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# El Residente

DESTINOS

## Quetzal Quest



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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.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

It's safe to read this issue – it was prepared while wearing a face mask! OK, not really but, like many, it seems I spend more time with a mask on than off, nowadays.

Regardless of COVID-19, our writers have overcome their quarantine issues (one hasn't even been able to return home to Costa Rica because of it!) and have prepared a lot of informative and entertaining articles for this issue.

So relax and spend a little time enjoying all the good stuff they have written for you; take a vicarious trip down the Rio San Juan (*Adventure in Paradise*), enjoy a trip to one of Costa Rica's premium nature preserves (*Destinos*), find out what to do if lockdown has caused some domestic tensions (*Paradise, We Have a Problem*), and have a visit with some street vendors (*A Day in the Life*). All enjoyable reading.

Oh, and be sure to read Across the Board, there's some really good information there.

The staff of ARCR and El Residente present this issue with much pleasure, and wish you and yours continued good health.



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# ACROSS THE BOARD

## Notes and News from the Board of Directors

**OPENFORBUSINESS** During the COVID-19 shutdowns over the past few months, contrary to rumors otherwise, ARCR has continued to conduct business as usual. We are operating with a skeleton crew, many working from home to assure their safety. Unfortunately, because of the reduced staff, we have had to restrict the amount of personal contact taking place in our offices. This step, however, has allowed ARCR to continue to serve our members to the fullest extent possible.

If you need to contact ARCR about any matter, please utilize email or telephone. Email should be sent to: [service@arcr.cr](mailto:service@arcr.cr). Our telephone number remains the same, 2220-0055, and a live person can be contacted by inputting the extension number immediately after the recorded greeting (see below for extension numbers). If any difficulty arises trying to reach an extension, please hold after the greeting and the call will be answered in person.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Additionally, ARCR recently experienced some difficulty with the phone system. During a few days in August some persons who called 2220-0055 received a greeting that they had reached "Pacheco, Marin, and Associates." ARCR's PHONE NUMBER HAS NOT BEEN CHANGED. The incorrect greeting was introduced into the system by the contractor who maintains the system and has been corrected. We apologize for any confusion.

**APOLOGY** As if the Covid-19 pandemic has not created enough problems for people and businesses, ARCR discovered we had a problem with our email system; it caused some members to not receive our email-blast messages (including those informing members of the release of recent issues of El Residente magazine). We apologize for the problem and want to assure our members that we have taken all the necessary steps to correct it. If you believe you are still not receiving our messages, please contact the office and let us know.

**CORRECTION** In the July/August 2020 issue of El Residente, under Important Dates, the dates of some holidays were listed incorrectly – some have changed. The changes are due to a recently approved law which moved the official dates of some holidays to Mondays. The law was passed to promote tourism by creating long weekends.

The changes for the calendar year 2020 include:

- Guanacaste Day, which moved from Saturday, July 25, to Monday, July 27
- Mother's Day (Día de la Madre) from Saturday, August 15 to Monday, August 17
- Independence Day September 15th (it will be celebrated on Monday 14th)
- Abolition of the Army (Día de Abolición) from Tuesday, December 1 to Monday, ~November 30 (This new holiday replaces Day of the Cultures, previously October 12. The Dia de Cultures will only be celebrated in Limon)

One holiday date that will not change is the Day of the Virgin of the Angels (Día de la Virgen de Los Ángeles), August 2, which will continue to be observed on a Sunday, though the pilgrimage has been canceled for 2020.

ARCR and the Board of Directors thank all our members for their understanding and patience during this trying time, and wish them continuing good health.



**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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by William Duckwall

## Quetzal Quest

**D**aniel Oduber Quirós, whose name you may recognize if you have flown into the country via the airport bearing his name in Liberia, was president of Costa Rica from 1974 through 1978. During his presidency the national bird was chosen – the yigüirro, or clay-colored thrush, formerly, and still sometimes, called the clay-colored robin. This bird bears the unflattering scientific name *Turdus grayi* (but, it is in good company – the American robin, with the red breast, is *Turdus migratorius*). Interestingly, the two birds play similar parts in the two cultures. We Norte Americanos associate the appearance and song of robins with the advent of spring; in Costa Rica the melodious song of the clay-colored thrush marks the welcome return of the rains.

The Oduber administration was focused on social and working-class issues – securing better pricing for agricultural products, preserving natural resources, and fostering good relations across Central America. It is consistent that the Oduber administration, with its focus

on the working class, would pick the plainest working-class bird in the country as the national bird. In its way, however, this bird symbolizes important parts of Costa Rica's character; it is modest and unpretentious and it likes people, often nesting near homes. It can be found nearly everywhere in the country. Its one standout feature is its enchanting song.

The digression about Daniel Oduber and *Turdus grayi* springs from my own idle curiosity – was there no controversy in 1977 when it was selected? Surely there were those who advocated birds with a bit more pizzazz? There are dozens of possibilities – the scarlet macaw, the keel-billed toucan, the harpy eagle, maybe one of the motmots or hummingbirds. Notice I didn't mention the quetzal, one of the most striking birds in the world, as it has been the national bird of Guatemala since 1871, and is featured on their currency, which is even denominated in – quetzals. So perhaps the quetzal was viewed as already spoken for.





To see a clay-colored thrush: From nearly anywhere in the country with a bit of greenery, walk outside and listen for birdsong that reminds you of the song of an American robin. If you see a bird that is about the same size and shape as a robin, but colored a nearly uniform light-to-medium brown, that's it. National bird or not, bird watchers are not stampeding to Costa Rica to see clay-colored thrushes.

To see a quetzal, well that's a bit more involved. The Costa Rican quetzal is the resplendent quetzal, *Pharomachrus mocinno (costaricensis)*, closely related to the slightly larger Guatemalan quetzal. Whether you pronounce it in the English fashion (ket saal) or in a Spanish fashion, with more emphasis on the ket and quick curt voicing of the second syllable, sal, everyone will know what bird you mean. The name came from Nahuatl, the original language of the Aztecs in central Mexico, into Spanish, and then to English.

The bird is spectacularly colored, iridescent green, or brown – depending. It turns out that their coloration is caused by microscopic stripes of brown pigment alternating with translucent stripes, with such regular spacing that the feathers absorb most colors of light but strongly reflect green. (When you see rainbow colors reflecting from a CD it is this same sort of interference effect; there are no colored pigments in the CD. Blue morpho butterflies use the same trick to appear blue.)

In direct sunlight the bird is iridescent green. In shadow it is far less conspicuous. The chest is red, and, in males, a pair of long (24 inches or more) green tail feathers flow behind. (There are actually four elongated tail feathers, two that are 10-inches or so, and two that are extremely long.) The quetzal belongs to the trogon family; it is the largest of the ten trogons in the country. They favor higher altitudes, like the cloud forests. For birders, the quetzal is high on the list of must-sees.

The quetzal is not on the endangered list, but it is not common. It nests in cavities in dead trees, often enlarging abandoned woodpecker nests. Nesting quetzals are only to be found in mature forests with a





supply of standing dead, partially rotted wood. This is one of the major constraints on their distribution and on their reproductive rate; wood that is sufficiently decayed to be workable for a quetzal is not likely to stay intact for long in the wet windy climate, and nest failures are common.

They feed on fruits, insects, and reportedly, frogs and lizards. A favorite fruit is the wild avocado, known locally as the aguacatillo. Before you go looking for chips, I should mention that these avocados are about the size of olives and consist mostly of skin and seed. Forget about guacamole. However, your best bet for finding quetzals is to be near a fruiting aguacatillo. The bird eats the fruit whole and regurgitates the seed a half-hour later. Experienced guides sometimes hear the plonk of the falling seed and look up to find the quetzal perched above. (I read this somewhere. There's a lot of plonking in the cloud forest, so I'm not really convinced that this is your best strategy.)

There are three or four areas in the country known for quetzals, though truthfully anywhere that offers cloud

forest would likely harbor them. Many tourists have seen quetzals in the Monteverde cloud forest – we saw our first quetzal there many years ago while on vacation. It is a preferred ecotour destination with a great variety of birds and distinct ecology, however it is a torturous two-hour drive from San José, so perhaps best if you have a few days to spend in the area.

One spot closer to San José is the Barva sector of Braulio Carrillo National Park. The park is 1.5 hours away from San José, north of Heredia, and a true gem. Access is a little difficult; four-wheel drive is advised. It doesn't draw a lot of foreign tourists, but there are good trails to follow for day hikes. Perhaps there is a preferred season for finding quetzals. I've been there once or twice, but saw no quetzals.

Last February our son was scheduled for a visit. We wanted to take him somewhere with guaranteed quetzals, so we took the advice of some Tico friends and went to the area near Los Quetzales National Park. It is a two-hour drive from San José over good roads – just follow Ruta 2 through Cartago and keep going for another hour. We stayed at a





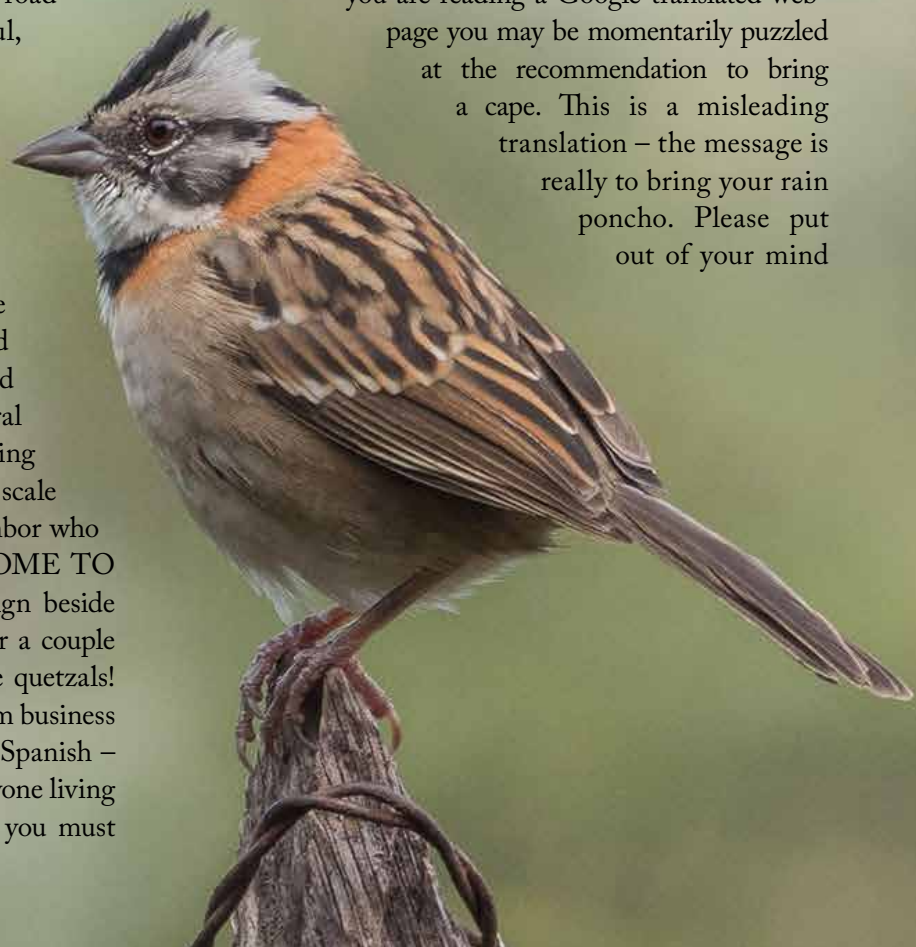
hotel on the San José side of the park, a spot with its own forest reserve. This hotel, Mirador de Quetzales (shown as “Albergue Mirador de Quetzales” on Google Maps) is a ten-minute drive from the park itself and is widely known among birders. It is a beautiful spot with a friendly helpful staff. Janet and I had stayed there in June the year before, but saw none. We were assured that if we returned in January or February we were 100% certain to see quetzals. This trip we saw so many we lost count.

The Mirador de Quetzales property was first claimed by Eddi Serrano and his wife Leonor in the 1950s. Eddi was a day laborer from Cartago who dreamed of having his own land. Back then there was only a dirt road into the area, but the highlands were beautiful, and all that was required to own land there at that time was to fence it off and move in. Those early years were difficult, and Eddi had to take day jobs in the area to feed his family.

Eddi cleared a hillside on his property so that he could raise blackberries. For a time he generated income by selling first, wood and charcoal, and then berries. By 1990 the hard times were largely over, but by then he had several of his children – now grown and married – living on the property, and there was really no way to scale up the berry business. With the help of a neighbor who spoke English, he fashioned a sign – WELCOME TO THE QUETZAL FARM. He posted the sign beside the highway one morning, and two hours later a couple pulled up to his house; they wanted to see the quetzals! That was the humble beginning of his ecotourism business – no guides, no binoculars or telescopes, all in Spanish – but it changed everything for Eddi and for everyone living in the highland area. Now, thirty years later, you must

reserve your rooms far in advance, especially during the peak viewing season of December through March.

The property is at an elevation of 8,500 feet. I was surprised to see the elevation sign in the parking area; I knew that the road had been steadily climbing since leaving Cartago, but the climb is so gradual that you don’t realize how far up you’ve come. Incidentally, it is cool at this elevation, and cold at night. The rooms aren’t heated, but like many mountain hotels they will send you off for the night with a felt-covered hot water bottle from the kitchen. And, there are enough blankets for a long hibernation. Rain is always possible, likely even, and rainwear is advisable. If you are reading a Google-translated webpage you may be momentarily puzzled at the recommendation to bring a cape. This is a misleading translation – the message is really to bring your rain poncho. Please put out of your mind



any apprehension you may have had about vampires or English schoolmasters.

I think everyone you meet working at the hotel is a member of the Serrano family. They are a hard-working bunch; the waiter for your evening meal is likely to be your guide for your morning bird walk. You're in good hands with all of them. The restaurant is very good by the way – a varied menu – we tried the homemade ravioli, and a couple of variations of fresh trout. And there is a cozy wood-burning stove near the kitchen, where your group can gather before dinner for a drink.

There is a two-hour long trail on the property that you are welcome to walk on your own whenever you want. This trail winds back and forth and up and down a heavily forested hillside. We spotted a pair of quetzals there when we visited with our son on the afternoon we arrived; we saw another six or so the next morning with a guide, all in the same general area. There are of course other birds to be seen; a row of hummingbird feeders sits in front of the restaurant, generating a constant buzz of activity of the tiny bejeweled birds. For variety, you can always drive another ten minutes to the Parque Nacional de Quetzales where there are dirt roads and hiking trails to be explored.

There is another area nearby also known for quetzals – San Gerardo de Dota – which is highly recommended by many writers. I have not visited it myself, but since there are only a handful of rooms available at Mirador de Quetzales, I feel I should give some alternatives.

About four kilometers past the Parque de Quetzales, there is a side road on the right – Calle San Gerardo – which drops down to San Gerardo de Dota, passing a series of inviting spots like Miriam's Quetzals, Dantica Cloud Forest Lodge, the Trogon Lodge, and more. Past town there is the larger Savegre Hotel and Spa and the small Suria Lodge, which is nearly at the end of the road, close to the Savegre River. Interestingly, some writers suggest March and April as the peak times for quetzals in this area, which would be a little later than the peak season at Mirador de Quetzales. This area is also known for trout fishing – rainbow trout now thrive in the cold mountain waters.

Let's hope that in the near future we will all be able to travel freely again, to see and experience the varied terrain and cultures of this beautiful country, a country squeezed between the Caribbean and the Pacific, bridging the Americas. (Otherwise, my next article will be about the big tree in my yard.) Until then, stay well everyone.

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





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# (12) OUT AND ABOUT

by Mitzi Stark

## When there aren't any fairs going on...

**A**las, with the pandemic still in force, it looks like we won't be going to any fairs for a while. There are, however, a few other places we can visit that are safe and will be around when the pandemic ends. They are little one-of-a-kind stores that are never crowded and have something interesting to offer. Three of these stores are in Grecia and one is in San José.

### Let's go shopping!

I live in a village between Alajuela and Grecia so I often go to Grecia to shop. BTW, Grecia was named for the country of Greece, just as Atenas was named for Athens, the Greek capital. A historian explained to me that Grecia was founded in the 1840s when Greece, the country, was fighting for its independence from Turkey. Costa Ricans, mindful of their own recent independence, named the cities for the valiant little country still in its struggle.

The first stop is Confitilandia, or Candyland. It is a candy store that sits right on the corner just one block west of the

little plaza behind the municipal building in the center of Grecia. It is all candy, everything from bars to packs and boxes of delights for gifts, or for yourself. There are chocolate novelties wrapped like bees and ladybugs and bars packaged like dollar bills. If you have a sweet tooth, it's easy to get carried away there.

Confitilandia also sells piñatas, the cardboard and crepe paper constructions which are filled with small, individually wrapped candies, toys, and unshelled peanuts, which are essential to children's birthday parties here. If you aren't familiar with them, a piñata is hung by a string which is jiggled while blindfolded kids try to smash it with a stick to release all the contents stuffed inside. When the piñata breaks, a melee follows as kids pile all over one another trying to collect as much as their mouths and pockets can hold. Confitilandia has been in business for six years and the hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. It is the one store I always visit whenever I am in Grecia!







Next is Escalera Ilustrada, or The Illustrated Ladder. It's a little book shop that is fun to visit. Many of the books are Costa Rica based and beautifully crafted; for instance books on the national parks have cut-outs to show canopies, birds, and jungles. They have many children's books and games which make nice gifts for kids, and there are novelties such as coffee mugs and bookmarks with literary designs by local artists. Their stock includes the classics, cookbooks, animal stories, maps of the world, and a limited number of books in English. Owner Reidel Galvez Riera can order books for you. The shop is a delightful discovery located one block west of the metallic church, and 25 meters right, on the first corner. Look them up on Facebook ([escalera ilustrada](#)) to see more.



A Ukrainian bakery In San Isidro de Grecia? Well, not quite, but the Ukraine was known as the bread basket of Europe, and I was told that a place called Panucraniano provides European style bread and pastries. I grew up surrounded by different ethnic groups, each with its own style of cooking. My family came from Austria and my

husband's from Hungary, so we argued over strudel vs. retes, and the merits of Dobos tort over Sacher tort, so I was eager to find a place which sold European style baked goods.

When I discovered Panucraniano, I was surprised to find it was no more than a simple table set up in front of the





supermarket next to the church in San Isidro de Grecia. Baker, Oleksandra, says she uses natural ingredients and recipes from her home country in her butter bread, cinnamon hearts, apple turnovers, poppy seed bread braids, and bagels. I bought enough bakery goods for a week! Panucraniano is on Facebook, but for now she only sells one day a week, on Sundays.

A semillero, or seed store, is a toy box for anyone who gardens. Whether you're growing your own organic food or just want some herbs on the window sill, in a seed store you can buy the quantity you need. And if you want seeds, El Semillero is the place to go. Located on Calle 6, Avenida 2-4 in San José, it is close to the Alajuela and Heredia buses (for those of us who hate driving in the city).

El Semillero was founded in 1922 and is, in many ways, unchanged by time. Nobody knows how many kinds of seeds they offer, but they have seeds to grow fruits, flowers, vegetables, anything that grows in the ground. There you can pick which type of plant is best for your yard and your climate. (El Semillero cr) is on Facebook, and there is a branch store in Cartago, next to the church of El Carmen.



My garden space is limited but I have a box near the kitchen in which I have planted lettuce so I can pluck off just enough leaves for a salad or a sandwich, while basil and Rosemary sit growing side-by-side on my porch. Next I will try growing some flowers.

So, while the ferias are mostly closed, exploring new and unusual shops is as much fun as going to the fairs. If any readers know of an interesting little shop, please let me know at: [mitzstar@gmail.com](mailto:mitzstar@gmail.com)



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## Ocean Plastic

**T**he beaches that edge the Golfo Dulce, where we live, are black sand and strewn with artistically tortured driftwood. The gulf derives its name from its relatively low salinity, due to the many freshwater creeks that drain into it. This “sweet water,” with an average temperature of 82°F, attracts calving whales because the mild water is gentle on the skin of the newborns. The Golfo Dulce is also a surfing playground, a rare tropical fjord that opens to the Pacific Ocean from where its clear, turquoise waters create an ideal surf break; for many of us living here, it is a small piece of paradise.

But all is not perfect...

After my first couple of visits to the beach, where I would see plastic bottle caps, take-out containers,

orphaned flip-flops, chunks of Styrofoam, and glass and plastic soda bottles washed up on the sand, I began bringing a large garbage bag with me. At first I thought that this debris must be stuff that had accidentally fallen overboard from passing boats. However, after a while, I realized that there were so many shampoo bottles, toothbrushes, and deodorant tubes that it was land-based garbage.

Our locality is lightly populated, with many Ticos living up in the hills, and not only do the creeks from those hills bring an influx of fresh water, but also, sadly, household garbage. Traditionally, for those whose homes are more remote, an effective and easy way to dispose of organic materials from the kitchen or farm was to toss them into a creek. Now that most household





and food products are packaged in non-biodegradable materials, this mode of garbage disposal is negatively impacting the beach and ocean.

Weekly, the municipality has a huge garbage truck that collects bagged refuse from metal and chain link boxes centrally located along the main road. But, for Ticos living in the hills, who may only have motorcycles, or no means of transportation, carrying a bag of garbage several kilometers to a collection box is not convenient. Throwing it in the creek is. Then, when a strong rain storm passes through the hills, the rushing water washes all the waste downstream and into the gulf, and the plastic waste, caught in the tides, floats up onto the sand.

To remediate the onslaught of pollution, our local community organizes a Beach Clean Up every season. It is the surfers that see the problem most often and it was the owners of a local surfboard shop who spearheaded our last effort. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 restrictions, the last clean up, a part of a nationwide Day of Awareness, occurred in December.



So now, every time I walk along the beach to surf, I pick up a myriad of items and place them in a heavy duty garbage bag to take back to our collection box. What is most bothersome to me is the presence of micro pieces; plastic battered by the saltwater breaks into tiny beads that can be ingested by fish and birds. I try to scoop up as much as I can, though it is an insurmountable task.

Our municipality has a recycling program that offers participants a selection of organic fruits or vegetables in trade for bringing in recyclables. The stumbling block is that the recycling center is located in the town of Golfito, 40 km away. For those of us with transportation, time, and gas money, it is a great incentive. For others, a liter of gas is a major expense and there is no room in the budget to drive the 80 km round-trip to perform a civic duty, just to receive a few vegetables.

Occasionally the recycling program will visit outlying pueblos like ours. The last time was almost a year ago and it was a great success. A local with a large open bed truck stopped in various neighborhoods to collect materials and bring them to the central collection point.

I like to believe that most people want to do their part for the environment, but I can also understand that many people are struggling. Until recycling and garbage disposal are made simpler and easier, it will not be a high priority.

Pending the time that the municipality can afford trucks that will collect garbage up in the hills; I will keep seeing household waste on my walks on the beach. I will continue to carry a garbage bag and pick up what I can; if I can prevent even a few pounds of plastic waste polluting the ocean, I can more fully enjoy the magical time that I spend floating in it.

*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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by Allen Dickinson



## Street Vendors

There's a big difference between where I used to live in Santa Ana and where I live now, in Ciudad Colón. Here, every day there are vendors coming by the house selling something – from small drinking glasses, to children's coloring books, to homemade pastries or candy, to household items like clothes pins or cleaning brushes. There's too much to list, but hardly a day goes by without someone calling "Upe!" from the gate. Today is a good example; there have been three peddlers by here just this morning. In Santa Ana the only ones that ever knocked on my door were evangelists wanting to save my well-used and threadbare soul. (Well, that's not exactly right, there was one guy that came regularly with excellent ceviche, but I knew him from somewhere else first.)

Generally, each vendor only has one category of item they are selling; one guy has only packages of bread and pastries, another has nothing but coloring books, a third is limited to plastic trash bags. The only two exceptions are the guy that comes by with a pickup truckload of day-old fruits and vegetables (not always pretty but edible – and cheap), and the guy with a freezer truck filled with pints of ice cream and popsicles. There was a lady who stopped by a few days ago that was selling individual BIC pens for 100 colones each, three for 200. Then there's the kid selling a suite of homemade cleaning products packaged in re-purposed soft drink bottles. (BTW, they work quite well!)

Something that's interesting to me is that most of the items being peddled cost the vendor (maybe three



hundred colones (+/-0.50 usd) each, at most, and almost none are being sold for more than 1,000 colones (about \$1.70 usd). Also intriguing is that each peddler usually has only a half-dozen (or less) of any particular item. (The pen lady had a box of 20 she was selling from.) Maybe that's because the vendors are walking (except the vegetable man and the ice cream guy), going from door-to-door to sell something that would be heavier to carry more of. Or, maybe that is all the "stock" they can afford to buy at a time. Each sale may net the vendor as much as 1,000 colones, most less, and I wonder, How many houses do they have to visit to make a decent amount of money? (But then, how much is "a decent amount?") And, how many hours and miles do they walk to make it?

This puts me in mind of those multitudes of vendors standing on street corners or beside the road (sometimes perilously IN the road) selling lottery tickets or cheap items or bags of fruits and vegetables. I often wonder how they can make enough money to make their time and effort worthwhile?

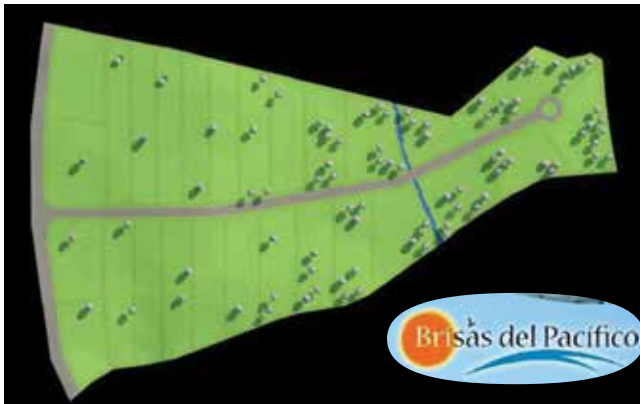
I admire the ambition and endurance (or maybe it's desperation) of all the vendors. I try to buy from them

(that's how I know the cleaning products work) if it is something we might use. The fruits and veggies are all healthy, if not "pretty" (nice appearance is something we Norte Americanos have been convinced by grocery stores back home is a requirement for purchase, but is not exactly true) and some of those homemade bakery products are pretty tasty!

Sadly, since beginning this article, the COVID-19 pandemic has had the side effect of causing a significant reduction of people appearing at my gate. When they do show up, I am trying, even more than before, to buy whatever they are peddling. I know that some of them must be really hurting financially and it's the least I can do. It's not charity, I get something useful or edible for my money, and they get the confidence that their effort is more than begging. That's worth a lot more than the few colones it costs me.



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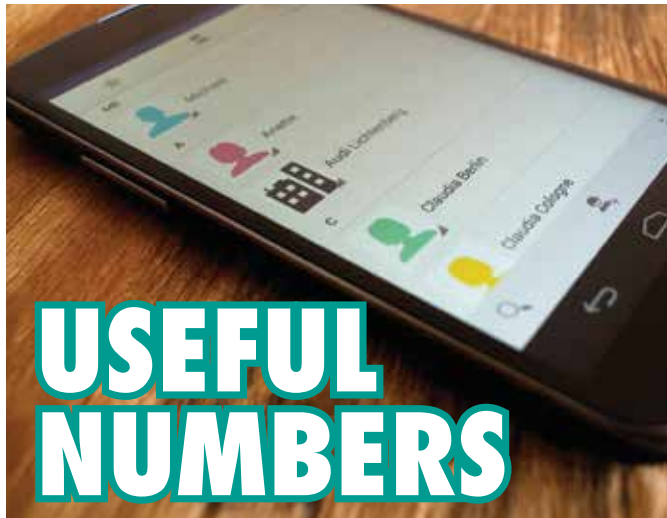
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# USEFUL NUMBERS

## United States of America Embassy

Phone: (506) 2519 2000

**Address:** Vía 104, Calle 98, San José

**Hours:** 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**American Citizens Services:** (506) 2519-2590

**Fraud prevention Department:** (506) 2519-2117

**Duty Officer (after business hours):** (506) 2519-2000  
(Dial zero and ask for the Duty officer)

## United Kingdom Embassy

Phone: (506) 2258 2025

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

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

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica)

**Email:** [costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk](mailto:costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk)

## Canadian Embassy

Phone: (506) 2242 4400

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

**Hours:** 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

**Email:** [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca)

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

## French Embassy

Phone: (506) 2234 4167

**Address:** A022, San José, Curridabat

**Hours:** 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Email:** [a.m.bafrcr@gmail.com](mailto:a.m.bafrcr@gmail.com)

## Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

**Address:** Calle 32, San José

**Hours:** 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Email:** [emb.sanjose@maec.es](mailto:emb.sanjose@maec.es)

**Emergency assistance:** (506) 6050 9853

## Venezuelan Embassy

Phone: (506) 2220 3704, 2220 3708

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

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

**Hours:** 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., 1:30 – 3:30 p.m..

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(These are APPROXIMATE factors, NOT EXACT.)

**Milliliters × .034 = Fluid Ounces**

**Kilograms × 2.205 = Pounds**

**Millimeters × .039 = Inches**

**Meters × 3.28 = Feet**

**Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet**

**Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares**

**Hectares × 2.47 = Acres**

**Kilometers × .62 = Miles**

**Centigrade × 1.8 + 32 = Fahrenheit**

**Liters × .264 = Gallons**

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

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# (24) FROM THE EMBASSIES



## ASK ACS

### COVID-19: Status of Consular Services

In response to significant worldwide challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of State suspended routine consular services at our overseas and domestic facilities in March 2020, while continuing to process emergency and critical cases. The Department took these steps to protect our customers, our workforce, and public health worldwide. As conditions have evolved across the United States and around the world, the Department has initiated a phased resumption of routine consular services on a location-by-location basis, based on public health data and local conditions.

U.S. citizens overseas in need of consular services, or those wishing to apply for a U.S. visa, should check the website of the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to determine its operating status.

U.S. citizens wishing to apply for or renew their passports in the United States should check our “Passport” page on [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) to determine how to apply. The website of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica can be reached at [cr.usembassy.gov](https://cr.usembassy.gov).

### What services can U.S. citizens currently receive at their closest Embassy/Consulate?

U.S. Embassies and Consulates remain open for emergency U.S. citizen services. As U.S. Embassies and Consulates reopen their services to the public in a phased approach, we are prioritizing routine services to U.S. citizens, such as passport services, Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) applications, and voting services. U.S. citizens should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate by following the instructions on the Embassy or Consulate’s website to determine what services are available. The website of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica can be reached at [cr.usembassy.gov](https://cr.usembassy.gov). U.S. citizens should note that the ability of U.S. Embassies and Consulates to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens may be limited by the reduced staffing posture at some Embassies and Consulates.

### Are you conducting prison visits for U.S. citizens in detention? If not, how are you ensuring their fair/humane treatment?

The Department of State has no higher priority than the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens overseas. One of the most important tasks of the Department of State and U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad is to provide assistance to U.S. citizens who are incarcerated or detained abroad. Some countries have suspended all in-person visits to detention centers and prisons, including those by our consular officers, in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. During these suspensions, consular officers have been making efforts to reach out to U.S. citizen prisoners by other means, such as by phone in lieu of in-person consular visits, in the interest of the safety of the prisoners as well as the consular officers. We will resume regular in-person visits to detained U.S. citizens once the suspensions are lifted, in accordance with guidance from health authorities.

### When can U.S. citizens overseas begin applying for their passports/CRBAs?

U.S. citizens overseas may experience delays when applying for non-emergency passport or citizenship services. U.S. citizens overseas should review the website of their nearest Embassy or Consulate for its current operating status. The website of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica can be reached at [cr.usembassy.gov](https://cr.usembassy.gov).

### Passport Services

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect our workforce and customers, we significantly reduced passport operations in March 2020. While our agencies remain open, with reduced staffing, we temporarily suspended expedited passport processing and restricted counter services to cases involving life or death emergencies. As conditions continue to evolve overseas and in the United States, the Department has resumed routine passport processing in phases across the country, while protecting the safety of both our staff and our customers. We are working to increase onsite operations in three phases as part of the U.S. Department of State’s Diplomacy Strong framework, which is informed by guidance from the White House, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Office of Management and Budget, and the State Department’s Bureau of Medical Services. Each passport agency and center’s phased progression is based on



local conditions, and customers can find updates on each agency's status on [travel.state.gov/passport](https://travel.state.gov/passport). Our dedicated team of passport professionals has begun to return to our facilities in substantial numbers, and we have surged staffing and resources from other consular operations to address this critical need.



If there is something one doesn't expect while working in the Embassy it is to suddenly change careers and become a travel adviser. Nonetheless, this was what happened to us, rapidly and unexpectedly, in March 2020. Within a few days all the comforting certainties of travel for our citizens around the world changed suddenly.

Countries protected themselves from potential contagion due to COVID-19. This was made complicated because each country introduced different rules with different variables; some prohibited travellers by point of origin or passport nationality. Some allowed airside transit, others not. Some put a limit on the length of time "transit" could take. There were health checks using different criteria, ranging from certifications, to medical questionnaires and temperature checks.

All this in a matter of days, during which airlines were cancelling flights, some with little or no notice. People were trying to rearrange travel amid collapsing flight schedules, and where refunds were just a distant promise on the horizon.

So it was unsurprising that citizens turned to their Embassies for information. A flurry, and then a blizzard, of enquiries started to arrive through email, telephone calls, and social media, all asking for detailed advice on travel options, and every case was different.

It is a little known fact that Embassies don't usually have a hotline to the individual airlines to obtain information unavailable to the public. Where we have good personal relations with a particular local office, we might sometimes get helpful insights, but by-and-large we are working with publicly available data.

There was some success in trying to give generalised messages and pointers to solve the simpler, commonly asked, questions, but most cases needed bespoke solutions. The requirement to help travellers went on for several weeks at high intensity and now, several months later, we are still helping where we can.

So, now that we've had unexpected experience in the subject, what lessons can we share that we will apply to our own personal travel in the future?

- A good Travel Agent is worth their weight in gold. They do have access to systems that we, mere human beings, do not. Surprisingly, the final costs often look very similar to DIY booking online.
- Check the Entry Requirements and Rules for each and every country on your route. Even short transits. A good source of information is [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) where there is Travel Advice applicable to British Nationals for every country you are likely to travel through.
- If you're not sure who might fly to and from an airport, check the online Arrivals and Departures boards, which will often give some ideas for carriers you hadn't thought of.
- And finally, spend time getting an insurance policy that works for you, will reimburse or rearrange flights without too much hassle...and has a call centre that answers the phone. Time spent on finding a great insurer is never wasted.

**To Do List:**

1. Join ARCR. (✓)
2. Apply for residency. ( )
3. Attend ARCR Seminar for Expats. ( )
4. Relax! ( )

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## 26 AN ADVENTURE IN PARADISE

by Lee Swidler



## Kayaking the Río San Juan; The Trip of a Lifetime Part 2

*The following recounts the author's trip traversing the Río San Juan (which constitutes the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua) with his son and some friends. Part 2 begins on day three as the four men enter the river in their inflatable kayaks, each towing a second kayak with food and supplies, for the first time.*

For the first time since becoming a dad, I found myself in the position of being the weaker link, and sat in the front in our kayak, allowing my son to do the paddling in the rear. My friend Bob and his boy followed the same arrangement. Who were we going to fool; the younger men were obviously going to pull the major part of the weight, so we may as well have accepted reality. I finally felt my 60 years of age.

Within five minutes we were looking for a place to pull off. The kayaks were sitting way too low; Bob was practically lying down backward for lack of back support, and in the rear Cody and Dave barely had their butts out of the water. My old friend Neil, who owns Kayak Jacó and had lent me the kayaks, had advised

me we should not over-inflate them because the hot sun could cause the tubes to expand more and blow out. Apparently we had taken that advice too literally; the boats definitely needed more air. We found a safe place to stop, which fortunately was just out of the view of the unwilling-to-wave Castellians.

A short time later we got back on the river, feeling a bit better. Bob and Dave, however, still had no back support and the boats were still sitting low. We pushed on for an hour or so before being forced to pull over again to figure a way to keep the back supports full of air and to get the boats to sit higher in the water. Bob broke out some five-minute epoxy, the 21st century duct tape, and true to its name, the stuff worked; after just ten minutes



all the back supports held air. We added more air to the floor bladders to boost the kayaks and, after eating a light lunch, shoved off again. Everyone was a bit more comfortable and our attitudes improved immensely.

We started looking for a campsite around 3:30 p.m., but didn't find what we were seeking for another hour. At this point the southern bank of the river is Costa Rica, so we camped on that side. The biggest obstacle to finding a campsite was locating one with a sufficient number of trees for four hammocks. When we finally found a place that met our needs, we landed and pulled all the boats and gear out of the water. It was then that we discovered that the kayak which Bob and Dave were towing was completely deflated on one side. The sun was setting and we had a camp to build and a fire to get going, so we decided to wait until morning to look for the leak.

First we strung up the hammocks, then got the fire going. Historically, Bob and I have always brought some flammable liquid when we go camping, and this trip was no different; a little lighter fluid made the fire start in a whoosh. Cody kept it fed while the rest of us secured things. We dined on rice, foil-pouched Indian cuisine, and warm beer; and finished off dinner with cigars. It was incredible, being riverside at night, secure in our insect-proof hammocks. The moon was close to full and the sky was clear; and lying in the hammocks we could see the whole sky, so there was no reason to put on the rain flies (waterproof flaps that cover the hammocks to keep them dry). We had no problem falling asleep to the sounds of insects, frogs, and night birds. Leaving the rain flies off turned out to be a mistake though, because about 3:30 a.m. the sky started spitting on us. We scrambled (all but Dave, who stayed indoors while Bob covered him up) to rig up the rain flies and we were soon nestled back in.

Coffee was at 6:30 a.m., but by the time we fixed the Banana Boat and repacked it, it was 9:00 – another “early start.”

The day on the river was long and brutal. The current was almost non-existent, and added to this was a strong headwind. Towing the single kayaks behind us was like



pulling anchors and we made slow progress. We thought about the so-called four hours of no current we had been told about, and started joking about having to look for a boat with a motor that could tow us for a while.

Three hours later we passed a small Tico homestead and saw some men standing outside the house. We also noticed they had a boat with a motor. We decided to go over and talk. One of the men, Daniel, spoke some English and told us he lived there with his brother and mother. We asked if maybe he could give us a tow with his boat, but he said he had no gasoline. We wished him well and were soon back on the river.

The wind gave no reprieve. There were swells every once in a while and we were getting beat up. Two hours later, using our GPS, we discovered we had been moving at less than 2 MPH. We had expected to be traveling at least double that and realized there would be no way we would reach Boca de San Carlos, our goal for the day, before nightfall.

A little after mid-day we started to look for a place to pull over to eat lunch and rest. About that time we heard the sound of a boat coming from behind us. By the sound he was much bigger than us and the wake could be dangerous, so we looked to see where he was and where on the river we should be to avoid him.

As the boat approached we could hear him slowing down. We had moved to the side of the waterway to allow him to pass, but he kept coming closer, stopping alongside our kayaks. To our surprise, Daniel showed





his face and asked if we wanted a lift! He had flagged down one of his friends who had a large cargo type panga and had come looking for us.

We hastily loaded all our gear onto his boat then pulled the inflated kayaks up and laid them across the gunwales. All this was done mid-river while the captain controlled the boat to avoid our losing anything or hitting something in the river. The boat had no seats, but there were a few people in hammocks and plastic chairs along for the ride. We arrived in Boca San Carlos in about 30 minutes; it would have taken us another day-and-a-half if we had been paddling!

Once again we had to move all the gear, this time off the boat to shore, along with our empty (but still inflated) kayaks. The town had four buildings: a cantina, a soda, some cabinas, and a police station. We only visited the cantina to buy some cold beer and lunched on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches before again loading the gear onto the kayaks. We were soon floating down the river again.

Just past the mouth of the San Carlos River we hit our second Nicaraguan checkpoint, where we presented our passports and river permit. We also gave the men a few packs of cigarettes (something we had been told they

would appreciate). The gifts were accepted and we were wished a good trip (with an expression that seemed to say, "What was that all about?")

The winds got stronger but we paddled on. By 4:00 p.m. we were quickly running out of steam and had no choice; we began the search for a campsite. We eventually found a large finca (farmland) with lots of cattle. The site was littered with semi-dry cow pies but it was late and we were too tired to move on, so we used the paddles as shovels to tidy things up. A few times some cows came by wanting their campsite back; we told them "Not tonight." and they wandered away.

We were so tired after unloading all the gear and setting up the hammocks that we decided to not cook and just eat some snack food for our dinner. Dave's hunger, however, was stronger than our need for rest, so he cooked for us. By cooking I mean he boiled water to which we added some freeze-dried bags. Mac and cheese never tasted so good. I accompanied my bowl with a slice of salami on rye. (Just like home when I was a kid!) We slept well, falling asleep to the sounds of howler monkeys, insects, and more. This night we put on the rain flies.

To be continued.





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



## (30) SENIOR LIVING IN COSTA RICA

by Katya De Luisa

### Tourists with Dementia

**W**ell, our airports just opened to some countries, excluding the USA, and that means we'll be seeing a few tourists again. Often people in earlier stages of dementia will travel alone, and others, even into mid-stages, will travel with spouses or family, the latter usually booking tours. This article is about that little addressed problem.

Dementia is not just an "old person" condition anymore; early-onset dementia is affecting thousands of younger people in their 30s and 40s and, invariably, tourism also becomes affected. Most people in earlier stages of dementia are usually still quite functional and many like to travel. Unfortunately, the local tourism industry is unprepared for the problems a tourist with dementia might experience, especially if they are traveling alone.

A tour guide here in Costa Rica, specializing in nature tours and treks, told me a story about a group he took to Tortuguero, an isolated part of the country famous for the turtles nesting on the beaches. This area is extremely hot and humid and requires a three-hour bus ride from the capital, then a five-hour boat trip to get there. In the group was a woman with Alzheimer's who was traveling alone, and neither the tour company nor tour guide had been notified – until it was too late.

The lady seemed fine at first, but as the trip became more strenuous she began to have emotional meltdowns and irrational outbursts. Her behavior disrupted everything, group members got angry, and the guide, having no dementia experience, didn't know what to do. The lady would go in and out of these episodes, and when they began the trekking, she broke down on the trail, crying and unable to walk. The guide called his company, who called the lady's daughter (who had booked the tour) and learned that the woman suffered from Alzheimer's. Eventually, they got her to the refuge and back to the city.

There have been several cases of tourists with dementia getting lost in this country; one went into the jungle and was never found. The problem is that when someone is in early stages and in their recognizable home environment with regular routines, they usually manage well, or so it appears. Like this woman's daughter, family and friends

don't understand that dementia symptoms often increase in strange environments. Imagine the difficulty of maneuvering through airports, customs, and baggage. Then, regardless of whether they go on a tour or not, they are in a strange environment with unfamiliar people and hotels, and when in a foreign country, a different language.

The Costa Rica Emergency Dementia Service Facebook group was created to help locate and assist people with dementia emergency situations here in Costa Rica. There have been three instances when a distraught family in another country contacted us to find or check up on their loved one, who was here alone. These situations were resolved by contacting people on Facebook groups in their areas, and luckily the people were found and were able to get help.

Another challenge is that the person suffering dementia usually believes they are fine because they can manage their symptoms when in their home environment. They may be able to book their trip themselves and get through the airports, but when they immerse themselves in unfamiliar, continually changing circumstances, over time, even slight symptoms can increase suddenly.

In Costa Rica, tourism is a major economic resource, and since dementia is increasing worldwide, instances with tourists with dementia visiting our country will increase also. Tour operators need to add dementia stipulations into their tour guidelines and provide basic dementia training to their guides, especially those who take tourists to isolated areas. Usually, these companies don't want the added expense, but that has to change if they are to provide quality and safe service.

Many expats who live here permanently, or semi-permanently, often entertain family or friends who come here to visit. They must be careful to assure that if any of those who suffer some degree of dementia do come, to take adequate precautions to prevent the disease from not only destroying their visit, but to also preserving their own peace and tranquility.

It may be awkward, but asking the visitor (or some related person) about the state of the visitor's mental health, before



they arrive, is an important step. That can save both you and them endless hours of stress and anxiety.

But what if you don't know about the visitor's dementia condition ahead of time? How can a host determine if their guest is suffering from the condition? Here are some clues that can help you identify that person's condition, and decide what steps may need to be taken next:

1. Memory issues (but many of us are having those).
2. Confusion, especially when tired, heated, or in strange environments.
3. Emotional outbursts.
4. Irrational decisions and arguing they are right.

Most likely it will be difficult to ascertain if someone is in the early stages of dementia; even families often miss it. The person may just seem really combative. However, if someone visiting you does exhibit any of the above symptoms of dementia, having an honest discussion with their family is important.

In the meantime, if your guest is exhibiting some of the signs of Alzheimer's, here are some tips for dealing with them:

First, ALWAYS be sure that the person is accompanied at all times and not allowed to wander out into the community on their own.

Second, don't argue with them, especially if they are already agitated. Try to redirect their attention, "OK James, you are right. Hey, let's go make some lunch. I'm hungry, how about you?"

Third, contact their family immediately.

And, if you need help here, contact the Costa Rica Emergency Dementia Service Facebook group to ask what further resources are available.

*Katya De Luisa is an artist, freelance writer, author with 20 years' experience working with those with dementia and their families. She is the founder/director of a non-profit dementia project here in Costa Rica: [www.theinfinitemind.org](http://www.theinfinitemind.org)*



# WHAT CAN ARCR MEMBERSHIP DO FOR YOU?

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



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by Ivo Henfling

## Moving to Costa Rica – Dream or Nightmare?

**Y**ou have decided to move to Costa Rica and live that dream you have had for so long. You see yourself sitting on the covered terrace of your incredible new residence, sharing delicious piña coladas and bocas with your great company, as you enjoy the loveliness of nature or an ocean view.

Is that a dream that can come true? Or will it only appear a dream for the first weeks or years, then turn into a nightmare? If you're renting, that's an easy fix; you can walk away from your security deposit and move elsewhere. But when you're buying, you really want to make sure your life in your dream home doesn't turn into a nightmare.

Who doesn't want to live in the tropics, in such a nice country as Costa Rica? It doesn't matter if you're moving here to retire, to start a business, or to work for a company; the first rule is to Always Do Your Research.

I'll describe four dreams that were shattered because someone didn't follow the rules of common sense: don't run before you can walk, use your head, don't let anyone talk you into things you had not planned, stay on track. And, do the research! The following stories of dreams gone bad are real ones. The first one is my own dad's, in 1979 -1980.

### BUYING A BUSINESS

My parents made a two-week due diligence/vacation trip to Costa Rica with plans of retirement. Sitting on the terrace at the Gran Hotel Costa Rica, enjoying a coffee, they met a gringo, a very nice and amicable person. He was the owner of a spice and tea company and looking for a partner to grow his business. My parents' dream was to have a successful business without hard work and enjoy retirement, and the man's offer fit their plans exactly.

Arriving back home, without doing any further research, my dad wired his new partner \$30,000 to invest in the business. Six months later they arrived in Costa Rica to discover that all the money had been spent; my father's new partner had put a new roof on his house and bought a new Harley Davidson.

Three years later, after trying hard to get the business going and to get along with his partner, my dad decided

to walk away from his investment. Three years after that, their dream totally shattered; they moved to the Canary Islands.

### STARTING A BUSINESS

About the same time our parents moved to Costa Rica, my brother and I, 23 and 25 years old at the time, decided that we also wanted to make the move and be with them. We both had pretty good jobs in Holland, but we didn't have a clue what to do to earn a living in Costa Rica. We didn't have much savings, so we put together a list of ten possible businesses we thought would be good, and sent the list to our parents. One of the businesses was a window cleaning company, and my parents thought it was a great idea, because there were windows everywhere.

Our dream, just like our parents', was to have a successful business and a bright future in our new home country. Before leaving, and without any further research, we went into a three-month training period with a friend's window cleaning company. Upon completion we filled a shipping container with window cleaning equipment and sent it off to our new country.

Arriving in Costa Rica, without speaking a word of Spanish, we tried to convince the Tico business and building owners that they needed to clean their windows at least once a month. Ticos, however, were not interested in having clean windows. In short, after five years of hard work we lost our investment. But, in the process, we gained other important lessons. Do your homework before you start a business and, if you don't speak the language, prepare well before you take the jump into owning a business in Costa Rica.

### HOUSE ON A LEMON FARM

Some five years ago, a couple called me; they were desperate to sell their home. They had fallen in love with, and purchased, a 27-acre parcel of land in a lemon farm near Guayabo, a small town of 3,500 souls at the foot of the Miravalles volcano.

There they followed their dream to build a beautiful plantation-style home in the middle of the lemon



farm. When the house was finished, however, they were bored stiff, did not get along with the neighbors, hadn't learned Spanish, and therefore got screwed by their contractor. When they called me they had ended up pretty much hating Costa Rica. "Please help us sell this property, we're only asking \$650,000!" Today the property has still not sold, and is now offered at \$330,000 (let me know if you're interested). Please, do your research, learn Spanish (and make sure you're friendly with the neighbors).

## MY FRIEND MEMO

Memo was a divorced, ex-KLM airline manager, who retired to Costa Rica at age 65. He soon fell in love with a Tica and, at her urging, without further research into her history, married her. His dream was to be happily married and enjoy his retirement. Sadly, the Tica was greedy and hired two teenagers to kill him so she could inherit his estate sooner.

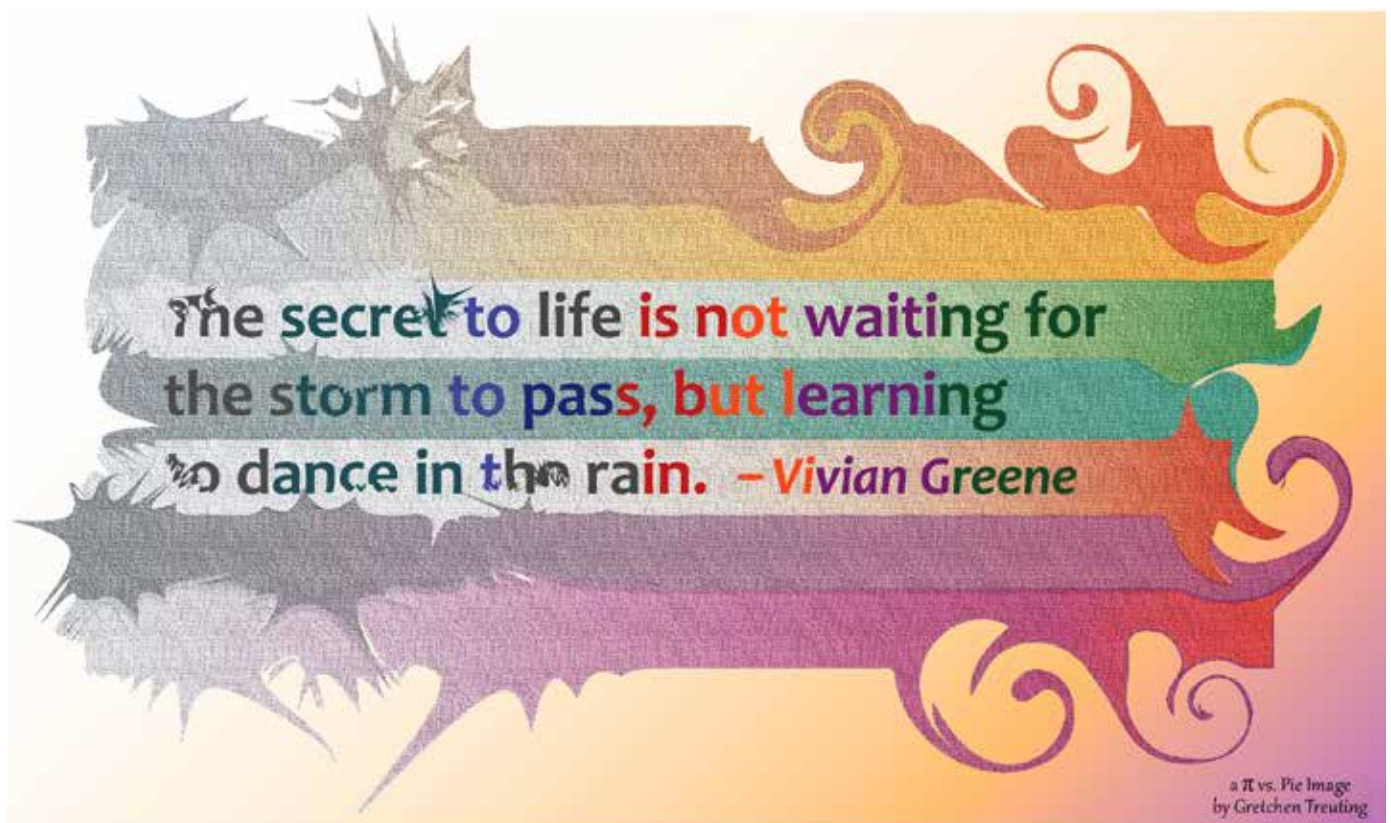
The investigations took over a year, and in the end the wife was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The house, which was owned by Memo's nephew, had been taken over by Nicaraguans who ran it as a boarding house for their compatriots. Unfortunately the nephew passed away before he could recover the house. The woman was released a couple of years ago. She got nothing.

Don't let these stories deter you from your dream. There are well over 60,000 expats from all over the world happily living their dream here in Costa Rica. There are successful business owners, people working for others, or remotely from their tropical homes, and many, many retirees simply enjoying their lives in paradise.

I relate the above stories because they are examples of decisions that were big mistakes; a senseless waste of happiness, money, and life. And they all occurred because the people involved ignored the basic rules: do the research, don't run before you can walk, use your head, don't let anyone talk you into things you had not planned. Stay on track.

I often meet expats who are mad at everyone, except themselves; it's "everyone else's" fault they made the wrong decisions. Don't be one of them. Do your research and inform yourself well before you make important decisions. And, if it involves the purchase of a home or property, hire an experienced real estate expert before you buy.

*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 GoDutch Realty and can be reached at (506) 2289-5125 (506) 8834-4515 or at: [ivo@american-european.net](mailto:ivo@american-european.net)*



## **Seven Questions and Answers about Traveling During COVID-19**

**Q. What will happen to Costa Rican and resident passengers traveling to countries whose borders have been opened when they return to Costa Rica?**

A. Costa Ricans and residents of Costa Rica who traveled to these countries must complete the Health Pass when they return. They will not be asked for proof of a negative COVID-19 test, nor will they be asked to buy travel insurance, but they will be given an order for their home isolation for 14 days.

**Q. What are the requirement for Costa Ricans and residents who return to Costa Rica on humanitarian or repatriation flights?**

A. Costa Ricans and residents of Costa Rica who return to the country on humanitarian or repatriation flights must complete the Health Pass. They will not be asked for proof of a negative COVID-19 test, nor will they be asked to buy travel insurance, but they will be given an order for their home isolation for 14 days.

**Q. Will health insurance and a negative COVID-19 test be required for repatriation flights that continue to be made from other countries after August? Do the rules apply the same for Costa Ricans, residents of Costa Rica, and the exceptions approved by the authorities?**

A. No. Proof or insurance will not be required for passengers on repatriation flights. However, all passengers on these flights must comply with home isolation for 14 days.

**Q. Can Costa Ricans and residents not do home isolation if they have tested negative of the COVID-19?**

A. No. All Costa Ricans and residents of Costa Rica who return to the country must comply with the order for home isolation. If they wish, they can perform a COVID-19 test, but they will still have to complete the home isolation, even if the results are negative.

**Q. What happens if I go out during the days of home isolation?**

A. In accordance with article 378 of the General Health Law, failure to comply with health orders or special or general health measures issued by the Health Authorities, will be fined in the amount of a base salary (currently corresponding to the sum of ₡464,300.00). In the case of measures which order the isolation of people, the fine will be increased to three or five times the base salary, as provided by Law No. 9837 of April 3, 2020.

**Q. Will the exit and re-entry conditions that were in force on August 1, 2020, be maintained for residents of Costa Rica? For example, could a Canadian resident of Costa Rica travel to his home country and return to Costa Rica without losing their residency?**

A. All people who are permanent and/or temporary residents of Costa Rica, who present their current, valid DIMEX card can enter the country as long as their entry is by air from any of the authorized destinations, and as long as they have remained in that country for at least 14 days before traveling to Costa Rica. They will not be allowed to enter Costa Rica by land or by sea.



**Q. As of August 1, 2020, can people with current permanent or temporary residency, and who left after March 23, 2020, reenter Costa Rica?**

**A.** All people who are permanent and/or temporary residents of Costa Rica who present their current, valid DIMEX card, can reenter the country as long as their entry is by air from any of the authorized destinations, and as long as they have remained in that country for at least 14 days before traveling to Costa Rica. They will not be allowed to enter Costa Rica by land or by sea.

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by Ryan Piercy

## The Porcupine

They're small, so cute, and well, not-quite-cuddly – and they are difficult to find in Costa Rica. Called a tree porcupine, or by the much more colorful name, Mexican hairy dwarf porcupine, the local species *Coendou mexicanus* is smaller than its North American cousin, but equally as prickly!

The porcupine is a member of the rodent family and the species found locally grows to between 12-18 inches plus a tail of 8-14 inches. They can weigh up to six pounds and are herbivores, which feast on a diet of young leaves, fruits, seeds and buds. Their heads are light-colored with their body covered in dark hair, which somewhat obscures the short yellowish quills. Their prehensile tail facilitates easy movement among the tree branches. The animals are nocturnal and tend to

favor jungle and woodland areas, such as the many parks in the country.

Porcupines are not aggressive and their quills are purely for defensive purposes, which are only used if the creature feels threatened. The quills, totaling up to 30,000 per individual, also do not “shoot” at victims, but will become impaled if touched or if the porcupine manages to swat the threat with their tail. Of course, this is usually more of a problem for predators or curious creatures, like dogs, but you certainly want to take precaution not to get overly close to one.

The Mexican hairy dwarf porcupine is not found on the threatened list and is located throughout the Americas from Mexico down through Panama, and thus in all areas of Costa Rica. The males are quite territorial amongst each other, but not







toward the females of the species. They are also very vocal and combative during mating season, and generally just a single offspring will result from a pairing. The small ones will receive care for about six months, but actually begin foraging for their own meals within days of birth. Their life span is about eight years.

Though it is possible to see the occasional porcupine in the daytime around the country, from sea level up to about 3,200 meters, being nocturnal and solitary makes this infrequent. For a greater chance of viewing, as well as a potentially safer one, your best option may be at one of the various animal sanctuaries found around the country.

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# (38) PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

by Tony Johnson

## Not Perfect, but Much Better!

*Nobody but you, for all my life (Happy Together, The Turtles, 1967)*

Within the last three months I've fallen in and out of love with three very different women. The first was with a uniquely beautiful, tall, slender, Palestinian doctor. The second was the doctor's opposite, a petite, girl-next-door type in a tiny pink G-string on a Spanish beach. The third was more to the beach-goer's side of personality types, wearing a super tight, short dress and heels. What might these three different characters have in common? All were visually striking, and all "promised" emotional and physical fulfillment.

But I quickly moved on. My attraction was not as fickle as it may seem because the women I "fell for" were actually three carefully engineered movie characters, designed to arouse specific emotions in the audience.

The men who played the lovers of these three women were an Israeli security agent, an American college student, and a Finnish CEO, respectively. So the studios didn't neglect the women in the audience. Let's examine the Finnish love affair more closely, for it reveals how we (men and women) are programmed.

A provocatively attired woman stands on her tiptoes and reaches up to kiss the tall, handsome CEO saying, "I wish I knew you fifteen years ago." referring to the now unhappy fact that she is married to someone else. Her also married boss responds, "Don't worry. We'll be happy for the next fifty years."

The irresistible delusion is that this romantic moment will last forever, and in doing so it is a triumph of fantasy over reality. The scene, designed by the entertainment industry, was created to arouse loving, anticipatory feelings in the audience, just as the inevitable final car chase is contrived to arouse anxiety and tension in the viewers.

Entertainment professionals know us well. Actors, producers, and directors create such feelings because they know we're hard-wired by nature to imagine a wonderful future with attractive potential partners. The promise that with THIS person we shall be supremely happy, is intoxicating and compelling, implying that there will be

NO disagreements, just sublime harmony. But that's not reality, it's a fantasy, one that is impossible to sustain. Why? Because it's much easier to fall in love with a fantasy than to develop love with reality.

### THE PROMISE OF LOVE

However well we know this, we all still enjoy the pretending because those movie scenes represent our deepest needs for love and the promise of a wonderful future. It's a trick evolution plays on us; we are programmed to have an irresistible attraction to each other because it ensures our genes are passed to the next generation. So, when we enter into a relationship with another person, we fantasize a life of perfection, a life without conflict, it's like our mouth watering when the steak arrives. Hard-wired. Would we actually join for life with each other's reality without a period of delusory perfection to seal the deal? Probably not.

After the romance evaporates, the challenge becomes to move past the fantasy and into a sustainable future, to enjoy the benefits of a solid partnership. And nothing makes that harder, nothing bursts the bubble of those delusions more than – conflict.

### REALITY

As we discover the reality of each other – and ourselves – disagreements WILL occur. But, we told ourselves, "Sure there may be some arguments, but we'll easily work through them; we are so much alike." Then we discover we are not really able to complete each other's thoughts, as we imagined during the early romance period, because even if we are similar, we are still very different INDIVIDUALS with different, often clashing, needs, values, and perspectives.

While we dreamt of the perfect connection, actually attaining one is impossible. A LOW conflict relationship, however, is attainable. It is possible to prevent disagreements from becoming disputes, or worse, battles filled with powerful negative emotions



and words which are drenched with personal attacks and counterattacks.

When a disagreement morphs into an all-out conflict, a common strategy is to attack the other's character, personality, and motives. Rather than disagreeing with their ideas, opinions, and beliefs, it then becomes a battle rather than just a simple disagreement. And when that happens, when there are frequent conflicts, we begin the descent into the hell of regular criticism, nagging, defensiveness, stonewalling, and contempt. The latter being the most toxic to the health of the relationship.

Sure, we've all been in, resolved, and moved beyond awful conflicts. Clearly most couples have learned many skills of conflict avoidance, resolution, and management. They might not have achieved the ultimately desired harmony, but they solve most problems and get along well. Isn't that enough? Could be.

## BUT THEY CAN ATTAIN HIGHER

First, be aware that some couples lack the basic conflict resolution skills. Because of that, they actually make things worse, becoming totally trapped in a downward spiral. Their fights become so ugly and toxic that they live in constant anxiety about the next one; dreading the time when their partner becomes yet another threat to their wellbeing. It's like living in a bad

neighborhood where muggings are routine. Conflict resolution doesn't come naturally; it has to be learned through hard experience.

Living under the threat of constant personal attacks, partners in these brutal relationships will develop 24/7 vigilance and defensiveness. And that defensiveness tends more toward counterattack than to calmly present facts and logic. Each assault on the other's character, identity, and worth, only pushes the "down" button to a deeper level of hell. Name-calling, putdowns, screaming, unrestrained degradation, may all feel good at the moment to the person engaging in those assaults, but the results will be disastrous to both; the receiving partner is sure to escalate the heat and volume of the exchanges and thereby also speed the descent into the pit of despair.

What's the secret then of couples who exercise restraint, repair, and resolution instead? They choose "Resolve" over "Win." Because they realize they have a choice in how they respond, they're acutely aware that the long-term stakes far outweigh the short-term benefits of a Win. So, rather than cause lasting damage to the relationship, they choose resolution. They calm themselves to be more rational and thoughtful, preventing a disagreement from becoming worse and starting on the path to a battle. They are deeply aware that if they don't want to be attacked, they must not attack.



It ALWAYS comes down to the sense of self. Theirs AND their partner's. And they KNOW that the best way to protect themselves from attack is to concede where their partner is correct; admitting where one is wrong!

For example, our partner criticizes us for being late. Rather than defending yourself with a counter attack such as, "YOU'RE criticizing ME for being late? What about YOUR lateness, buster?" We grant that they're correct, "You're right. I'm running behind, making us late. I'm sorry." Resolution takes place and the conflict is over.

## WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

One partner realized that defensiveness on their part would have very likely brought on the assault they feared. Whereas, conceding the obvious actually prevents the assault and PROTECTS their overall sense of self. They protected themselves, NOT by attacking, but by conceding where (and only where) their partner was right. By accepting a flaw in ourselves, by accepting responsibility for the problems we cause our partner, we avoid creating a larger dent to our sense of ourselves, and actually improve our sense of interpersonal competence. By deciding that the long-term health of the relationship outweighs the short term benefits of defensively denying our part of the problem, we can defuse conflicts before they become battles.

By staying calm we can realize that our ENTIRE worth is not damaged by an uncomfortable admission. This is difficult because we often believe that ANY shortcoming erases our entire set of strengths. It does not. Actually, making a small concession makes a big improvement in our self in the eyes of our partner, and for ourselves. And, by accepting the responsibility for our actions we acknowledge that we are STILL much, much more than that one flaw, and we can take comfort in our good qualities. If we over-generalize from one shortcoming to our entire being, we do terrible damage to ourselves. And, most importantly, admitting our role in a potential conflict begins to establish a new way of diffusing disagreements before they become wars. It moves our relationship closer to our original needs of a smooth running connection.

But isn't this just a wimpy, appeasing, people-pleasing approach to a relationship? Isn't this just a new version of attaining the ultimate fantasy of a conflict-free connection?

No! Acknowledging our responsibility represents personal strength and strengthens the relationship. It

literally represents a realistic way to treat each other; with truth and honesty. It doesn't promise perfection, only a path to a low conflict, high harmony connection.

Can't it be overdone? Yes, if it's a ONE-SIDED approach where one partner makes efforts to resolve conflicts and the other does not. It's not recommended if it's not reciprocated after a while. And, yes, sometimes there are things which are worth fighting for.

But even there, a change in approach may be in order. No relationship will ever be perfect, or will ever attain the idyllic state portrayed in songs and movies. But the connection can be better than it is now. Much better.

For a discussion about those conflicts that require more than an easy, "I'm wrong," tune in next time. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, give this tip a try.

*Tony Johnson taught a semester-long conflict resolution class and was the campus coordinator of the Dispute Resolution Center at a California State University. He still frequently uses the skills he taught. He can be reached at: [johnson.tony4536@gmail.com](mailto:johnson.tony4536@gmail.com)*

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## ► Alcoholics Anonymous

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

## ► Al-Anon

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

## ► American Legion Post 10-Escazú

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

## ► American Legion Post 12-Golfito

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

## ► American Legion Auxiliary

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

## ► Amigos of Costa Rica

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

## ► Atenas Bridge Club

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

## ► Birding Club Costa Rica

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

## ► Canadian Club

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

## ► Central Valley Golf Association

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

## ► Costa Ballena Women's Network

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

## ► Costa Rica Writers Group

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

## ► Democrats Abroad

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

## ► Domestic Animal Welfare Group Costa Ballena

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

### ► First Friday Lunch

Each month on the first Friday of the month ARCR sponsors a First Friday Lunch at 12 p.m. All are invited to join ARCR officers and others for an informal lunch and BS session. No RSVP or agenda, just good food and meeting new and old friends. Attendees are responsible for their own food and drink expenses. Meetings are at the Chinese restaurant, Marisqueria Mariscos Vivo, located behind the Mas x Menos grocery store located across from the Nissan Dealer near Parque Sabana. Call ARCR (2220-0055) for directions.

### ► Little Theater Group

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

### ► Marine Corps League

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

### ► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

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

### ► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

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

### ► Professional Women's Network

PWN provides its members with opportunities to network with other professional women with the goal of aiding personal and professional development of entrepreneurs, students, and

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

### ► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information email Walter Bibb at: [wwbsurf40@yahoo.com](mailto:wwbsurf40@yahoo.com).

### ► San Vito Bird Club

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

### ► Wine Club of Costa Rica

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

### ► Women's Club of Costa Rica

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

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

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

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

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

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



# BUSINESS DIRECTORY (43)

## Important dates in Costa Rica:

**Monday, September 14th.**  
Independence Day

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

## Funniest One Liners

I changed my iPhone's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

A will is a dead giveaway.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

Haunted French pancakes give me the crepes.

A girl today said she recognized me from the Vegetarians Club, but I'd swear I've never met herbivore

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A.

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

The batteries were given out free of charge.



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# Are you a member of ARCR? Join today!

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- Personal assistance with the application process.
- Legal assistance from attorneys.
- Application for residency from outside Costa Rica.
- Personal escort to Immigration.

### **Seminars on relocating to Costa Rica.**

#### **Discounts on:**

- Insurance (auto, homeowner, trip).
- Group health insurance.
- Legal services packages.
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- After life services.

### **Personal escort services for:**

- Enrolling in the CCSS (CR Social Security).
- Opening a bank account.
- Obtaining a Costa Rican driver's license.
- Obtaining or renewing cédulas.

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For more information, or to enroll online, go to our website at: **[www.arcr.cr](http://www.arcr.cr)**, email us at: **[service@arcr.cr](mailto:service@arcr.cr)**, call ARCR Administration at: **(506) 2220-0055**, or drop by our offices on Calle 42, Avenida 14, San José, Costa Rica (The ARCR office is on the right).

