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ARCR's English Language Magazine

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El Residente

Adventure by Chicken Bus

LEAVING COSTA RICA

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For more information, or to enroll online go to our website at: www.arcr.cr, email us at: info@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.)

* (One hour parking, all others will be towed / Keep an eye on your belongings / Alligators by the estuary / No restaurants nearby)

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

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

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Check our blog on our Facebook site.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Hola Readers! Another two months of the pandemic have passed and all is going well. The ARCR staff is staying healthy and in full operation. The only drawback is the slight inconvenience of necessitating appointments for all activities that require a personal appearance in the office.

One side effect of COVID-19 has been that it has sometimes been more difficult to obtain the information which we need to move or live here. For that reason, I want to call attention to the Across the Board column in this issue. In it we have summarized some of the new laws, and significant changes to old ones, that have been enacted. Check it out.

As usual, this issue also contains some entertaining stories and helpful hints that you will enjoy; Mitzi Stark's article Out and About will give you some ideas about where you can go to combat cabin fever, and A Day in the Life relates some positive personal experiences that occurred entering back in to the economy. (Hint, it includes finding Twinkies!). If you prefer to stay home, in Design Wise Shelagh Duncan has given some hints about furniture that can make a home stay more pleasant. There's more and I'm sure you'll find everything worth your time.

As always, El Residente is looking for new writers to contribute to future issues, so if you think you have something to share, send it in! Send an email to service@arcr.cr, Subject Line, "El Residente," and we'll get right back to you.

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Cover Photo: Janet Losole

ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

IMPORT TAX EXEMPTION As reported last issue, the \$500 USD import tax exemption for items purchased on-line and shipped here, has been discontinued. However, the exemption remains in place for those newly purchased goods travelers bring in with their baggage. The key word is “travelers.” The exemption of the import duties applies to the new items being transported by persons entering the country, whether by air, land, or sea, whose total value is \$500 or less. Be aware that each time the exemption is used, all or in part, the total exemption is considered “used” and isn’t available again for six months. Additionally, tax exemptions for purchases made at the Golfito tax free zone are unaffected by the change.

THE LAW TO ATTRACT NEW RESIDENTS HAS PASSED As mentioned in a previous issue, a law designed to attract new residents to Costa Rica has been signed into law by President Alvarado. Aimed at persons considering relocating here, the law has multiple points:

One part, aimed at those seeking to qualify for residency through investment, reduces the required minimum capital investment from \$200,000 to \$150,000.

A second part specifies that money earned abroad, such as a pension, would not be taxed by Costa Rica.

Thirdly, another part of the new law which affects all those who wish to move here, allows the one-time tax-free importation of vehicles for personal or family use, and for importing household goods. There is also a provision in the law that allows those items to be replaced tax-free if they are lost or stolen. Those who qualify can also import “up to two land, air, or sea transportation vehicles, for personal or family use, free of all import, customs and value added taxes.”

Another part of the law reduces taxes on property purchases.

The law is an effort to attract new residents and their money, which will generate sales and employment and assist the country’s financial recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

DIGITAL NOMAD LAW PASSED A law designed to attract remote workers to Costa Rica, who are often

called “digital nomads,” has passed. (Remote workers are those whose employment is conducted from a distance via the internet, mail, or telephone.)

The new law grants qualifying persons year-long visas, allows them to stay for one year, extendable for a second year. (Previously digital nomads were considered tourists and had to leave the country within 90 days.) Additionally, digital nomads will be allowed to open local bank accounts and operate a vehicle using a driver license from their home country.

For more information about the requirements to qualify for the Digital Nomad Visa, contact your attorney.

***NOTE,** persons who wish to utilize the new law to “Attract New Residents” or the “Digital Nomad” law, should be aware that the application of these laws may not occur for some time. Although the laws have been passed, before their full implementation can be take place the various affected governmental departments must interpret the meanings of each law and resolve multiple questions about the details of its application. For instance, the departments must determine: What are the rules and processes to request/grant an exemption? Which department(s) are authorized to grant the exemption? In the case of bringing in a vehicle, does the exemption apply only to new vehicles, or older ones also? How much older; is there an age limit for vehicles allowed to be imported duty free? Is there a time limit that must transpire before an exempted vehicle can be sold? Upon sale, will either the importing owner or the new owner be required to pay the import taxes? And many more. Therefore, expect delays before the final implementation of these new laws take place*

PROPERTY TAXES GOING UP To keep the Costa Rica government going during the COVID restart, President Alvarado negotiated a program for economic reactivation with the International Monetary Fund. The final agreement with the IMF was that it would loan Costa Rica \$1.75 billion USD, an arrangement that the Asamblea approved and the government signed. A provision of the accord requires Costa Rica to increase property taxes on high-end housing units, including both single family homes and apartment complexes. The new tax rates start at 0.25% of the property value and are progressive, climbing in six steps to a maximum of 0.55%. Check with your accountant to see if the new law affects you.

CORPORATE NAME CHANGE For those who noted the change on the cover and in the masthead, in response to a need to update and modernize the corporate structure, ARCR Administration has recently changed its business name to ARCR CR CORP SA. For practical purposes, only the name has changed, everything else remains the same.

SEMINARS RESUMING ARCR conducted a two-day seminar for those considering moving to Costa Rica, on August 26 and 27. This was a TRIAL to determine if the popular seminars can be resumed. The conducting of future seminars will depend on the state of current health conditions, and if viable, the dates and locations will be announced in advance. The seminars are also available to those who have already moved here and need updates on laws, procedures, resources, etc. Reservations and vaccinations are required for attendance. If you are interested in attending one of the future seminars, send an email to the ARCR Office at service@arcr.cr and you will be placed on the announcement list.

NEED TO RENEW OR OBTAIN A COSTA RICA DRIVER LICENSE? A recent article in the Tico Times (August 19, 2021) reported that an investigation by Channel 7 (Teletica) has found that appointments for driver licenses may be being sold. A copy of the complete article follows for your information.

"A series of reports from Teletica have detailed the illicit business involved in securing an appointment with Costa Rica's Roadway Safety Council (COSEVI).

"Every month, thousands of Costa Rican citizens and residents complain they cannot get an appointment for a license procedure on the platform administered by COSEVI. This is in part because an illegal business of selling appointments moves millions of colones a month, Teletica found.

"In many cases, Costa Ricans decide they have no choice but to pay an unknown third party between 10,000 and 30,000 colones (up to about \$50) for access to an appointment.

"Some appointments are even advertised in the comments sections of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MOPT) Facebook page. MOPT says it can't delete those comments due to free-speech concerns.

"COSEVI has denied reports that so-called gavilanes are hoarding and reselling appointment slots, but MOPT says it may file criminal complaints against those suspected of the activity.

"One of the most-common COSEVI procedures for new Costa Rica residents is the homologation of their foreign driver's license so they can operate a motor vehicle here.

"For a homologation appointment, you must make an appointment. Go to <https://servicios.educacionvial.go.cr/Formularios/SolicitarCitaTramite> to do so (though, of course, there may be no appointment slots available).

"Here is what you'll need to have:

- Your foreign driver's license. It must be unexpired and in good physical condition. Also bring two photocopies of the front and back of it.
- Your cédula or residency card, which must be in good standing. Also bring two photocopies of the front and back.
- Your passport, which must demonstrate you've remained in Costa Rica for at least three months and one day. Bring two photocopies of your passport (including the photo page and the page with your entry stamp).*
- Results of your medical exam, or dictamen medico. This can be completed in the 180 days prior to your trip to COSEVI in clinics across the country, many of which are concentrated around COSEVI offices.
- A translation of the foreign license, if it is in a language other than Spanish (yes, even English). The translation must be from an official translator. Click here for a list.
- Original marriage certificate (and two copies) if the surname(s) on the license differs from your legal name."

Thanks to the Tico Times and Teletica for this information, The complete article can be found here: <https://ticotimes.net/2021/08/19/pay-for-play-the-underground-business-of-costa-rica-license-appointments>

PLEASE NOTE that a valid residency card (aka DIMEX card or cédula) is required to obtain a Costa Rica driver license. Cédulas are ONLY available to those persons who have completed the residency application process and have been granted residency. Those persons in Costa Rica in "Tourist" status are NOT eligible to apply for the license. If you need an appointment to convert a foreign license or to renew a previously issued Costa Rica driver license, ARCR can assist you. Send an email to service@arcr.cr to begin the process.

NEW Catastrophic Insurance Plan

Available through INS Costa Rica!
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Sonia Gómez García

Licencia número 08-1271

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Available in ARCR's Insurance Office
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ADVENTURE BY CHICKEN BUS

7

by Janet Losole



Part 5: Leaving Costa Rica

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

Editor's note: After 16 months in Costa Rica, the Losole family heads back to home in Canada. But before making the journey they explore some last sites in Costa Rica and then head off for a quick pass through some other Central American countries.

The school year in Costa Rica is divided into two chunks; January to July, then after a "Summer Break" period, in August, classes resume until December. With summer and the need for another border run approaching, my writing nook became covered with maps and notes scrawled on scratch pads outlining ideas for a detour south through a couple of Costa Rica's National Parks.

"How would you feel about going back to Panama?" I asked the gang as we ate supper on the terrace. "We can stop off at

Manuel Antonio National Park then head to a small town called San Vito to hike the Wilson Botanical Gardens. From there we can cross the border at Río Sereno."

Everyone agreed that sounded like a good plan.

The Río Sereno border post was deserted and aptly named, as it turned out. No vendors, no hawkers, no money changers, no chaos. At the Imigración window Lloyd was told to walk down the hill, enter Panama, go into the grocery store, buy four tourist cards, walk back up the hill, enter back into Costa Rica, and present these cards to the official.

From the border, reaching the small community of Boquete required a detour to the city of David, where

I bought five copies of the iconic Condorito comics to reinforce the girls' Spanish.

In Boquete, I spied a leaflet advertising a monkey sanctuary called Mono Feliz that offered accommodations right on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. We learned that the only route to the sanctuary was via a vegetable truck. Whatever.

The instant she jumped from the truck, Natalie was greeted by a red squirrel monkey who launched himself onto her neck. John, the owner of Mono Feliz, welcomed us and introduced us to Mickey, who had been adopted as a baby after he was orphaned. He possessed human-like characteristics, right down to the tiny hands, dirty fingernails, and thumb sucking, and the girls studied every inch of him as he clamored over their arms and necks. As he sat on Natalie's shoulder with one hand clamped around her neck, with the other he snatched a dragonfly from the air in mid-flight and bit down on it, ripping its head off with one chomp as if it were a piece of celery.

John said, "I'm slowly reverting the land back to its wild state." And true enough he was; each outbuilding was cleverly hidden by foliage and neatly groomed dirt paths, stained only by splotches of banana poop, linking them together.

The next day, I decided to do some laundry and John provided small buckets for guests to use. As I picked one up, Lloyd said sharply, "Drop the bucket and back away!" A giant red tarantula with long, thin, hairy legs was clinging to the underside. Lloyd slid the pail over to the jungle with his foot and flicked the spider off with a leaf. In response, it reared up on its haunches in attack position.

"Lloyd!" I cried. "Get a stick!"

He came back with the proverbial ten-foot pole and, in keeping with his Canadian upbringing, slap-shot the monster into the wild.

After three days of dodging spiders and badly-behaved monkeys, we popped the plugs of the air mattresses, packed our things, and said goodbye to our host. It was back to the vegetable truck.

"You get the kids seated, and I'll handle the packs," Lloyd said as we climbed into the truck. Natalie burrowed onto a bench seat between two young women and Jocelyn draped

herself over a sack of avocados. I stood the entire two hours of the ride, along with dozens of others, clinging to an overhead bar. As we went down the road, I noticed several school children with the pants of their uniforms rolled up to the knees, walking barefoot to school in the surf. The presence of an indigenous population was evident everywhere, and in the truck a toddler rode the full two hours clutching the brightly embroidered dress of his Ngobe mother. Lloyd was dangling out the back with the other men, riding firefighter style while gripping the external steel frame with his fingernails.



After crossing back into Costa Rica, we were greeted with the usual deplorable roads and appalling condition of the chicken buses – gaps in the floor opening straight down to the highway below and seats that were not fastened down.

When we arrived at our village we were tired, hot, and a little grouchy. It all melted away when we were greeted by, "Hello Teachers!" from the townspeople who saw us return with the girls.

Then, Lloyd stopped dead in his tracks. "Where's the bum bag with the mp3 player in it?"

I wracked my brain and looked at him gravely, "I left it on the bus."

That bus now harbored all our favorite music recorded on our mp3 player, AND the keys to our villa. Paola, our landlady, let us in with her spare set of keys.



The next day, while Lloyd did laundry and the girls rode around on their bikes, I boarded the 12:30 bus to Quepos. I arrived at 2:30 and sprinted to the bus company's office to pick up our mislaid items which were, amazingly, there; I had only to introduce myself and ask for my paquete and it was given to me. I then had to dash back to the terminal to catch the last bus departing at 3:00.

We resumed our regular lives under rainy skies. We had fostered a strong core of friendships, flitting here and there, kayaking at Playa Agujas with our friends Neil and Yasmin who owned Kayak Jacó, or strolling around town to see friends. But it was time to go home; Lloyd's second leave of absence was half over and we wanted to see more of Central America.

We reduced our possessions to prepare for the strenuous trek north through Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico. Lloyd informed the school that he would not be renewing his contract, and I said goodbye to my night school students who quickly arranged a farewell party. Manuel, one of my students who owned a restaurant and offered to provide the food, strode through the doors triumphantly with pizza and a few cold beers. It was a bittersweet moment, leaving these wonderful people behind yet looking forward to another adventure.

Before leaving I popped in to see one of my students, Valeria and her chubby baby, Luis. Nearby, a classmate of Natalie's named Kevin was rolling his trucks around in the dirt as I described to Valeria our plans to travel through the rest of Central America.

Kevin, still wheeling his trucks around, asked, "You're leaving?"

"Yes," I said.

He stopped and looked up at me. "When are you coming back?"

I fought back the tears and swallowed hard. "I don't know."

After Christmas break, we entered Nicaragua on the first leg of our trip home. We were entering a new world. The infrastructure of Panama and Costa Rica disappeared; instead we witnessed a nation of contrasts, dominated by destitute conditions where people eked out a living under an unforgiving sun.

Our first stop was Granada, a beautiful colonial city, and made a list of must-sees: youth orchestral performances, cigar rolling workshops, fortress tours. Granada's majestic orange cathedral sat directly in front of the shady Parque



Central, and beyond the park stood our lodging, the Hotel Plaza Colón, floored with red and white Moorish tiles. There is a good tourist trade in Granada and horse-drawn carriages jockeyed to take newcomers on tours of the city. During the day the plaza swelled with ice cream vendors and merchants selling handicrafts. It was enough for a body to shout their enthusiasm to the skies so I thought, “What the hell,” and belted out the words to the classic “Eres Tu” as it played over a loudspeaker, while the girls, in total mortification, pretended to not know me.

The city’s deteriorating infrastructure was impossible to ignore. Water and electrical outages occurred every day. Staff at hotels, museums, and restaurants filled garbage cans with water every morning, and that was all they had for the day. I expected the girls to learn about this facet of life. “Watch how the women wash the dishes,” I said. “Fill up this small bucket with water from the garbage pail and pour it into the sink.”

In Leon, we visited Our Lady of Grace Cathedral, which was undergoing major renovations. The young woman at the ticket counter perked up when she saw us. Eager to show off her English, she told us we would have to wait a few minutes because, “The lady? She is sweeping the floor.” She used her two arms to make full circles as if churning butter as she gave us strict instructions to avoid the delicate



domes of the church, admonishing us with a wagging finger and an impressive elongation of rolling “r”s. “But rrrememberrrr. Do not walk on de domes.”

Hoping to learn more about the Contra war, we joined dozens of laborers aboard a chicken bus traversing a lonely stretch of highway en route to Estelí. We passed people seeming to lead lives of desperation on the parched land. The shoulders of the road were baked dry and tumbleweeds bounced across the paths of boys on horseback, rounding up skinny cattle. We were slack-jawed at people riding on top of tractor trailers, holding down tarps and eating their lunch as the truck hurtled down the highway.

In Estelí, we settled into a rustic motel and Natalie asked, “Can we get pizza tonight?”

“Well, there is a pizza joint recommended here in Lonely Planet,” Lloyd said, so we went.

Later that evening, when I tried to get the girls settled into bed, Natalie squirmed and complained. “My stomach hurts.” At that moment, Lloyd emerged from the bathroom and announced, “I’ve got diarrhea.”

After a fitful night’s sleep there was nothing to do but get up. I brushed Natalie’s hair up into a ponytail. “Are you feeling better?” She nodded and took her breakfast outside to eat at the table next to Jocelyn.

I said to Lloyd, "Have you noticed the image of a young woman, rifle slung over her shoulder, beaming at the camera, baby attached to her breast?"

"Yes. I've even seen T-shirts with that image on it."

I said, "Let's see if the Gallery of Martyrs and Heroes has more information."

At the museum a blown-up version of the image called "La Miliciana" looked down on us from high up on the wall. "She was fighting with her baby?" Natalie asked.

"I'm not sure," I admitted. "Maybe the grandmother took care of it while she was fighting."

"What if the mother died?"

"I think lots of mothers and fathers died."

Jocelyn came over to us. "Did any children die?"

"Most likely."

From the look on her face, I think at that moment she matured by ten years.

We crossed into Honduras and immediately boarded a bus bound for Danlí. The driver gunned the accelerator when we were barely seated and I worried about Jocelyn's stomach as we swayed violently to the left and right. A few minutes later he came to a back-breaking stop in a dusty village and bolted off the bus, followed by the passengers.

"Probably has to go to the bathroom," Lloyd reasoned, and after passengers filed back onto the bus, our driver returned, punched the gas pedal and sped off. We caught sight of a printed sign behind his seat that read, roughly translated: If you wish to vomit, please request a bag from the driver.

Danlí was a layover, nothing more. We were aiming for a lodge on the outskirts of the lake town of Peña Blanca. Tranquility sank into my bones when I spotted the lodge; the grounds were exquisite, featuring a swimming pool fringed with heliconia, bougainvillea, and hibiscus. In our cabin Lloyd turned on the suicide shower and placed his upright palm under the spray.

"Oh!" he shouted.

"Electrocution?" I asked.

"No," he laughed. "Scalding hot."

I scooped the girls up into my arms and jumped up and down. "Hot water!" I cried, tossing them on the bed. I dove in between them, covering my ears to their shrieks of laughter.



Natalie turned over and pointed at the ceiling. "Wow, that's a big spider."

"Lloyd! Tarantula!"

"Oh, I forgot to mention. The owner told me when he was clearing the land; he uncovered a massive tarantula colony."

My top lip curled in revulsion, and I knew there was only one thing to do. "I'll meet you at the restaurant. I need beer."

The next day we visited the spectacular Pulhapanzak Falls. Trundling along in the bus I saw campesinos toiling on farms terraced against the rolling green countryside. I felt like I had stepped back in time watching young boys looking like Huckleberry Finn in threadbare trousers cinched at the waist with rope and wearing straw hats, straddling burros. We stopped occasionally to pick up passengers and in one town, at the very cusp of the main road, a woman, expertly illustrating the concept of "location, location, location," sold beer and gallo pinto from a stall erected from cinder block and corrugated metal. The bus honked its arrival and three men swigged the last of their beers, paid up, and hopped on the bus.

The falls seemed to erupt out of nowhere, as if a giant faucet was turned on full blast from behind the jungle foliage. Shouts and whistles rang out from a group of American college students who had made the daring trek to the top and lined up to fling their bodies out and over the falls, plunging into the river below.



We left Peña Blanca on a beautiful Sunday morning and headed for the coastal town of Omoa. There, all we were charged was ten dollars a night for a large, empty room. We each staked out a corner and organized our individual possessions – me stacking travel guides and maps beside my pillow, the girls zipping open their toy pouches to unleash imagination into kingdoms. Lloyd pumped up the air mattresses.

After a week in Omoa, we boarded the weekly ferry to Dangriga, Belize. From there we would head to Guatemala. The girls knelt on the bench seats of the ferry to peer out at the sea. Not long afterwards we entered open water and the boat pitched violently, initiating a fit of giggles from the girls. But within minutes they were green.

The deckhand motioned emphatically for all passengers to slide carefully along the benches to the stern. The bow was rising and falling so viciously we were centimeters away from smacking our heads on the ceiling. My heart raced. Jocelyn became overwhelmed and the deck hand hauled her like a sack of potatoes to the outer deck where she could vomit in privacy. They were followed by a staggering Lloyd who was unable to transfer her for fear of smashing them both into a steel frame or dumping her into the lap of a passenger.

Natalie and I clung to each other – me, looking desperately for the horizon, she, exerting a vice-like grip on my hand. After about thirty minutes she wanted to lie down, which she did, and then promptly went to sleep. I couldn't even help her negotiate a comfortable position as my breakfast was at the brink. The deck hand dashed over to help her lie

down then stayed by her side so she wouldn't fly off at every bump.

After what seemed like a thousand and one hours, I saw a break in the clouds and I chanced a look forward. There, before us, lay Belize. Lloyd and I barely spoke a word to each other. "I can't talk about this right now," I muttered.

What could be said? We were safe. Hairly moments aside, we were together doing what we had dreamed of doing. The Travel Team had gained another notch on the belt of life.

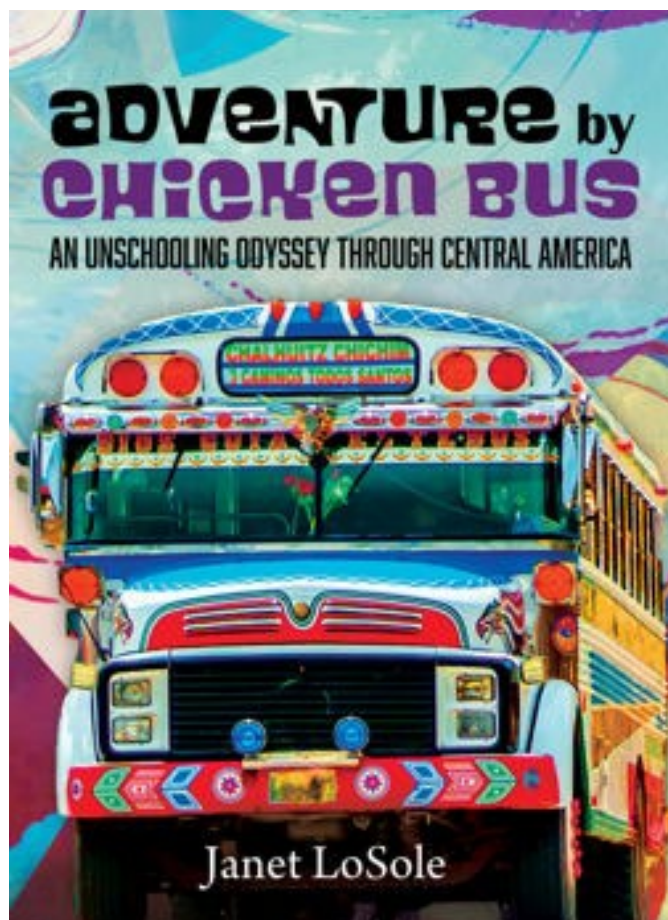
To be continued.

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

book about their travels at:

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

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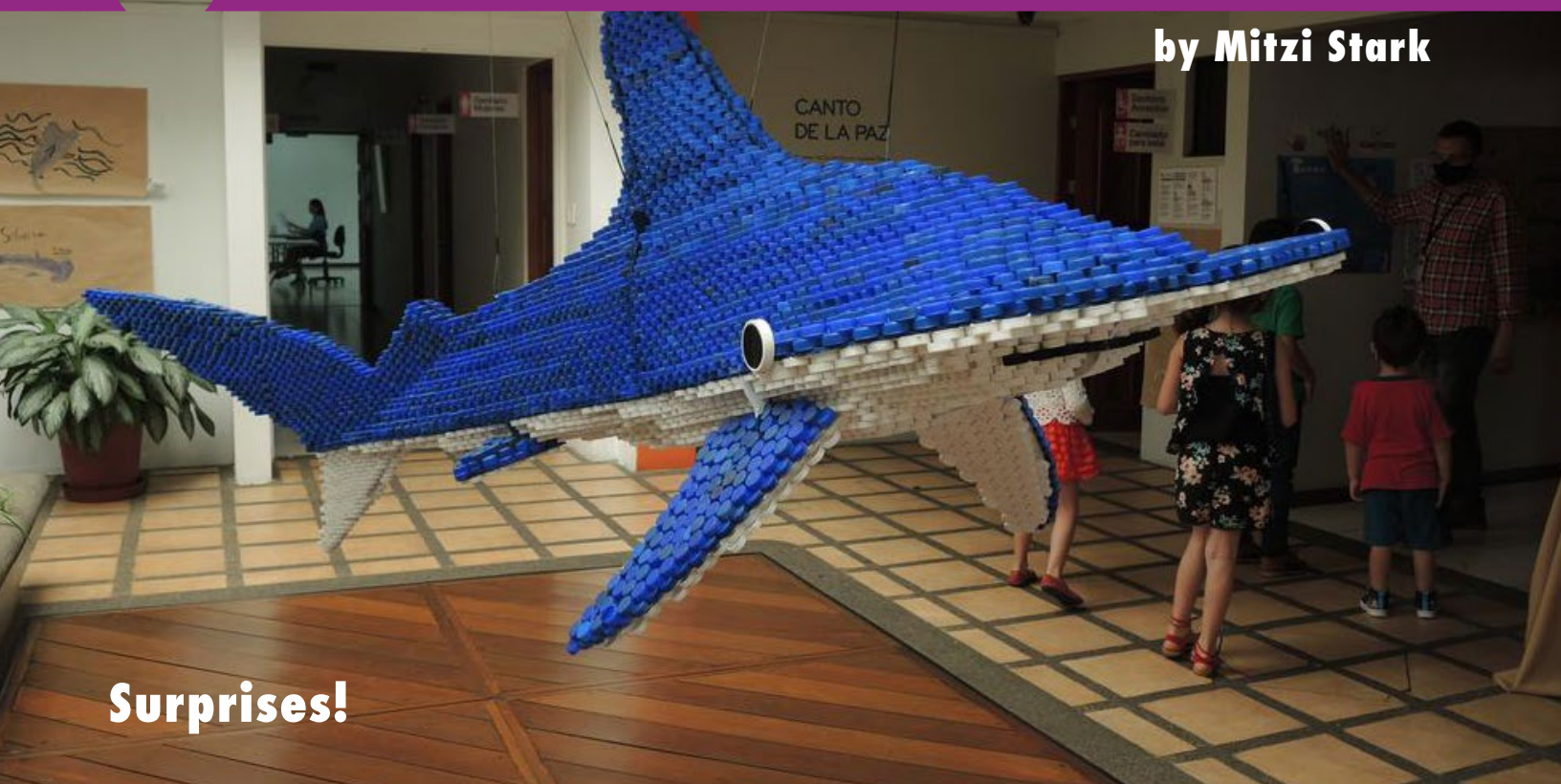
The Association of Residents of Costa Rica is dedicated to serving expats from all over the world who are interested in this beautiful country. We can answer all your questions about life in this tropical paradise, AND help make YOUR transition of moving here **simpler, easier, and smoother**. ARCR provides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

- Assistance in applying for Costa Rica residency.
- Help with obtaining a Costa Rica drivers license.
- Guidance in opening a Costa Rica bank account.
- Group rates for national health insurance.
- Expert information on moving and shipping household goods.
- References to proven businesses who can assist arrivals obtain desired products and services.
- Discounted general medical services (by appointment).
- Comprehensive two-day seminars on living in Costa Rica.
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by Mitzi Stark



Surprises!

Shark story Centro Cultural Figueres Ferrer Bottle cap shark

Costa Rica is full of surprises. Imagine walking in a door and coming face-to-face with a ten-foot long hammerhead shark!

The shark, named TIBU, is hanging from the ceiling near the entrance of the Figueres Ferrer Cultural Center in San Ramón. Made of bottle caps, it was designed to startle visitors; to make us aware of the need to protect our seas and waterways. The 31,000 bottle caps used were all gathered from Costa Rica's rivers and shores. Children visiting the shark can make their own drawings of marine life; their versions of turtles, starfish, whales, fish, and aquatic plants fill their artwork, which is added to the display.

Jason Mendez, a 34-year-old engineer, diver, conservation activist, and founder of the One Hand Foundation, a conservation project, created and designed the set. The display shows that even in the current, limited environment, there are activities that we can enjoy when we need a getaway. The bottle cap creature held sway at the cultural center in San Ramón for a month and is now on display at Parque Marino del Pacifico in Puntarenas for a year. See their Facebook page for information on hours and cost.

* * *

Another day, another surprise at the Figueres Ferrer Cultural Center! This time it was a display of orchids, not real ones, but brilliant photos taken at Lancaster Gardens and brought to San Ramón. There was also an art show of Costa Rican birds in another gallery. The cultural center is in the heart of San Ramón and is a gem for art, history, culture, even food shows, plus there is a permanent picture history of José (Pepe) Figueres, three time president of Costa Rica and founder of the 22nd



Shark story Centro Cultural Figueres Ferrer - Jason Mendez talks to young visitors

Republic (1948), who lived in the building in his growing up years. Located in the heart of San Ramón across from the side of the big church, it is free and offers comfortable seating while observing the galleries. Don't forget the health rules; masks and hand washing at the entrance. Check their calendar on Facebook for activities.

The Costa Rican Tourist Institute lists 32 regional museums, large and small, scattered around the country. Plus, there is an extensive list of cultural centers which specialize in local areas. Hours may vary and some are closed for now, so I will start with the Juan Santamaria Museum in Alajuela, because it's in my neighborhood. It's FREE and I can walk in and look at the latest exhibits whenever I'm in town. And there's always something new!

The Juan Santamaria Cultural and Historic Center in Alajuela was once the army headquarters and the city jail, and parts of the original structure, the barred doors, paving stone floors, turrets and balconies overlooking the central park across the street, are part of its history and are fun to explore. "Soldiers lived and trained here, from about 1870," says historian Marco Garita. "The army was made up of 400 soldiers and the museum's central plaza was the parade ground. Recruits were easy to find because the army gave them education and social mobility. Music also attracted recruits because military bands were famous." Costa Rica abolished its army in 1949.

The museum is dedicated to Costa Rica's 1856 triumph over William Walker and his adventurers, denying them claim to the five Central American republics as slave states for the United States. In those turbulent years both England and the United States vied in taking over Central America. Costa Rica's citizen soldiers fought

back Walker's invasion at Santa Rosa in Guanacaste, and pushed the enemy army back to Nicaragua where Juan Santamaria, a private from Alajuela, torched enemy headquarters and ended the siege. His image is often seen with a torch in hand.

Uniforms, rifles, swords, medals, documents from the war, furniture and doll-size dioramas, give us a picture of Costa Ricans back then. Temporary exhibits may include traditional dresses, religious history with statues from the colonial era, photo exhibits, and cultural activities. The museum is open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission is FREE. Remember to use your mask and gel, and groups are limited to five persons.

Finca Alsacia, located in the high hills (not quite mountains) on the way up to Poas volcano, is a Starbucks Visitors' Center. There, amid nature's greenscape, is a surprise; a retreat, a getaway, a real, true coffee break. The cool, fresh air is scented with coffee, but that's natural, this is coffee country!

The finca, named for the province of Alsace Loraine in France, homeland of the original owners, is a 600-acre coffee farm and experimental station for Starbucks, the iconic coffee company. Admission is FREE and the views are terrific with benches to sit and admire the view, but you won't want to miss having a cup of coffee here. My morning snack was a good-sized black coffee and a pie-sized chocolate chip cookie, ₡4,000. With the panoramic view from the balcony I chose a rocking chair and dawdled down to the last drop and crumb while gazing at the waterfall and the extensive greenery.

Finca Alsacia offers an hour-and-a-half tour of the whole coffee process (\$20 USD for nationals and residents,



Museo Juan Santamaria - The museum was once the army's quarters



Finca Alsacia - Look for the tower to find the entrance



Finca Alsacia - Entrance to Finca Alsacia



Finca Alsacia - View from Finca Alsacia

\$15 USD for senior citizens) which includes coffee and a bandana. Reservations are needed for the tour. The entrance and parking area are easy walking and cheerful looking. The finca is located in Dulce Nombre de Fraijanes on route 702, the road which goes to Poas volcano. The highway from Alajuela is excellent, but if you like to adventure by bus, like I do, so that you can look around, read signs, and not get muscle cramps from mountain driving, Coopetransasi buses go from Alajuela's cemetery park to Jaulares every hour and stop at Finca Alsacia on the way. It's cool up there in the almost-mountains, so be prepared with a jacket, mask, and gel. Finca Alsacia is on Facebook.

These surprisingly fun places let you take a break, get out, and see something without spending too much time, too much money, or too much energy. I like to adventure but I also like to get home in time to feed my cats and dogs and watch the evening news. As of now, many locations and activities are still uncertain, but I promise more surprises for the next issue.

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by Allen Dickinson

Good Things II

My home is nearly 50 years old. Its walls are constructed with the lower one meter of cement and above that the structure is hardwood, which, termites will not eat. The bathroom walls, however, are sheathed in a soft wood.

One morning, as I brushed my teeth, I noticed the sink was pulled away from the wall. Investigation revealed that, over time, the frequent splashing of water from the sink had taken a toll on the wall, and it no longer had the structural integrity to hold the screws for the bracket which holds the sink.

I thought about the situation and, rather than tear out and replace the small area of rotted wood, I decided I would simply cover the area with some ceramic tiles, creating a nice backsplash for the sink. Not only would that prevent future damage from splashing, it would provide a surface to which the sink could be reattached with structural adhesive. The next step was to find suitable tile.

A trip to the big box home construction materials store in Escazú was a bust. Though they sold suitable ceramic tiles, they would only sell me a complete box of 50 pieces. I didn't need a whole box, just a few pieces, so I headed out to find a different source.

In Lindora, there is a large, modern store which specializes in nothing but ceramic tile, so I went there. As I wandered among the beautiful displays (who knew there were so many designs, colors, sizes, of tile!). I was approached by a salesperson to whom I explained what I wanted. He directed me to a display I hadn't seen and the tiles were perfect!

At this point, I need to explain that the store displays are comprised of vertical panels about three feet wide by four feet high. Each panel contains multiple tiles and gives a nice example of what a particular pattern would look like installed. What I didn't know at the time was that the tiles in those displays are held in place by pieces of hook-and-loop (aka Velcro) material glued to the tile's back side.

The design of the tile we were looking at was exactly what I wanted; white and about two feet long by eight inches wide. Two of those mounted horizontally would create the perfect backsplash. But, the salesman said, they too only sold tile by the box.

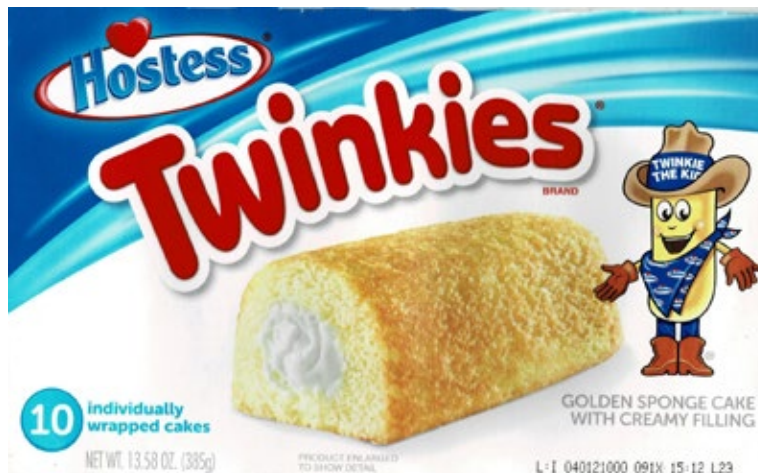
When I explained to the salesman that I only needed two of those size tiles, he looked at me a moment then, to my great surprise, reached out and pulled one of the tiles off its Velcro attachment on the panel, handed it to me, and with a wink removed a second one.

With the two tiles in hand we headed for the door, where we put them in my car. As the

salesman turned to return inside, he grinned and said, "¡Feliz Navidad!" and walked away!

My bathroom sink now has an excellent backsplash!

Many people think the stores named Pequeño Mundo (Small World) only sell children's things, as I did before I went there. It's a natural assumption since the name is the same as the attraction at Disney World, but it is much more than that; it's a goldmine of other things.



True, Pequeño Mundo, with several stores throughout the country, sells a lot of cheap Chinese made things, but they have US items too. I recently found, of all things, boxes of Twinkies there! I never thought I would see them again, and had found an acceptable substitute local product, Submarinos, but they are nothing like the real thing! I bought two boxes!

They also carry some quality US made products, as well as things from other countries around the world (I've found cookies made in India there – India!). They sell food items (they have just added some large coolers of meats, cheeses, and frozen food items at the Highway 27 store) and have a selection of some US brand packaged items, like salad dressings, pasta sauces, soft drinks, breakfast cereals, and others. (Think Lays, Oreo, Coca Cola, Kellogg, Hunts, Smucker's, etc.) There is also a selection of wines, and some hard liquor in brands you may recognize, plus a wide variety of chips and snacks to go along with them.

You can also find a wide assortment of home decor items (paintings, artificial flowers, picture frames, kitchen and bath items, furniture, etc.) and tools (I don't recommend them for the serious mechanic, but for

occasional use they are OK). Shelving, cabinets, office desks and chairs, fans, lighting fixtures, some plumbing items, and home and patio furniture are all part of their regular inventory. Of course they have children's toys and lots of clothing for all ages (my recommendation, stick with Ropa Americano stores for adult attire) as well as some electronic items.

I believe that Pequeño Mundo is somewhat like Big Lots, TJ Maxx, Value City, and other stores in the USA, which buy large quantities of overstock or closeout items, because for a while you will see something you like, then a few months or weeks later they don't have that item any longer. That happened to me with peanut butter – I bought it for years, then suddenly no more. The wise shopper will buy a larger supply of something they like than they normally would – it may not be there next time. That happened with the Twinkies – two days later they were all gone.

The bottom line is that if you've not shopped at a Pequeño Mundo store before, give them a try. You may find something you thought you had given up to come here – like Twinkies!

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Here yesterday, today, and tomorrow



by Ivo Henfling

How Easy is it to Make Friends in Costa Rica?

When moving to Costa Rica, making friends is more important than you might think. In fact, friends are much more than important; they will not just help you “learn the ropes” but they can give you the emotional support that will make the adjustment to your new home country much easier. Having friends can make the difference between living here being bearable, being incredible, or unbearable.

Costa Ricans are known as being a friendly and happy people, but will you be able to make friends with them? Of course you will, if making new friends – amigos – among the local population is one of your wishes. But creating a network of friends can be different than what you might expect. I have lived in Costa Rica since 1980, am married to a Tica, and have learned that Ticos have very different ideas about what “friends” are than do expats.

MAKING FRIENDS WITH TICOS

To start with, if you want to make friends with Ticos, you'll have to make an effort, and the most important step is learning the language. Remember, the language here is Spanish, and it's a simple matter of having enough respect for the locals to at least try to learn the basics. I know of expats who moved here 20 years ago and can't even say “buenos días” or “una cerveza por favor” – and they don't have any Tico friends either. How would you react to a Costa Rican who moved to your hometown, lived there a long while, and still spoke only Spanish? I'm sure you'd think that person should learn to speak your language, right? Well, it is the same here. And like you, Ticos will appreciate the effort, no matter how poor your skills are.

FRIENDS VS. ACQUAINTANCES

You need to realize that, although they are friendly people, most Ticos keep their distance. Yes, Ticos will be nice to you at all times; they may even invite you to come by for coffee. But, unfortunately, they may not tell you where they live. I probably have a couple of thousand Tico acquaintances, but after 40 years I still don't have any really good Tico friends. And those who know me

know I'm a pretty social guy. I have tried, believe me. We have had uncountable barbecues at our house, and always had a good time, but they don't reciprocate. Why is that?

It is because Ticos have different social norms. The biggest difference is that they have family, and in the Tico culture, family comes first, second, and third. They do everything with their family; they spend weekends, holidays, birthdays, and any other celebration with their family. Therefore, they don't need friends in the same way as expats do. So being pals and expecting to “hang out” with Ticos can be more difficult and requires more effort than back home.

Of course, the language plays a big part too. Not being fluent in a language is definitely a barrier to making friends. My Spanish is fluent, better than my own language, which is Dutch. My wife, who is Tica, speaks pretty decent English, but even so she doesn't feel totally comfortable speaking it, especially if the gringo who is visiting speaks too fast or with an accent, like a Southern drawl. This makes a social meeting much less interesting for her than it does for me. Remember, if speaking and understanding a conversation in Spanish is difficult for you, English may be equally awkward for them, so palling around together might not be something with which either of you are very comfortable.

Another factor is heritage. As children, growing up, we chose our friends. This usually had a lot to do with coming from the same neighborhood, having the same social level, and sharing the same interests and experiences. Often, our best friends are the ones we grew up with. Or it could be that the person who gave you emotional support starting college becomes your BFF. In any case, it is someone who shares your experiences, as well as language. We call it a “boezem vriend” in Dutch, “amigo del alma” in Spanish. Think about what that means in a culture where the family is everything.

A STORY TO TELL

Making friends, wherever in the world you live, is good for your physical health. It keeps you sane. So don't stay at home, get out there. You moved to Costa Rica because the country is so beautiful? Yes, it is, but you can't enjoy any of it from home! Make day trips, weekends trips, or stay a week

at a time in a different area. There is so much to see and do, and much to learn. AND you'll make friends along the way. Lots of them!

One other thing to keep in mind when you move to a foreign country is that you can't be too picky about who to make friends with. Often, being able to speak the same language is enough to be buddies with someone. Especially when you're lonely.

Remember, we all have a story to tell, and those that you meet once you have moved here also have one, and many are interesting stories; boring people don't move here, they stay home, afraid to venture to some new, exotic, faraway place like Costa Rica. Expats are interesting people because we are different. You and I belong to that group of people always looking for a new experience. So, if you want to make friends, be a good listener; if you want others to listen to your story, listen to theirs.


WHERE TO MAKE FRIENDS?

Don't despair; there are many ways to make new friends in Costa Rica. No matter which town or city or village in Costa Rica you move to, there are certain places where expats meet regularly. Maybe they are too loud for your taste? Or they don't have the same interests? Then don't just go to bars, try one of the many clubs.

There are lots of clubs for expats; there are women's clubs, bird-watching clubs, religious organizations, community clubs, country clubs, a wine club, a writers group, and many more. You can also get involved in volunteering, community assistance, animal protection, etc. For information on clubs, check, 61 Clubs in Costa Rica for when you are bored stiff at: <https://www.godutchrealty.com/costa-rica-real-estate-blog/costa-rica-entertainment/61-clubs-in-costa-rica-for-when-you-are-bored-stiff/>


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





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Kilometers × .62 = Miles

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(24) FROM THE EMBASSIES



Q: My family wants to visit me in Costa Rica. They are all fully vaccinated. Do they still have to purchase the COVID-19 travel insurance to enter Costa Rica?

A: Effective August 1, Costa Rica will allow entry without travel insurance to minors under 18 years of age and adult tourists fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. In the case of visitors from the United States, the “COVID-19 vaccination record card” will be accepted. Foreigners will be able to enter the country if they carry a vaccination certificate or card that contains at least the following information:

- Name of the person who received the vaccine
- Date of each dose
- Pharmaceutical company

Unvaccinated adult visitors traveling to Costa Rica will continue to need to provide proof of a medical insurance policy to cover any COVID-19 related medical treatment or quarantine lodging while in Costa Rica. In the case of international insurance, tourists must request from their insurer a certification issued in English or Spanish, noting:

- 1) The validity of the policy during the dates of visit to Costa Rica.
- 2) Guarantee of coverage for medicals expenses in cases of COVID-19 related medical treatment in the amount of 50,000 USD .
- 3) Minimum coverage of 2,000 USD for extended lodging expenses due to COVID-19 related illness.

It is also possible to purchase a Costa Rican medical insurance policy through the National Insurance Institute (INS) or Sagicor of Costa Rica, covering the duration of your stay in Costa Rica. Please send an email to aito: seguros@ict.go.cr for questions about insurance coverage or to verify that your current insurance policy

will be accepted in Costa Rica. All visitors to Costa Rica, regardless of vaccination status, must also complete an online Health Pass (pasa de Salud) 48 hours prior to travel to Costa Rica. The Health Pass can be found at: <https://salud.go.cr/>

Q: I want to travel to the United States but I'm concerned about the CV-19 testing requirement. I've heard some US citizens have received fines for having results from “fake laboratories.” How can I be sure my COVID-19 test results are legitimate?

A: Please note, the US Embassy has received reports of unlicensed businesses and individuals offering COVID-19 tests. Passengers presenting tests from unlicensed locations or falsified test results could be denied boarding, required to pay fines, or face other legal penalties, and are required to retest prior to departing Costa Rica.

Both PCR and Antigen tests are available in Costa Rica. Most results are available within 24 hours. You can assure that your results are legitimate by going to one of the properly licensed testing locations at medical facilities across Costa Rica. A complete list of licensed testing providers can be found on the US Embassy website on the COVID-19 information page at:

<https://cr.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>



Wise words from the Embassy's volunteer Consular Agent, Sheelagh Richards.

Back home we probably wouldn't plan for our death; the family knows our preference for burial or cremation, and they'll deal with it when it happens. But few expats here in Costa Rica have families at hand to rise to the challenge, so having a plan becomes a responsibility, if only to spare our Tico neighbours the sense of obligation they may assume, and to reassure our distant families that we have addressed the reality that we are all going to die, even here in paradise.

Having experienced my Canadian neighbour's death 13 years ago, and having helped several grieving friends since then, here are a few key facts to help you set about your plan.

Firstly, the processes are not very different to those in our home nations. If someone dies in hospital or at home while under medical supervision, the responsible physician will issue the death certificate

If death is traumatic, however, (in an accident, for example), sudden, or at home and not under medical supervision, judicial authorities will appoint a coroner to establish the cause of death. If necessary, the body will be taken to the national morgue at Heredia for autopsy; all deaths must be registered at the Registro Civil. They will provide copies of the registration document for subsequent legal requirements, such as advising Social Security administrators of the death.

Burial – Many municipalities have a municipal cemetery, but most local ones are run by small management committees. They set the rules on fees, gravestones, tombs, etc. and provide the gravediggers. Investigate local policies and charges, and who should be contacted in the event of your death.

Cremation – Is becoming more common in Costa Rica but most crematoria are still in the San José urban area. The cost of transportation therefore makes this an expensive choice for many in distant rural areas. Autopsies are legally required before all cremations; the crematorium company will organise this, if it has not been done at the national morgue

Funeraria i.e. funeral companies – Generally they offer pre-payment plans, at a fixed price, and sometimes discounted. They will know the people and policies of local cemeteries and the companies and requirements for cremation. They'll put the whole act together, including catering for the 'velacion', or wake.

There is a third option, possibly making the ultimate gesture to your adopted homeland of Costa Rica, you may donate your body to medical science. I will tell you all about that in a future edition.

For now, get planning so you can rest easy!



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Environmental Regulations in Costa Rica

Costa Rica has always attached great importance to the conservation of its natural resources. At the same time, industrial and land development has increased exponentially in the last three decades, and in recent years development has been focused in the coastal areas and in the Central Valley, especially in areas deemed “Free Trade Zones.” Economic and social progress is essential for the country, while at the same time public policy is highly focused on the need to protect nature through sustainable development.

Under Costa Rican law, in order to develop any project with an environmental impact, an environmental license must be obtained. Applying for an environmental license consists of providing certain documents in accordance with the type of project to be developed (e.g. cadastral plan, land use certificate given by the

local municipality, a water availability certification, soil survey, geological survey, wastewater treatment system, basic study on storm water management, presence of forest cover or wetlands, study on the access of roads, information on the location of nascent or pipeline easements, public street alignments, topographic data and contours, basic archeology study, among others).

The main environmental regulations with which investors will need to deal with in Costa Rica are:

- 1) Land use and zoning.
- 2) Protected areas.
- 3) Construction regulations.
- 4) Water availability, use, and waste disposal.

Following is an overview of each of those four categories.

LAND USE AND ZONING

The area where a project or industry will be located needs to be suitable for its intended purpose. Every project must comply with land use regulations in the municipal area where it is located. In forest areas, the Costa Rican Forestry Law prohibits changing the land use and only authorizes the use of 10 percent or less of the existing forest area of the property (including roads, trails, viewpoints, buildings, etc.).

PROTECTED AREAS

Protection of protected areas within a private property is compulsory for owners. Environmental protection laws establish certain protected areas, such as forests and bodies of water (lakes, ponds, reservoirs, marshes, wetlands, streams, and rivers). When a permanent water source is present, a protected perimeter of 100 meters must be established, whereas if the source is intermittent the perimeter is 50 or 60 meters. If the water source is used for human consumption, the perimeter will be increased to 200 meters. Thus, when investing in property in Costa Rica it is important to inquire about possible aquifers, mangroves, wetlands, proximity to National Parks, and other possible environmental restrictions to the property.

Any project or activity that may generate a possible negative environmental impact requires an initial and subsequent environmental assessment issued by the Costa Rican Environmental Authority known as “SETENA.” Elements of the project such as size, location, and activity will be taken into account when analyzing a request for an environmental license. No construction or operation can start without the approved environmental feasibility.

CONSTRUCTION REGULATIONS

Under Costa Rican law, each municipality has to authorize new construction through the issuance of a permit. SETENA’s Environmental License is required for such a permit to be issued, as well as the payment of a 1 percent tax on the total construction value.

Contracts with construction companies and related services should include clear environmental compliance clauses drafted according to Costa Rican law. A breach of the

environmental compliance laws can lead to an administrative or even criminal case against company management. Any work that alters the environmental conditions of the site (for example, the removal of vegetation cover) should be performed only in previously authorized spaces.

WATER AVAILABILITY AND WATER USE

Water permitting is regulated by two institutions in Costa Rica, the National Water Institute (AyA) and the Ministry of Environment (MINAE) through its Water Department.

Water availability is fundamental for any project development in Costa Rica. Investors should perform adequate due diligence on the water availability before investing in a project. Although water is abundant in Costa Rica, infrastructure or capacity may be lacking and the permitting process often involves multiple national and local institutions.

Projects face two main situations when trying to obtain water availability; either the area has an existing infrastructure for water service, or there is no existing water infrastructure. If the area has existing infrastructure, the water service will be provided by an entity authorized by the government, either AyA, a municipal aqueduct, or a local aqueduct run by a community association that reports to AyA. In this scenario, a water availability letter should be obtained from the local supplier to guarantee water availability for the development of a project.

In the second scenario, if an area does not have existing water infrastructure, water can be obtained through a concession to drill and exploit wells or to draw water from nearby rivers and streams. These concessions require hydrological studies and are approved by MINAE’s Water Department.

Desalinization plants are also a possibility. Costa Rica has enacted regulations for the construction and operation of desalinization plants. To date, no such plants are operational in the Country.

WASTE WATER

Under Costa Rican law, wastewater produced by projects or industries may not be discharged without obtaining a discharge permit and without prior treatment. Before disposal into the sewer system or bodies of water, the discharge has to meet minimum standards outlined by the regulations. Therefore, any activity, work, or project

must develop a wastewater management plan to correct or prevent any contamination. For the storage of fuels, pesticides, or other chemical contaminants, the law requires a spill prevention system be incorporated into the plans.

Any investor or organization contemplating commencing or investing in a project should do so only after becoming familiar with the applicable laws.

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by Ryan Piercy

Monkey Business

Spider monkey

One of the things about this country that attracts all of us is its natural beauty and varied wildlife. Many tourists flock here annually for the Eco-tourism, and one of the more popular sights are the monkeys.

Though many times we use the term monkey generally, in fact the name is more specifically used for American or Eurasian monkeys, all of which are a part of the marmoset family. Though appearing the same at a glance, the two are different; American monkeys have a characteristic 32 teeth, while their Eurasian counterparts have 36. Both, however, generally have prehensile tails and live off of leaves, fruits, and insects.

Costa Rica is known to be home to four members of the American monkey family (Cebidae). It includes the howler

monkey (mono congo in Spanish), the spider monkey (mono colorado), capuchin (mono carablanca), and the squirrel monkey (mono titi or mono ardilla).

Before you even see the black howlers you will most likely hear them calling, as these are the loudest of the group and can be heard from up to three kilometers away. The mantled howlers are the largest and most common monkeys to be found here, weighing up to 10 pounds. They can be seen throughout the lowlands and mountain forests foraging for leaves and fruits in the canopy, typically in groups of up to twelve monkeys, possibly accompanied by several small babies. They rarely come down to the forest floor.

Reputedly the most intelligent of this group are the capuchin, which are prevalent throughout Costa Rica. Easy



Capuchin Monkey



Howler Monkey



Squirrel Monkey

to recognize due to the cowl-like white head, they travel in groups and are fun to watch as they fussily scrounge for food. They can be found throughout the lowlands of the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, below 1500 meters, and are in abundance in the Manuel Antonio National Park and in Santa Rosa. They are opportunistic feeders, eating fruits, leaves, insects, eggs, crabs, and lizards, and communicate through a series of chatters, squeaks, and shrieks. Unlike howler monkeys, they do descend to the forest floor in search of invertebrates and other food.

Their copper colored fur and acrobatics make it easy to recognize the versatile spider monkey. With long limbs and especially long tails (as long as their head and body combined) they are fantastic jumpers. They all have a distinctive pot-belly and their antics are an

unforgettable sight to experience. Though once the most abundant, the spider monkey has suffered great losses due to encroachment on their territory by humans. They are very solitary by day and males often keep apart from the females and young, but at night tend to bunch together for sleeping. Mostly arboreal, they feed on fruit, nectar, leaves, bark and the occasional insect. The largest populations are concentrated in protected areas like Corcovado National Park, Monteverde Cloud Forest, and Tortuguero.

Last in both size and number, is the tiny squirrel monkey. Originating from South America, this highly endangered species is found in two places; Manuel Antonio and the Osa Peninsula. They commonly are seen in bands of up to 30 individuals, the gray-crowned species inhabit the protected rainforest of Manuel Antonio National Park, while the black-crowned variety lives in Corcovado National Park. They will eat anything and compete for food with the larger capuchin...and invariably, lose. Due to their endearing appearance, this physically small variety of primates fell victim to the illegal pet trade over the years, but their numbers are on the rise, thanks to local conservation efforts and non-profit organizations like the Mono Titi Alliance. It is the only one of the four monkeys I haven't had an opportunity to see, but hope to soon.

by Shelagh Duncan



Outdoor Living in Costa Rica

For most of us, outdoor living back home was probably very different from the way we live in Costa Rica. Summers were glorious and outdoor entertaining was the thing to do, as well as relaxing and enjoying some down-time in a hammock or by the pool, perhaps. However, come fall we would pack it all up and put it away for use the next summer.

In Costa Rica we are fortunate to be able to spend most of the year outdoors. So, if we want to enjoy our outdoor living and dining areas we need to make sure we find the most suitable type of furniture for that activity. However, we also have about 12 different climate zones – and many more microclimates within those – so how do we know which is right for where we live?

Living in the Central Valley we can select almost anything we like; wood furniture, metal, or natural materials like bamboo, wicker, and rattan. Along the Guanacaste coast we need to think about materials that will tolerate the dryer salty air, but down on the south Pacific coast or on the Caribbean it is a different story.

Those areas are still coastal but always hot, less breezy, and the humidity is very high all year long, especially in the green season.

Generally it is wise to choose the best furniture we can afford; that way you do not have to replace it in a few years and suffer the discomfort and unattractive appearance until the next big sale comes along! This is not always possible, of course.

So let's explore the most popular frame materials used in exterior furniture, and based on the area you live in, you can make better choices when it is time to buy.

ALUMINUM

Aluminum is by far the most popular patio furniture material (even resin wicker is typically woven over an aluminum frame). It resists rust and moisture damage better than other metals, and a powder-coated finish will offer added protection against the elements. Aluminum is strong yet relatively lightweight, making it easy to

rearrange and store. Tubular aluminum is the most lightweight option. Wrought and cast aluminum are heavy enough to withstand wind and weather conditions but are still manageable to rearrange and store.

Benefits:

- Lightweight construction makes it easy to move
- Resists rust and moisture damage better than other metals
- Powder-coating finish offers added protection against the elements
- Requires little care and is easy to clean
- Withstands rain, sunlight, and extreme temperatures

Care Tips:

- Clean with clear water or a mild soapy mixture to remove dust and dirt. To maintain the finish, touch up chips in the paint to avoid oxidation

Care Level: Minimal

RESIN WICKER

Also known as all-weather wicker, resin wicker is a longer-lasting, weather-resistant synthetic fiberweave wrapped over a metal frame. While plant material such as cane and rattan are the traditional materials used to make wicker furniture, the term “wicker” actually refers to the woven style in which the furniture is made, not the material used. Resin wicker is typically made with thin strands of PVC, nylon, polyethylene, or high-density polyethylene. Caution: The resin used can range from high quality down to the type you’ll find in hardware store furniture.

Benefits:

- Lends a traditional, homey feel to your outdoor area
- More durable than traditional wicker material
- Most high-end resin wicker is UV-resistant, so it won’t fade or crack
- Withstands rain, sunlight, and humidity

Care Tips:

- Remove dust and dirt by spraying with water and let air dry
- If unsure about your furniture’s resistance to sunlight, keep in shaded area when not in use

Care Level: Minimal

WOOD

Not all woods are created equal, but if there’s one common benefit to all wood patio furniture, it’s the ageless appeal of its natural beauty. Pine and cedar are softer woods with some degree of natural weather resistance; hardwoods such as teak boast exceptional durability and performance. Caution: Ask about the wood finish. Marine varnish offers the best protection.

Benefits:

- Lends a warm, casual feel to any outdoor space
- Acacia and cedar offer some natural weather resistance at better value
- Teak provides incomparable durability that will last a lifetime if cared for properly
- Withstands rain (if sealed properly), sunlight, humidity, wind, and extreme temperatures

Care Tips:

- Always use coasters, pads or felt to avoid the appearance of moisture rings and heat marks
- Sealing with varnishes or stains can help prevent warping in humid climates
- If it is sealed wood, clean with a mild soapy water mixture to remove dirt, dust and pollen
- If painted wood, avoid exposure to moisture, clean with a damp cloth

Care Level: Medium



RECYCLED PLASTIC

In both versatility of style and in performance, recycled plastic patio furniture ranks at or near the top. Recycled plastic is extraordinarily strong and extremely durable, is resistant to moisture, rotting, and cracking, and is impervious to salt water and stains. It also resists fading because its color is intrinsic to the material. And best of all, most recycled plastic is made to resemble wood but requires none of the care wood does. You will find more modern furniture options using this material.

Benefits:

- Requires little to no maintenance and is easy to clean
- Naturally resistant to fading and moisture – won't produce mildew, rot, or rust
- Eco-friendly – many types are made from plastic milk jugs and similar containers
- Withstands rain, humidity, wind, and extreme temperatures

Care Tips:

- Easy to clean – simply spray with clear water or a mild soapy mixture to remove dust and dirt

Care Level: Minimal

WROUGHT IRON

Wrought iron is prized for its distinctive appearance, wind-resistant sturdiness, and strength. It's heavier than aluminum and, in its natural state, is more vulnerable to the elements.

Benefits:

- Heavy weight keeps it stable and firmly in place with no threat of being blown over
- Can be powder-coated to further protect from moisture
- Withstands sunlight and wind

Care Tips:

- Clean with a damp cloth to remove dirt and dust
- If you spot rust, clean with mild soapy water, sand the area, then seal with similarly colored auto paint

Care Level: Medium



STEEL

Lighter than wrought iron but heavier than aluminum, steel provides strength, stability, and endurance in extreme temperatures. Powder-coated finishes aid in rust resistance. Steel is typically used for framing high-end modern chairs and bistro-style seats, and is also often used for retro designs.

Benefits:

- Its hefty weight provides a sturdy, long-lasting construction
- Will not dent as easily as a lightweight aluminum
- Powder coating helps protect from moisture to prevent rust
- Classic look lends a clean, sophisticated look to your space
- Withstands rain, humidity, and extreme temperatures

Care Tips:

- Spray down frame with clear or soapy water to wash away dust and dirt
- Immediately treat chips in the finish to limit exposure to the elements

- Apply a clear coat of liquid car wax at least once a year to protect finish

Care Level: Medium

We could look at outdoor fabrics, and the pros and cons of sling chairs over cushioned chairs, but I'll save that for another time.

Now that you have a better understanding of what frame materials you're looking at when you shop and how they will fare in your particular area, you can ask the right questions when you shop. This will help you spend your money wisely.

Enjoy the outdoors!

Shelagh Duncan

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(36) PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEMby **Tony Johnson****Falling into Happiness**

SPLAT! Down I went. No chance of breaking my fall. None whatsoever. The chair I fell from was so slippery that I slammed onto the floor before I even knew I was falling. You can guess what curses I screamed after I crash-landed on my right hip.

Luckily, I didn't break anything; mechanically I could still walk and stand, but the pain was excruciating. Surprisingly, there was never a bruise on the hipbone where I landed. Instead, the most intense pain was in my groin, inside my right leg, and in my lower stomach area and right buttock. I must have badly torn some leg muscles and injured some nerves because the slightest movement hurt like hell. I quickly learned that the fundamental role of my legs is not just for motion, because now, not only was walking and standing painful, but reaching and carrying. Actually, every other upper body movement also caused pain. That's because any upper body movement must be anchored on something firm (the legs) to enable the movement.

So the pain was inescapable. And severe.

To carry on any life activities, I had no choice but to move very carefully, very slowly, or not at all. That was not simply to prevent my falling again, but to minimize the pain that came with even the tiniest movements. Even when completely still – I hurt!

Unfortunately, this happened a few hours before returning to the "happiest place on earth," so my joy at being back was drastically reduced. Some regular activities had to be completely foregone; no dog walks, no beach clean ups, no gardening, and not much housework. I did keep my daily morning appointment with Swami Sarvapriyananda's advaita vedanta videos, part of my study of consciousness, something I've been doing for years.

But there too I felt pain as I tried repeatedly to find a completely comfortable sitting position. I haven't yet succeeded at that, but I have, finally, after decades of trying, begun to understand the nature of happiness. I've long realized that happiness is the range of positive feelings that we enjoy when our life is going well on our

own terms; the more we SEE our life as satisfying, the happier we are.

Now, satisfied may seem like a pretty lame way to explain happiness. Kids going bananas when they have been turned loose at recess, seems to be a better example of happiness. But remember, they are not asking for more; they are totally satisfied with just being freed from the classroom.

HAPPY VS. UNHAPPY

If satisfaction and contentment explain happiness, then dissatisfaction and discontent must explain unhappiness. In other words, whenever we perceive our life situation as disappointing, inadequate, deficient, we're unhappy. And when we are content it's because we see our lives as adequate, successful – good enough. And that makes us happy. What that means is that our situation alone does not account for what we feel, it's how we SEE that situation, how we perceive it, which determines whether or not we are happy.

Sounds rather pathetic, doesn't it? Content? Satisfied? Don't we want our lives to be fabulous, not just some lame degree of satisfactory? Many would argue that life should be great, not just OK. I counter that's not exactly correct because, as I have paradoxically learned from my leg pain, as nasty as it was, happiness occurred when I was content with OK. Grateful for OK.

My daily routine for years now has involved awakening without an alarm, making coffee, and setting up a chair and a speaker on the deck so I can look across the Ojochal Valley at the sunrise while listening to the swami.

By the way, "swami" doesn't mean some kind of mystic, or shaman; Sarvapriyananda would chuckle at any notion of greatness. No, he's simply a teacher with a profoundly clear explanation for what we are. Not WHO we are, but WHAT we are – consciousness. Not the body and brain, but consciousness.

Pre-SPLAT! I typically settled into my morning routine quite quickly. My total comfort was easy to attain. Post-fall, comfort was nearly impossible, making my morning

study very distracted and difficult. Five weeks of this has taught me that perfection does NOT exist; right now, for me, there is no totally pain-free position. The best I can hope for is a tolerable level of pain that doesn't divert my attention. And what also became clear was that my persistent search for the perfect spot, completely free of pain, was the main reason I was unhappy with my morning study.

FIGHTING REALITY

It became obvious that the more I squirmed and wiggled, twisted and fidgeted, trying to find a pain free posture, the more discomfort I felt. I learned that the sooner I find a GOOD ENOUGH sitting position, the sooner the pain subsides and I can focus on my study. In other words, the quicker that I accept satisfactory, and give up the pointless struggle for perfection, the sooner I enjoy a tolerable situation.

So what? What's the big deal, you ask? I now see that those same principles hold true for life overall, and that by adapting to any less than perfect life situation, the sooner I am happy. I now see that by rejecting what life gives me, while insisting that it be better in search of some imaginary, impossible perfection, that I ruin the good I do have.

Neither you nor I sit there thinking, "Life MUST be perfect for me to be happy." What we do think is that, "This is NOT good enough. It won't do." If our current situation does not meet our expectations we may feel we have been cheated and deserve better, and we struggle with what is, refusing to accept things as they are, trying instead to mold life into what we feel we are entitled to.

But rarely does natural, social, or personal reality comply. Our unconscious quest for the ideal, for the just right, prevents us from seeing what is already satisfactory. Our quest blinds us to seeing the "this is OK" parts of our experience, leaving us believing that the experience

is entirely negative. But it's not. It's a mixture of "ahhh and ouch." But too often we let the "ouch" completely bury the "ahhh."

I am NOT suggesting to deny the negative. Just be cognizant of the positive.

As long as we overlook the positive aspects of our experience the negatives will dominate and color our entire outlook, leaving us feeling everything is bad, rather than accepting that there can be some mix of both. Like, loathing my pain AND being grateful for the parts of my body that don't hurt. And that makes it easier to tolerate and endure the healing process.

Accept the negative?

How un-American is that! How defeatist to surrender to the less than perfect, we might say. Why, if we settled for the good enough of the Wright Brothers' first flight we'd have never reached the Moon! The drive for more and better has given modern HUMANS a wonderful life.

OK, that's true, in a broad sense. But never being satisfied with our INDIVIDUAL life guarantees our PERSONAL unhappiness. So how can we use the principles I discovered in life beyond my morning meditation sitting struggles?



FINDING THE GOOD ENOUGH

In my unhappiness with my meditation seating, I could not see what was good about my situation. Until I let go of the impossible expectation of total relief from pain I denied myself some level of feeling good. I'll apply this understanding to another part of that experience.

I was also discontented with my short, morning practice walks, but I couldn't explain why, until I asked myself, "What's missing here? What do I need?" I then realized that I missed my ability to walk quickly, vigorously, and without pain. What I thought I needed were those qualities. But, thinking further about it, I saw I could not have that kind of walk until more time passes and I heal more completely. My frustration was because I was blinded to the positive aspects; I COULD walk a tiny bit. Sure it was slowly, but with less pain than immediately after I fell. And if I knocked off the "pissin' and moanin'" I could enjoy the beauty of the sunrise and how the early morning sunshine revealed the glorious green everywhere.

To CLING to my impossible expectations would ruin the pleasant, satisfactory parts of the experience. To ACCEPT less than what I expected would actually give me a MORE satisfying moment; SOME happiness compared to the zero happiness of clinging to my unrealistic expectations.

DOING IT TO OURSELVES

As you well know, the Buddha said, "Life is suffering, but we can still be happy." But suffering is not just physical pain; it is the unhappiness that we feel when we "don't want to be here." When we refuse to accept our current reality and make the best of it, and instead focus on demanding our life occur somewhere else; in some other place, condition, or emotion other than our present.

El Residente readers come to Costa Rica to be somewhere else; to attain the happiness that we were unable to find elsewhere. But even in this paradise we'll end up in uncomfortable chairs. The trick is to refuse to let that discomfort ruin the happiness we have found here.

I have learned that when I expect, when I feel entitled to, more than reality can provide, I make myself very unhappy. It occurs to us all when we have unrealistic expectations of our circumstances. Happiness, on the other hand, comes about when we accept that, sometimes life, while far from perfect, is good enough. Don't misunderstand, I'm not saying that we shouldn't

strive to be better or have more in our lives, but in the process of achieving those things we need to remember that happiness is a byproduct of the achievement, not the goal.

Yes, I will continue to seek relief from my pain, but I will no longer let myself become so obsessed by that goal it spoils whatever happiness is available,

Is THAT what you've been trying to tell me all these years, Swami?

Tony Johnson is a retired university mental health center therapist. When he first came to CR he had to overcome some negative emotions that were ruining his happiness. Now he has to adapt to pain that COULD ruin his happiness, IF he lets it. He can be reached at: johnson.tony4536@gmail.com



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► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

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

► **Al-Anon**

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

► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

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

► **American Legion Post 12-Golfito**

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

► **American Legion Auxiliary**

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

► **Amigos of Costa Rica**

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

► **Atenas Bridge Club**

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

► **Birding Club Costa Rica**

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

► **Canadian Club**

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

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

► **Central Valley Golf Association**

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

► **Costa Ballena Women's Network**

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

► **Costa Rica Writers Group**

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

► **Democrats Abroad Costa Rica**

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

► **Domestic Animal Welfare Group Costa Ballena**

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

► **First Friday Lunch**

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

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

► Little Theater Group

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

► Marine Corps League

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

► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

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

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

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

► Professional Women's Network

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

► Quepos-Manuel Antonio Writers Group

The QMAWG is a group of aspiring and accomplished writers living in the Central and South Pacific Coast area who meet

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

► Radio Control Sailing Club

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

► San Vito Bird Club

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

► Wine Club of Costa Rica

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

► Women's Club of Costa Rica

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

► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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

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

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

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

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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Important dates in Costa Rica:

9 September, Thursday,
Children's Day,
Observance

15 September, Wednesday,
Independence Day,
National Holiday (The official
Day Off will be taken the
preceding Monday)

Observance: *If the date falls on a weekday, it is a paid day off for Costa Rican workers and will be celebrated on the actual date, not moved.*

National Holidays: *Non-essential businesses will be closed. These are paid holidays for Costa Rican workers. A worker who is required to work on a national holiday must, by law, be paid double wages.*

SEMINAR: *The ARCR Seminars for Expats has been resumed and will be conducted on the below dates, health conditions permitting. Contact the office for updates and reservations. Seating is limited*

September 23 / 24, 2021
October 28 / 29, 2021

Funniest One Liners

A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it.

I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but check when you say the paint is wet?



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For more information, or to enroll online, go to our website at: **www.arcr.cr**, email us at: **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).

