stood on one leg, and “survived” on a daily diet of a single grain of rice. But, of course, more suffering didn’t relieve suffering or access ultimate reality any more than had the extreme self-indulgence of his former life. So he finally ate well and began to meditate under the renowned Bodhi Tree. When he arose, he was ENLIGHTENED.

What does the word “enlightened” mean? In Gautama’s case it meant that he saw things as they are without illusions. In this case ILLUSIONS refer to the mistaken beliefs, the erroneous ways we perceive our world, that keep us from seeing the reality in front of us.

And what does that mean when applied to MY “enlightenment?”

To achieve (my) enlightenment I needed to identify my illusions and see how they prevented my access to reality. Freeing myself from mistaken beliefs enabled me to finally see what I’ve always been seeing, but misinterpreting.

ILLUSIONS? We all have our illusions. One is that almost everyone has the mistaken belief that we humans are special beings: separate, distinct, detached from the world around us. To show how pervasive that belief is, I, for many years taught students that illusion. Within weeks of being hired at a university mental health center it was clear that many students were struggling with a very negative self-image. So I created a self-esteem improvement group therapy program. It’s still being offered 40 years later by other therapists. That program enabled me to meet a student need, demonstrate that my boss hired the right person, and work on my own poor self-esteem.

And while that program helped many students overcome painful, negative self-images, I encouraged the maintenance of an illusion, the illusion of a separate “self.”

## WHAT IS “THE SELF?”

To organize our experience and make life more manageable and less confusing, we divide the world into the “me” (the self) and the “not me” (the other). Let me put that another way; self is our PERCEPTION of the universe and us as being “SEPARATE AND DISTINCT” from each other. Furthermore, “self” is one of those interconnected concepts where we can’t have one (up) without its opposite (down).



And the “self” concept seems to make some experiential sense; I can lift the arm that belongs to me, but I can’t control the clouds so I can see the sun. In other words, some parts of reality are under my direct control (self) and there are some that I have no control over (other). Our self is seen as that which not only initiates actions (such as lifting an arm) but also that which experiences the world, feelings, sensations, and produces thoughts. So “self” is not a completely crazy idea.

How was “self” created? Before neuroscience and brain surgery it was assumed that the self was located somewhere in the head, behind the eyes and between the ears. A few hundred years ago this was imagined as a “little man” (sorry ladies, it was a pre-feminist era) dubbed a “homunculus” which lived inside an “inner theater” watching pictures taken by the eyes and listening to sounds collected by the ears. The belief was that it took something more than the “meat” of the brain to have experiences, so to experience something a “self,” a “soul,” a “spiritual nature,” was required. And that made some sense, then and even now in a scientific time.

But no modern brain surgeon nor anatomist has ever found that inner theater or the little man enjoying the show. Nor have they discovered some spot in the brain that would function as an experiencing agent.



So the conclusion of modern science, and much of philosophy, is that there is no “self.” That our sense of self is an illusion!

And you’re asking right now, “So what’s experiencing these words? What’s thinking about these ideas? What’s connecting these ideas to memories and other ideas? What’s deciding and executing the movement of my arm? What’s having an inner discussion about all this? Those experiences certainly can’t be illusions!”

No they’re not. You ARE having those experiences, but there is no “inner me” having them. AND HERE’S THE REALLY HARD PART; there is NO separate hearer and heard, no stand alone see-er and seen; the hearer and the heard, the see-er and the seen are one. (Didn’t I say it’s HARD?)

Another way to think of the “me/not me” dichotomy is that it’s where we draw the line between where we end and the world begins. Typically we believe that WHAT we experience is OUTSIDE our skin-self and the world begins at that boundary.

But what if the world is actually IN our experience, not outside it? What if the world and experience are ONE?

## WHAT THE BUDDHA REALIZED

It is said that while he was meditating on the Morning Star, Venus, he saw there was only ONE; that he and Venus were not separate, but were one and the same. That there was no boundary line between him and Venus.

“WHAT? This is really getting nuts!” you say. I understand your bafflement.

An analogy: Classical painters, like Vermeer, create the ILLUSION of distance where absolutely none exists. The “Milkmaid” seems to be standing out from a background of a wall. But she and the wall are on the exact same plane, the two dimensional plane of the canvas. All is ONE; it is just our vision, our perceptual organization, that says it is not.

Or how about this. Remember the “reversible figure” of the maiden and the witch from intro psych? What you see depends on where you look. Focus on the upper left “eyelashes” and you see the maiden wearing a red choker; no “witch” is visible. Focus on the lower right “red mouth” and it becomes a “witch;” no “maiden” is present. Simply by shifting our focus we change the WHOLE experience, not just part.

Where we focus can determine our experience. PSYCHOLOGICALLY; if we focus on problems we

experience distress and unhappiness. If we focus on the possibilities in those problems we experience optimism and relief. METAPHYSICALLY, if we focus on our thoughts we CREATE a “self” and “other” split.

And just as there’s no UP without a DOWN, when we focus on “SELF” there is logically a necessary “OTHER.” So, when we silence our constant inner chatter, the illusory self disappears and we can finally focus on our pure consciousness. When we eliminate the notion that a “self” is a separate “me,” is having the experience of the “other,” we too can see what the Enlightened One saw; that All is One because all occurs in ONE and only one place; in our consciousness, our awareness, our “knowing.” It is the “self,” and all its typical cacophony of thoughts and feelings, which OBSTRUCTS our seeing what has always been right in front of us; there is just ONE consciousness. Nothing more.

Recognizing another important, common perceptual organizational principle is “figure/ground” can help here. The “figure” of the self, our thoughts, blocks our awareness of our actually being pure awareness. Hearing the inner dialogue, the inner conversation about ideas, plans, feelings, others, etc. stands in the way of pure consciousness. Our thoughts take precedence and help create the illusion of a separate “me” having thoughts, and an outer “not me” experienced as the background.

Try it For Yourself – Remove The “Figure” Without the illusion of the “self” figure, created by the chatter and chaos of the thoughts and feelings of the “self,” we experience only consciousness. Meditation is one way to remove that “figure,” that obstruction.

There are many ways to meditate, all of which are intended to enable you to quiet your mind so you can experience the pure consciousness underlying all experience. To meditate all one has to do is:

Focus on your breathing

Empty your mind – leave your mind “outside”

Repeat a mantra

All these let thoughts drift away like clouds, revealing the sky of consciousness behind all experience.

Yet another way: turn your visual focus away from the background and look “inward” for the “self.” This essentially removes the activity of “self” (thoughts), leaving only what is really present; consciousness. In doing so, you see only the world IN your consciousness. With the illusion of the self gone, all we see is our infinite CAPACITY for experience.

"But didn't The Buddha realize that he was NOT separate from the Morning Star? You may accept that we're fundamentally consciousness at the basis of all experience, but that star is still separate from me, no?" you ask.

No. He and that star were ONE. (Remember "no see-er AND seen?")

"But it's 25 MILLION MILES from the Earth, for God's sake. HOW can it and I be "ONE?"

Because the self is not the only moment by moment illusion we are caught up in. DISTANCE is also an illusion.

"Now WAIT A MINUTE, 25 million miles is a pretty big 'illusion,' isn't it?"

Right, it is. You can't touch Venus, but strictly speaking, Venus, and EVERY OTHER EXPERIENCE, occurs in only ONE place; in our consciousness. And since we are fundamentally consciousness, whatever we are conscious of is ONE with us. It is the SELF that adds the distance. When we remove "self," Venus and we are on the same plane.

## SO THERE IT IS

My enlightenment is (ha, ha, ha – it only took me 50 years to see this) just the recognition that all is CONSCIOUSNESS.

Ah, you ask, "What's "consciousness?"

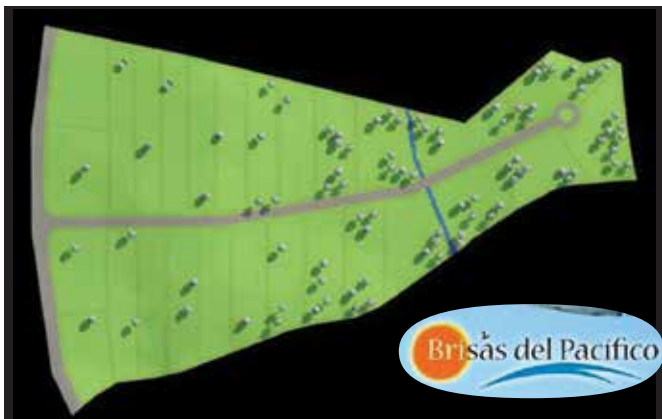
"It's that by which we know all experience. That in which we have all experience. And that from which all experience appears." (Rupert Spira)

Earlier on I said you too can achieve enlightenment. But you're still struggling to get this, aren't you? Keep trying. It took THE BUDDHA something like six years. Learn to meditate, it takes practice. Don't expect it all to happen the first time you try (or possibly even the 50th) but practice it. We live in a GREAT PLACE to meditate on the reality of what we think is "out there" and discover where it ACTUALLY is.

Am I a Buddha? Are you crazy!? But the Enlightened One did say everyone can see this if they do the work.

*Tony Johnson is just a regular guy who refused to admit defeat and stay with the view that the "Sun circles the Earth." He can be reached at: [johnson.tony4536@gmail.com](mailto:johnson.tony4536@gmail.com)*

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

## ► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

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

## ► **Al-Anon**

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

## ► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

Meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 11 a.m. on the second floor of Casa de España in Sabana Norte. Casa de España has an elevator for handicap accessibility. If you wish to attend please call: 4034-0788, or email: [commander@alcr10.org](mailto:commander@alcr10.org) or visit our website at: [www.alcr10.org](http://www.alcr10.org). If you need directions, call Terry Wise at: 8893-4021.

## ► **American Legion Post 12-Golfito**

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

## ► **American Legion Auxiliary**

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

## ► **Amigos of Costa Rica**

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

## ► **Atenas Bridge Club**

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

## ► **Birding Club Costa Rica**

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

## ► **Canadian Club**

Welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons, and at our special annual events. No passport required. There is no fee or dues to pay, just sign up with your email address and we will keep you informed of Canadian events. For information go to: [www.canadianclubcr.com](http://www.canadianclubcr.com) or email Pat at: [canadianclubcr@yahoo.com](mailto:canadianclubcr@yahoo.com) to sign up.

## ► **Costa Ballena Women's Network**

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

## ► **Costa Rica Writers Group**

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

## ► **Democrats Abroad**

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

## ► **Domestic Animal Welfare Group Costa Ballena**

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

## ► **First Friday Lunch**

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

Mariscos Vivo, located behind the Mas x Menos grocery store located across from the Nissan Dealer near Parque Sabana. Call ARCR (2220-0055) for directions.

### ► Little Theater Group

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

### ► Marine Corps League

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

### ► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

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

### ► PC Club of Costa Rica

Meets the third Saturday of each month; social, coffee, doughnuts at 8:30 a.m.. The meeting starts at 9 a.m. and ends at 11 a.m. at the Pan American School in Belén. Guests are allowed one free month before joining. For information call Dick Sandlin at: 2416-8493 email him at: [d\\_sandlin@email.com](mailto:d_sandlin@email.com) or visit our website at: [www.pcclub.net](http://www.pcclub.net).

### ► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

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

### ► Professional Women's Network

PWN provides its members with opportunities to network with other professional women with the goal of aiding personal

and professional development of entrepreneurs, students, and professionals. PWN sponsors service and outreach programs to "give back" to the community. Meeting schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Helen at: 2280-4362. Location: Tin Jo Restaurant in San José, Calle 11, Av. 6-8. Or email us at: [pwn.costarica@gmail.com](mailto:pwn.costarica@gmail.com). PWN website is: [www.pwnocr.com](http://www.pwnocr.com).

### ► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information email Walter Bibb at: [wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com](mailto: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](http://www.sanvitobirdclub.org) or email: [eltangaral@gmail.com](mailto:eltangaral@gmail.com) for more information.

### ► Wine Club of Costa Rica

Meets at 1 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Join us to tantalize your taste buds and expand your education. For more information on upcoming events please contact us at [costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com](mailto:costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com).

### ► Women's Club of Costa Rica

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

### ► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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

**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.net](mailto:service@arcr.net) subject line; Club Corner, and post them on the the ARCR Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/ARCR123](http://www.facebook.com/ARCR123).



# BUSINESS DIRECTORY (51)

## Important dates in Costa Rica:

**November 1st**

First Friday Lunch

**November 28th:**

Thanksgiving Day

**November 28th and 29th**

ARCR Seminar for  
Expats. Location: Hotel  
Casino Palma Real

**December 6th**

First Friday Lunch

**December 25th**

Christmas Day

*NOTE: the office will be  
closed from Dec. 20, 2019,  
until Jan. 6, 2020*



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## Funniest One Liners

*I like older men because  
they've gotten used to life's  
disappointments. Which  
means they're ready for me.*

*I entered what I ate today  
into my new fitness app and  
it just sent an ambulance  
to my house.*

*When I say "I'm not  
drinking too much tonight"  
it never goes as planned...*

*Most people are shocked  
when they find out how bad  
I am as an electrician.*

*Maybe if we start telling  
people the brain is an app  
they will start using it.*

*I'm not saying your  
perfume is too  
strong. I'm just saying the  
canary was alive before  
you got here.*



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