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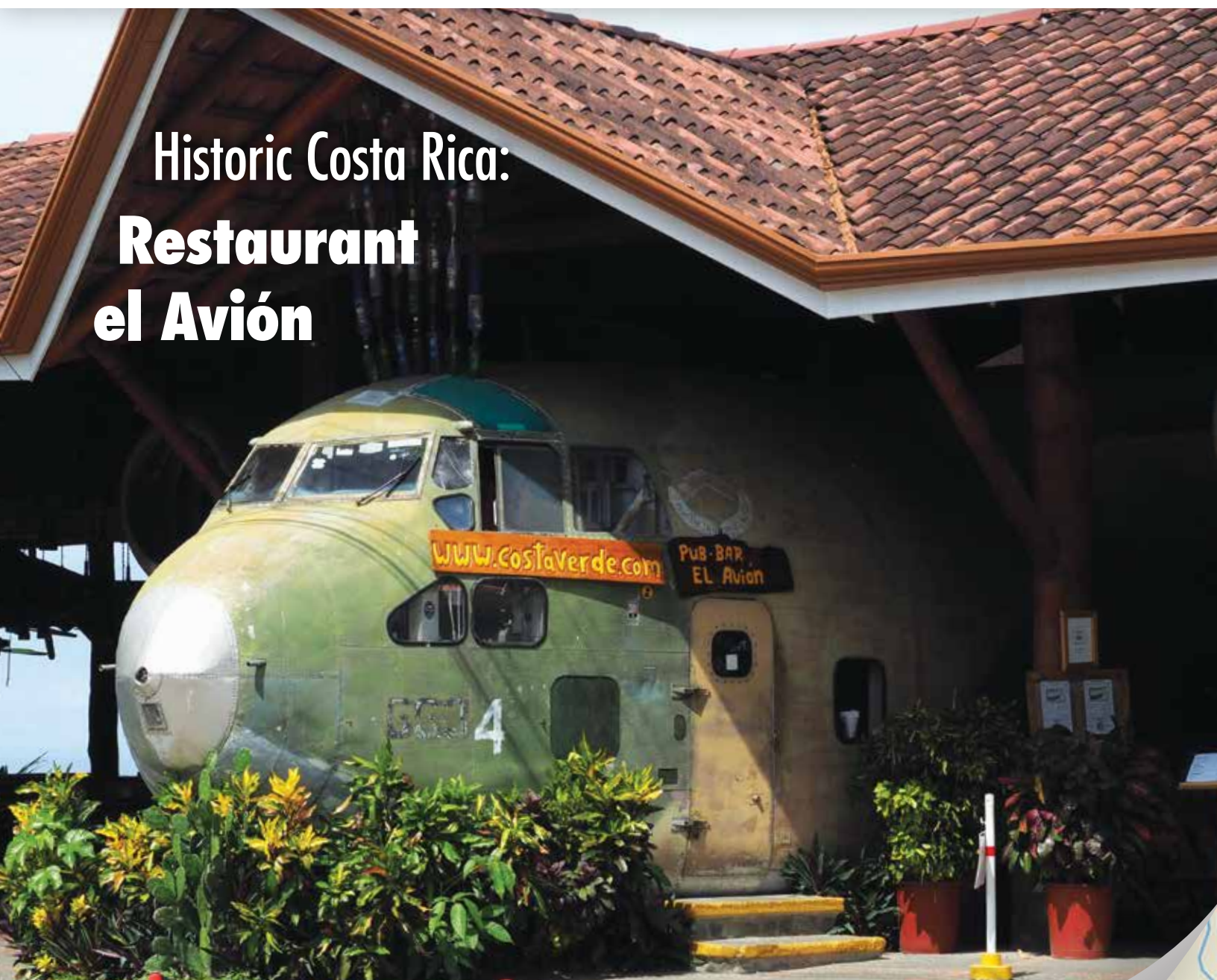
ARCR's English Language Magazine

July / August 2018

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El Residente

Historic Costa Rica: Restaurant el Avión



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EDITOR'S NOTE

From the hustle and bustle of downtown San José, to the tranquility of the rolling surf in Sámara, to happy and healthy rescued animals in the Southern Zone, this issue has lots to offer, no matter where you live or travel.

And that's not all! As well as our regular informative and entertaining articles, there is a new column, Dollars and Sense. If you have investment or retirement accounts in the USA, be sure to read it – there is some important information there.

Thinking about taking a short adventure and trying a new restaurant? Try El Avión! It abounds with the richness of Costa Rican history, well described in William Duckwall's cover story about Historic Costa Rica.

Check out our new advertisers, they may be offering exactly what you have been looking for.

If you wondered about the lateness of the last issue, an apology from the staff and management of El Residente goes out to all our readers; technical issues caused a delay in publication. A new computer system is now in place and should prevent a repeat.

Happy reading!



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

Since 1984 the ARCR has 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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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

UPDATE TO PET TRAVEL BAN. Delta Airlines has announced additional restrictions for shipping animals, effective June 18, 2018. (Changes to the program, called PetSafe, were sparked by a series of pet transport disasters earlier this year, prompting the carrier to originally suspend its pet shipping program on March 20.) The new pet travel policy bans 21 breeds of dogs and four breeds of cats from traveling as cargo due to health concerns. Additionally, the airline will no longer accept “giant” crates (taller than 30-inches); a restriction that affects large-breed pets such as Great Danes and some large Golden Retrievers or Labradors. If traveling internationally, pets must be shipped through a third-party contractor that is part of the International Pet and Animal Transportation Association. The new rules were developed through a partnership with the animal organization American Humane, Delta officials said.

NEW ARCR ID CARDS. Have you gotten your new ID card? The credit card sized plastic cards are FREE, just stop by the office at your convenience and spend 10 minutes getting yours. It will give you the tool necessary to take advantage of the forthcoming merchant discount program ARCR is creating. And, it is free!

FINDING US. Did you know that the location of the ARCR office is on the cell phone app Waze? (It's also on Google maps and Uber.) If you don't visit the office frequently and have difficulty remembering how to find us, check your cell phone app – it will lead you right to us!

MAIL FORWARDING SERVICE. ARCR regrets to inform our members that due to a situation beyond our control

(restrictions and requirements by the Costa Rican postal system) the mail forwarding service intended exclusively for ARCR members has been cancelled. After extensive efforts to find a replacement for Aeropost, we have so far been unable to identify a suitable alternative. The search continues.

SCAM ALERT. Members are advised that they should be very skeptical of any telephone call they receive purporting to be from their bank and asking for passwords, account numbers, etc. There have been recent reports of scammers who have obtained such information from unsuspecting people, and subsequently had unauthorized withdrawals made from their accounts. Banks that have been victims of this scam include Banco Nacional, Banco de Costa Rica, and Scotiabank. **DO NOT GIVE OUT PERSONAL ACCOUNT INFORMATION OVER THE PHONE UNLESS YOU INITIATED THE CALL TO THE INSTITUTION INVOLVED.**

COSTA RICA ZIP CODES. Members are reminded that they should inform correspondents that CR ZIP codes should not be used for sending mail directly to CR from the USA. Using the Costa Rica ZIP code in an address confuses the USPS automated mail sorting machines, and results in mail being sent to the wrong address in the USA.

NOTARY SERVICE. Persons needing a U.S. legal document notarized may find the website notarize.com able to provide a useful service. In some instances the service can assist people who cannot be physically present at the notary's office, and can accomplish a notarization through a video conference via the internet. Rates are reasonable. To learn more, go to: <https://notarize.com/>

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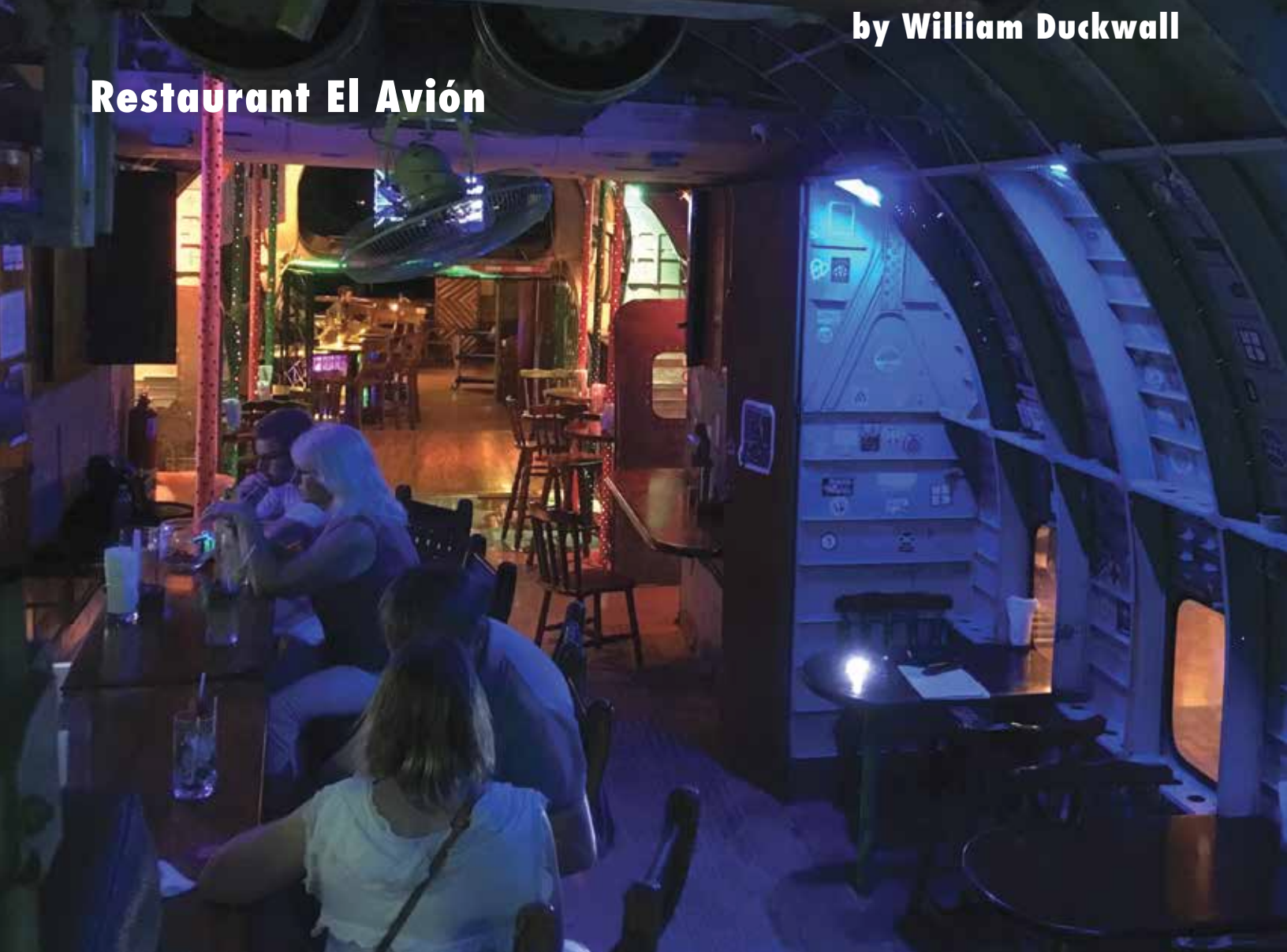
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6 HISTORIC COSTA RICA

by William Duckwall

Restaurant El Avión



My wife and I have been in and around Costa Rica for years, but had missed Parque Nacional Manuel Antonio, until recently. It is the smallest of the national parks but the one most visited. Located in the center of the Pacific coast, just south of Quepos, it is 130 km from San José. From Quepos, the road to Manuel Antonio goes inland along a ridge, with views of the sea. The road is lined with hotels and restaurants, but the tropical forest still holds sway. Some criticize the area for its semi-domesticated wildlife, but for a tourist whose time in the country may be brief – Hey look, monkeys!

Hikers and beach goers had enjoyed the area for decades. In 1971 a Frenchman purchased the property and fenced

it off, intending to build a private resort. At the urging of local activists, however, the national legislature passed a law forbidding commercial development of the property, and the park was born. Since then development has flourished outside the new park, notably along the ridge to Quepos, and Orbitz now lists more than 90 hotels nearby, ranging from back packer hostels to high-end resorts.

Of particular interest is the Costa Verde Hotel, which Allan Templeton opened in 1988. It includes four associated restaurants, one of which – El Avión – has an airplane as a central feature. This was his first property with an aircraft (a 727 with a luxury suite was added later) and has proved to be irresistible to tourists and travel writers. It is easy to find; as you drive the ridge going

toward Manuel Antonio, look for a restaurant on the seaward side of the road with the nose of an airplane sticking out.

The airplane in El Avión is a Fairchild C-123 cargo plane. How did it happen to end up here? The plane turns out to have a fascinating history, involving the CIA and covert operations. The history, like much of the history of Central America, is tangled and complex; the following thumbnail sketch only scratches the surface.

Nicaragua: In the early 1900s, Nicaraguan President José Santos Zelaya invited European and Japanese interests to aid in constructing a trans-ocean canal. The U.S. promptly engineered a coup financed by the powerful United Fruit Company (UFC, now Chiquita) forcing Zelaya out. Adolfo Díaz was installed as President, backed by U.S. Marines.

In 1926 Augusto Cesar Sandino was a payroll clerk at a U.S.-owned gold mine. He and 29 of his co-workers began a guerilla war of

sabotage against U.S. holdings. In 1933, the U.S. Congress lost patience and cut off funding for the Marines, but by that time they had trained the Nicaraguan National Guard, who ably took their place. In 1934, Sandino was led to believe the Marine withdrawal was the end of the war. When he tried to attend a “truce dinner,” he was assassinated en route. The assassins were probably sent by a Nicaraguan sergeant – Anastasio Somoza, who later became President of Nicaragua.

Somoza and his heirs controlled the country’s politics for the next 45 years, maintaining power by catering to U.S. interests. In 1939, when Somoza visited Washington D.C., an advisor asked Franklin Roosevelt why Somoza

was getting such a red carpet reception, when he was such a “son-of-a-bitch.” Roosevelt reportedly replied, “Yes, he’s a son-of-a-bitch, but he’s ours.”

In 1956 an idealistic poet assassinated Anastasio, and the presidency passed to his son Luis, and later to his second son Anastasio Jr.

In 1960, after Kennedy was elected president, Washington settled on a two-pronged Jekyll and Hyde strategy for Latin America, satisfying both hawks and liberals. The first prong was the Alliance for Progress – AFP – focusing on health, education, and democratic progress.

The second prong was support and training for police and military forces. The AFP was thwarted in Nicaragua by the Somozas. As Anastasio Jr. bluntly put it, “I don’t want educated people. I want oxen.” Furthermore, the AFP funds supplied to Nicaragua were diverted into the personal accounts of the Somozas and their cronies.

In 1961 a group of revolutionary nationalists formed the Sandinista Front for National Liberation – the Sandinistas – named for Augusto Sandino, the guerilla leader of the 30s. Results were mixed until 1972 when an earthquake demolished the capital city Managua, killing an estimated 15,000 and leaving half a million people homeless. Funds for relief aid flooded in from virtually the whole world. Those funds, however, disappeared into the coffers of the Somozas. This was the last straw, and by 1974 the Sandinistas were drawing broad support from Nicaraguan society, reinforced by the new liberation theology of the Catholic Church. Until then, the Sandinistas had been impaired by infighting among internal factions. Finally all factions united behind Daniel Ortega.

Jimmy Carter became U.S. President in 1976 and human rights gained a new importance. Nicaraguan National Guard brutality had reached new heights, which led to a cutoff of U.S. aid in 1978. Somoza, in desperation, stepped up the level of repression; the Guard’s final act was the bombing of civilian neighborhoods in Managua. With opposition from nearly all of Nicaragua, and most of the nations in the world, the Somoza family fled to Miami on July 17, 1979. Two days later the National Guard collapsed, and the Sandinistas took control.

At the height of the celebration, an airplane with Red Cross markings landed in Managua. It left that same night, covertly carrying 70 members of the National Guard to safety in Miami. Some of these men later became key players in the Contra (contrarevolucionarios) war against the Sandinista government. Carter was still

Contra Bar at night

president, but the pendulum of U.S. policy had already begun to swing back.

Reagan campaigned as tough on communism, and Congress was subsequently unable to restrain him; no one could afford to be “soft on communism.” Support for the Contras continued – one way or another – through the eight years of the Reagan presidency. It was cyclical – new atrocities in Nicaragua, followed by new assurances of improving human rights. In the fall of 1984, when it leaked out that CIA operatives – not the Contras – had mined Nicaraguan harbors, Congress finally cut off funding. Thereafter, the National Security Council (NSC) started a program known as “the Enterprise” to fund the Contras covertly.

Concurrently, the U.S. administration had begun to sell arms to Iran for its war with Iraq. In return, Iraq would pressure Hezbollah to release American hostages in Lebanon. After the first delivery, Marine Colonel Oliver North, an aide in the NSC, proposed that the weapons be sold at a bigger markup, with the profits used to fund the Contras.

The scheme unraveled in October 1986 when a Fairchild C-123 cargo plane full of weapons and ammunition for the Contras, operating out of El Salvador, was shot down in Nicaragua. Of the plane’s four crew members, only Eugene Hasenfus parachuted to safety. Documents found on the bodies of the other three crewmen linked them to Oliver North. Hasenfus was captured and brought to trial in Nicaragua, where he was sentenced to 30 years, but was subsequently pardoned (with a statement that the

real offenders were U.S. policymakers). He was released in time for Christmas. Until this time, Congress had been in the dark about the arms deals and the ongoing support for the Contras.

The CIA also had built a mile-long runway in Guanacaste, known as Point West, with the tacit approval of Costa Rican President Luis Monge. Construction started in January 1986, and wasn’t completed until May. The runway ran parallel to the dry riverbed of Rio Potrero Grande. (A “dry” riverbed in Guanacaste is really only dry during the dry season. By May the rains had started.)

Costa Rica: 1986 was an election year for Costa Rica, with two leading candidates:

Rafael Ángel Calderon was favored by the Reagan administration. He pledged to reinstate the Costa Rican army (Washington was threatening to suspend aid otherwise) and he supported the Contra forces that were operating from Costa Rican territory on the Nicaraguan border.

Oscar Arias was the second candidate. He was a young, long-shot candidate whose campaign slogan was “Roofs, jobs, and peace!” He opposed rearmament, and opposed having Contras on Costa Rican soil.

The U.S. secretly helped fund the Calderon candidacy, yet Oscar Arias won the election and took office in May. He immediately shut down Contra operations in Costa Rica, and had Point West seized and occupied by Civil Guards. He was assured by U.S. ambassador Lewis Tambs that the Contra flights would not resume, and withdrew the guards

at the end of the month. Months later when he found out that Point West was in operation again, he had it seized once more, and kept a force of 30 guards on site. The Reagan administration applied every form of pressure to keep the airstrip open, but to no avail.

Arias went on to bring together the presidents of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador in February 1987. They agreed that:

- Military aid to the irregular forces in the region should stop.
- There should be cease-fires, with amnesty for political prisoners.
- Free elections should be held, and military forces reduced.



Cockpit of El Avión



Author (with hat) and Monkey



Outside plane



Hotel Victoriano, San Juan del Sur

Daniel Ortega did not attend, but within a month he also accepted the agreement. In August of that year, all the presidents – including Ortega – reconvened in Esquipulas, Guatemala. They spent two days formalizing their agreement, now including a timetable for implementation. Two months later Arias received the Nobel Peace Prize, a great honor for him, and for the people of Costa Rica.

Peace did not magically happen overnight, but the Arias Peace Plan served as a blueprint for subsequent efforts. Esquipulas was a turning point for Central America.

The Plane: El Avión is one of the two Fairchild C-123 cargo planes that were brought to Central America by the CIA. Due to the scandal of its sister ship in Nicaragua, and the opposition to the Contras by the Arias administration, the plane was abandoned and remained in San José. In 2000, it was purchased for \$3000, and shipped to its current resting spot near Manuel Antonio. The interior of the plane is now the Contra Bar.

The C-123 in El Avión is a reminder of the turbulent history of Central America. Many visitors – especially those under forty – have no memory of the Iran-Contra scandal. I'm way past that age cutoff; I was drawn by the history to El Avión, to sit in the Contra Bar, and then unload myself down the cargo ramp to the main floor of the restaurant, a ramp just like the one Eugene Hasenfus leapt from in 1986.

El Avión is a good restaurant, only a mile from Parque Nacional Manuel Antonio, where you can enjoy watching the sun set into the Pacific. If you are visiting the Park, stop in and have something refreshing in the Contra Bar, served with an appetizer of history. Enjoy a meal with the ambiance enhanced by a great view, and be thankful that this particular C-123 has found a peaceful home.

Other places of interest:

Hotel Victoriano in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua – Beautiful hotel overlooking the Pacific, formerly beach house of the Somozas. Forty-five minutes by taxi from the Costa Rican border crossing at Peñas Blancas.

Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress – started with the funds from the Nobel Prize. Located in San José on Avenida 2 near Calle 13, near the Jade Museum. Check their website, and keep up with their activities through their Facebook web page: <https://arias.or.cr>

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

(10) MONTEVERDE MOMENTSby **Marshall Cobb****Can you give me a ride, mi amigo?**

I've picked up a number of hitchhikers in my time here in Costa Rica. My collective experience with this pastime is a mixed bag. Generally, I've benefited from interesting conversations that yielded useful nuggets of local lore in the form of a free Spanish lesson. The positive experiences are counter-balanced, however, by rides that went ugly early – like the time the hitcher coughed up enough phlegm to reupholster my car, which is essentially what he did by using the interior to repeatedly clean off his hand.

Gringo backpackers quickly became an obvious no vote too. I'm sure there are exceptions but the majority of my experiences involved significant pungent smells, a general sense of confusion about their actual destination, and a desire to potentially save some money by inviting themselves to stay with me and my family for an indefinite, extended period.

These collective experiences have forced me to tweak my ride sharing approach, while still maintaining Pura Vida, by only offering rides in town. Profiling against sneezers and the great white unwashed, I happily give short rides to others, and if things go awry, my final destination can change to the next block. And I now keep a rag handy just in case someone slips past the phlegm radar.

There is, however, still one puzzle I have yet to solve: what to do with those seeking a ride down the mountain to the metropolis of San José (somewhere from 2.5 to 4.5 hours away depending on traffic, road closures, weather, and acts of Dios.) I should confess that I have been diagnosed as being three adult beverages away from being an extrovert, but the majority of the time I am very much at peace traveling alone, with my only companions residing in the confines of my capacious head.

There are also physical considerations. My car, which I accurately describe as a hunk of junk, has no functioning air conditioner. During the dry season, this means the windows go down – which also means the entire interior and all occupants are plastered in a thick layer of dust. During the wet season, any additional breathing creates that much more fog on my windows which my defroster is unable to pierce.

Plus, in all seasons, my creaking, groaning mistake from Korea makes so much noise that a conversation involving people with good hearing is a challenge. My time with loud music throws me clearly out of that category. I also find that my ability to understand Spanish goes down about 75 percent when I can't see the other person's lips move – and the rocky, guardrail-free road down the mountain makes keeping my eyes on the road a priority.

Another factor that defies my ride sharing screening is what I call the equivalent of, "Oh, while you're up ..." All of us have likely used that line on our significant other. It is mostly harmless. "While you're up, can you please: turn on the light; turn off the light; turn it up; turn it down and, at least in our house, get the cat out of the kitchen sink"? On several trips to San José I've found that expression less benign; it manifests as something like, "While we're down here I just have a couple of other stops I need to make."

San José was a town designed for traffic involving horses. Skinny horses – and not that many of them at any given time. This is compounded by the phenomena that objects appearing on the map are actually much further away than they appear, and a twenty-minute shift in the time of day can mean the difference between smooth sailing and being trapped in the evil stepmother of all traffic jams.

My favorite (now that it's over) story on this front started with a request from someone who wanted to join me for a trip to the hardware store. I warned this prospective passenger that my main goal for this trip was the hospital for check-up of my suspiciously, permanently swollen hand (we do have an X-ray machine at a private clinic on the mountain, but apparently there is no one trained to use it). "No problem," I was told. "I'm in no hurry."

I first felt something might be amiss after I'd picked up my passenger when an odd, unclear smell wafted through the car. The smell wasn't backpacker bad, but it definitely wasn't good. I sniffed at myself and confirmed that the shower I had just taken was still performing as hoped. My clothes were clean. My passenger also appeared to be freshly showered. As we bounced down the dirt road I wondered about the large, leather bag my passenger had

put on the floor of the backseat. The bag was odd to begin with – skinny, but nearly two-feet wide and equally tall.

I nodded towards the back seat. “What’s in the bag?”

My passenger tensed for a moment and then, keeping his eyes on the road, said, “Oh that? It’s nothing.”

I stared at him for a moment but he refused to make eye contact.

As we drove down the mountain I mentioned that we would use Route 27 once we got off the mountain. Route 27 is a newer toll road that enters the southern part of San José. Generally, it is much quicker and much less populated than the heavily utilized Pan American Highway (Route 1).

My passenger stiffened. “My recommendation is Route 1.”

I looked at him out of the corner of my eye. He was still staring straight ahead but was much more anxious about our route than anyone hitching a free ride should be.

“The hospital for my X-ray is just a few blocks off of the spot where 27 ends in San José.”

He clenched his hands again but didn’t respond.

I continued driving. A few moments later he repeated, “My recommendation is Route 1. 27 is very bad, There is always lots of traffic and all of the big trucks use it.”

I knew my passenger rarely left the mountain, and when he did it was on the public bus that used Route 1

“Um... have you ever been on 27?”

My passenger avoided my gaze and stared out his window, answering softly, “No.”

I let a couple of moments pass, still confused by his odd insistence, but stuck the landing with, “Well, Route 1 comes into the wrong side of San José for me. We’re using 27.”

Nothing was said for several minutes, then my passenger began furiously talking on his cell phone. I caught snippets but for the most part, it was too fast for me. One thing was clear – it was all about our route.

After several calls and a lot of talking he turned to me and said, “When we turn off for 27 we need to stop for a minute.”

This was getting stranger by the minute, and it was not lost on me that my passenger’s wish was apparently my command.

“Why?”

“I have to give the bag to someone. It will only take a minute. There’s a gas station right after the turn. We can stop there.”

I tried arching my neck to look at the odd bag but it was largely hidden on the floor of the back seat.

“What’s in the bag again?”

He again turned toward his window and muttered, “Nothing important.”

A little unhappy and a lot leery, I stopped a few minutes later at the gas station. He immediately jumped out and said, “I’ve got to find his wife. She doesn’t have a phone.”

“Who is he? And why are we looking for his wife?”

He smiled and jogged off in the direction of the neighboring hardware store. I checked emails to distract myself from the bag. A few minutes later my passenger, now sweaty, returned. “She should be here anytime.”

I checked the time. My appointment for the X-ray loomed. “How long is anytime?”

“Fifteen minutes.”

I knew from experience that this could mean anything. “Really?”

He smiled and said, “More or less.” He then ran off in the other direction.

About 20 minutes later my now very sweaty passenger opened the back door and grabbed his bag. The ends of a couple of tail feathers from a rooster now protruded from the top. He slammed the door and yelled, “Be right back.”

I noticed that my car almost immediately smelled better. It wasn’t me that stank; it was a rooster that had been amazingly quiet the entire way down the mountain. A rooster that quite likely was used in the illegal, but quite popular underground cock-fighting ring in the area.

When he returned, the rest of our drive was quiet but still uncomfortable. I had my X-ray, which showed that my surgically repaired hand was still screwed together. I fired up my beast in the hospital parking lot and gathered my bearings for the drive to the hardware store on the northwest side of San José. Just as I was about to let out the clutch my passenger noisily cleared his throat. I turned, confused and now expecting the worst.

“What about the lamp?”

I bit my tongue a little. “What lamp?”

He pulled a scrap of paper from his pocket with the name of a shop. I had never heard of it and had no idea where it was (a given for me in San José). He pushed the paper toward me.

“Where is this?”

To my surprise, the same guy that had used his phone to track our progress every step of the way on Route 27 – which I already knew by heart – shrugged.

"You don't know where it is? I don't understand."

He pulled out his phone and began furiously typing on Google Maps. I counted to 10, then 20. We needed to make this pass by the hardware store – that was on our way back home – and then get the heck out of San José before the traffic descended. I sighed and pulled out my phone too. Within a few seconds, I found a name that was very similar to the one written on this piece of paper. It was all the way out of San José close to a neighboring area to the east (Cartago). The exact direction I did not want to go.

Forty-five minutes later we continued to reroute through dead-end streets in some rough looking neighborhoods. It was clear that the Google map car had never been through this area – or had not survived the trip. Neither of us had any idea where this store was, or if it even existed. The third time I passed over the same highway I pulled over to the trash-laden side of the road and declared that I was done.

"I have no idea where we are. I'm sorry but we've got to make it all the way across San José before the traffic and I don't want to drive up the mountain in the dark."

He opened his mouth. Then shut it. He turned and looked out his window again, obviously unhappy with me.

I felt a little guilty as I tried to find directions to the hardware store. It's not my fault, I reasoned. He doesn't even know where this place is – and he didn't tell me anything about this lamp, or the rooster.

We made a series of turns back through the shady neighborhoods and soon found ourselves queued up in traffic at a red light. As we waited I looked around this part of Costa Rica that I had never seen, and my stomach dropped. To our left was a derelict shopping center and on the weathered, broken listing of businesses was the name of the store scribbled on his paper.

A few minutes later we found ourselves in the middle of a shopping mall that had long ago died but had not yet had the good grace to acknowledge it. The store with the magic lamp turned out to be one of the few things still operating. It wasn't actually a store but was instead a repository for things ordered on the internet via monthly installment plans. Another half-hour of waiting later, my passenger happily clutched a small white box to his chest as we walked back to my car.

I eyed the box dubiously. It was too small to hold a rooster. It also looked awfully tiny for a lamp. I didn't ask.

We hit the worst of the traffic and it took well over an hour just to make it back to San José – to sit in even more horrific congestion as we tried to make our way to the hardware store. Many hours later I finally got home with little to show for it other than an empty gas tank.

The memory of this journey, like the odor of a smelly farm animal, will eventually fade. Until then my trips to San José will likely be solitary experiences that involve Route 27, only planned stops, and no chickens – unless they are purchased frozen and reside in the cooler.

You can read more about life in the Monteverde community by going to: www.marshall-cobb.com



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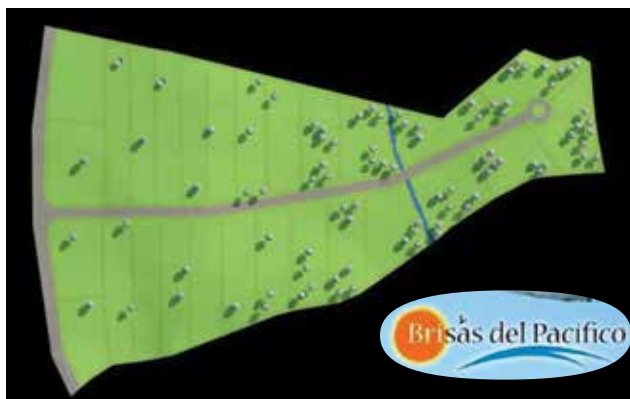
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by Katya DeLuisa

Healthy Aging in Costa Rica

Who wouldn't dream of living in Paradise, especially after retiring? Costa Rica is considered to be a paradise by thousands of visitors each year, and has become a number one retirement destination. It's a beautiful country abounding with exotic wildlife, tropical jungles, pristine beaches, and lush mountains. The climate is temperate, the cost of living low, and Costarricans are warm and friendly.

But truthfully, life in paradise isn't perfect. The experience of a short visit can be quite different from becoming a full time expat; it is not the same as it may seem when staying at one of the all-inclusive resorts on a beautiful beach. Don't be fooled by those gated communities, high-rise condos, shopping malls, or upscale beach communities; although the country may seem quite modern, it remains a developing nation with unreliable utilities and many unpaved roads. Moving to Costa Rica is not like moving to Spanish-speaking Miami Beach!

Lots of expats, however, do find it a desirable place to live; according to the U.S. State Department there are about 70,000 U.S. citizens residing in Costa Rica, and the number of Social Security checks collected here has increased 67 percent since 2002. And, many people don't always wait for retirement to settle in here; real estate agents report increasing property sales to people who plan yearly visits until they can live here full-time after retirement.

Unfortunately, many of the people retiring here tend to bring lots of baggage; not only the "physical stuff," but they also arrive with staunch judgments, old habits, and worse, unrealistic expectations of continuing their previous way of life uninterrupted, just in a nicer climate. If you are one of those, you are probably setting yourself up for major culture shock, ending in disillusionment, disappointment, and departure. Life in this country is just life; sometimes it is wonderful and other times challenging. Let's face it, living in a foreign country takes adaptability, and Costa Rica is a foreign country.



Despite the challenges, expats have been happily settling here for decades, and during the last three generations some uniquely diverse groups of retirees have made this country their home. So, what type of people move here and establish a satisfactory life, and what can they expect? Here's an overview.

The majority of today's new arrivals come largely from one age group: The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946-1964. Many in this generation were part of the 60s social revolution in which they fought against war and inequality, created new sexual norms, and became the harbingers of change worldwide. Today they are innovative, informed, techno-savvy, creative, and idealistic. They are predominately wealthier than the previous generation, are world travelers, and are into ecology, social issues, and self improvement.

The Boomer generation is active and adaptable. Witnessing the decline of aging parents has made them aware of the importance of healthy aging. To them, retirement isn't just playing golf or the weekly bridge games; they run marathons, join gyms, and exercise regularly. Yoga, meditation, and tai chi are commonly interwoven into their routines, and many prefer organic foods over the chemically laden packaged variety. Some would rather experiment with alternative healing methods preferring

acupuncture, chiropractic work, homeopathy and herbal therapies, over allopathic medicine and traditional healthcare. They arrive with different expectations than former generations and expect to continue a healthy lifestyle. These are realistic expectations because, lucky for them, Costa Rica's present phase of development allows them to have those things.

Nowadays most of the larger supermarkets have health food sections, even offering non-gluten products. Family owned "Macrobiotica" (health food) shops are available in most towns, and sell vitamins, herbals, and chemical free products. Even in the small beach town of Dominical, Mama Toucan's health food store offers an impressive array of national and imported health items and organic groceries.

Practitioners of alternative medicine are plentiful and classes in yoga and meditation are easily found. Most populated areas in Costa Rica have gyms and organized cultural events, and even smaller towns have cultural centers offering classes and artistic activities.

Both rural and urban areas have weekly farmers markets (ferias) where at least a few booths offer organic produce, and all-organic farmers markets, combining both expat and local vendors, are beginning to show up all over the country. San José's "Feria Verde" has over 2,000 visitors every Saturday, and Tinamastes, a tiny mountain village in the Southern Zone, has an organization, "Vida Organica," who run their weekly organic market and teach organic farming. Many Boomers are interested in sustainable living, and areas like San Isidro De General, which abounds with small organic farms, offer classes and volunteer opportunities.

Eldercare facilities are scarce and most are out-dated and ill-equipped. However, this is changing; Verdeza in Escazú is a forerunner of the modern, U.S. style, three-stage senior facility; a sign of things to come. Additionally, there is a global movement called co-housing which, for aging Boomers, can be a viable alternative to a senior care facility. It has been predicted that co-housing is destined to eventually replace or outnumber the antiquated eldercare facilities in Costa Rica very soon.

All modern-day retirees are required by law to join the Caja, the national healthcare system, as a condition of residency. Paradise isn't perfect and, as with most such national health systems, there are difficulties and hurdles, like filled waiting rooms, rotating doctors, long waits for tests or medicines, and extended waits, sometime years, for operations. There are, however, now many

modern hospitals which accept private insurance (but not Medicare) and many retirees have both Caja and private insurance coverage.

Living in Costa Rica can be a rewarding and exciting way to spend retirement. I arrived here in 1980, have raised three children as a single mother, and never looked back. I have weathered many challenges, but my wonderful life has taught me that to live here successfully one needs to have adaptability, patience, flexibility, acceptance, and a huge appreciation of the culture. If that is you, you are a good fit for living here. For me, this 70-year-old Boomer continues to love my life in Paradise with my only remaining expectation being to live out the rest of my days enjoying the many benefits this wonderful country affords.

Katya DeLuisa is an artist who has witnessed three decades of Costa Rica's evolution and been an integral part of its growth. She was a forerunner in eco tourism, published the first tourist maps, developed the country's initial program for street children, and ran a senior transition service for aging expats. She can be reached at: kdeluisa@yahoo.com

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16 LIFE IN THE SOUTHERN ZONE

by Carol Blair Vaughn

Blue Jay to Bubba: The Story of Costa Rica's Most Unique Animal Sanctuary



What happens in Costa Rica when a rescued feral animal is too injured to ever return to the wild, but is not at the end of its natural life? iRescue Animal Sanctuary steps in. And what a blessing that is for both the animals and the overcrowded animal sanctuaries throughout the country.

The sad truth is that Costa Rican animal sanctuaries are overwhelmed by wild animals, many too injured or handicapped to ever return to the wild and survive. These animals siphon off scarce and valuable resources; think veterinary care, food, living space, labor, and of course, money. The sanctuary becomes severely compromised in its operational resources. The animals find themselves disabled, confined to a small space, and often ignored due to overcrowding of the sanctuary, combined with insufficient staffing. These animals usually do not live very long. These animals need a compassionate animal-retirement “forever home.”

The mission of iRescue is to save those doomed creatures who have nowhere else to go and often have been harmed by humans, automobiles, or misguided pet owners who think a wild raccoon might make a fun pet - only to lose interest soon thereafter. iRescue provides these animals with a comfortable existence for their final years, including healthy food, vet care, and a custom habitat where they can live out the remainder of their lives in peace and comfort. They are located in Pejibaye in Costa Rica's Southern Zone.

The mission statement for the organization states, “Here at the iRescue Sanctuary we are committed to providing permanent housing, care, and quality of life to a very special category of animals. These are the animals and birds that can never be released back into the wild because of permanent disability or severe over-domestication.”

What a charming group of animals iRescue has collected A standout example is “Bubba,” a White-nosed coati (known in Costa Rica as a pizote), who was found as a tiny baby, barely alive, and brought to iRescue in an empty mayonnaise jar. In the subsequent 12 years Bubba has become an ambassador for his species, appearing on TV more than ten times. He now kicks back in his retirement enclosure with several raccoon buddies.

Also living a retirement Life of Riley are “Hook” the one-eyed Osprey, “Blossom” the Porcupine, the raccoons “Jack” and “Jill,” a Hawk, a white-tailed deer and twin fawns, “Earl the Squirrel” and his buddies, along with birds too numerous to count. The birds live in twin geodesic domes, which need to be replaced soon due to tropical corrosion. The food preparation area of the sanctuary needs to be updated and moved - funds are needed for this project - food prep is an endless task with so many animals with special diets.

Even more amazing at iRescue is the staff that keeps the place functioning smoothly, despite the challenges of unique animal diets, living-space needs, and animals just not meant to cohabitate.

Mike Graeber is the Managing Director and visionary force behind iRescue. Mike is a craggy faced outdoorsman with an animal-whisperer aura which allows him to walk into the hawk enclosure holding only chunks of raw chicken, and emerge unscathed. He manages all facets



of the operation with ease and kindness toward both the animals and his staff. Mike began his animal rescue mission at age ten when he found an injured Blue Jay and nursed it back to full health. He has operated two other animal rescue organizations prior to his involvement in iRescue.

The onsite veterinarian is a Tica named Dr. Pricilla Ortiz, who is doing amazing stem cell research, as well as miraculously curing blind and handicapped animals as part of her regular pet care. Flavia Fiorillo, an Italian student of animal care, is on site feeding and caring for animals and keeping the sanctuary running seamlessly and happily. Juan Luis Torres Vargas is General Manager of the mother farm on which iRescue operates and is master of all upkeep and maintenance. This is an incredibly small, yet powerful team, who keep the 500-acre Sanctuary functioning.



iRescue is funded completely through donations. The land was donated seven years ago by American philanthropist John Merritt, who still visits and supports the Sanctuary. He has built a mansion made entirely of bamboo on the property where distinguished visitors may soon be able to stay. The Sanctuary has launched a new website, and is planning a fundraising drive to support their Animal Kitchen Project, Dome Project, Perico Project, Jaguar Project, vet clinic and animal bodega, and other needed additions and improvements to the Sanctuary. These are ambitious goals, but ones Graeber plans to achieve with the help of community donations, and corporate sponsorships. And of course, his amazing staff.



The Sanctuary works closely with MINAE, Costa Rica's Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía, the government organization in charge of the environment and animals. MINAE brings many animals they find injured or in distress directly to iRescue, knowing they will be well attended.

Want to help iRescue in their animal rescue mission? The easiest way to support this wonderful endeavor is by going to <https://irescuewildlife.org> and clicking the

Donate button. At least look at the photos of the animals enjoying their recycled lives in the mountains high above Ojochal - enjoying their own Pura Vida paradise. It will surely warm your heart, and hopefully inspire you to give generously to support this vital nonprofit organization, saving injured animals of the jungle and rainforest.

iRescue Animal Sanctuary is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, meaning that Americans can deduct any and all donations to them off their U.S. tax returns, even though the sanctuary is operated in Costa Rica.

Photo credits for this article: Bryan Fabio Herrera.

Carol Blair Vaughn was raised in Latin America. She holds a Master's Degree in Performing Arts and retired from a career as a college professor of Dance and Theatre in Washington, D.C. Carol has written for Inside Costa Rica, El Residente, and The Costa Rica Star. She lives in the Southern Zone, in the town of Quebradas. Carol's first book, Crazy Jungle Love, the story of Ann Patton's three murder trials in Costa Rica was recently released on Amazon as a Kindle book. It is also available in the ARCR office in paperback. Contact Carol at: carolvaughn2012@gmail.com

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GUANACASTE... FROM A HAMMOCK (19)

Geoff Hull

The Cure

I've not been myself lately. I tend to over-think my experiences and lately have become overwhelmed with things in my life. I find myself walking around in circles with a blank stare, looking shell-shocked: health, family, loved ones, pets, home, transportation, finances, world events and, mostly, my expectations, have left me feeling a self-pity of hollowness and hopelessness that I hoped I'd never experience.

I also haven't been in the ocean in months. No wonder I'm punching walls and can't finish a sentence without using an F-bomb somewhere in it. How did so much entropy, change and chaos occur so rapidly?

Finally! Was it an alignment of the planets? A divine need? A primitive drive? I don't know, but a powerful and desperate yearning gets me and my board back into the warm ocean, despite the many perceived obstacles that have been keeping me from it. Ahhhhhhhh, I remember again the main reason why I live here.

I paddle through some gentle waves to the calm area just outside of them. It feels so good to be back in the water. I pick a little rising hump coming my way and go for my first wave in too long a time. Everything slows, my eyes dilate, and I heft my old bones up and plant my feet on the wax. Suddenly I am gliding along to a rhythm provided by the magic of the Pacific. It's a short and gentle ride, but I am exhilarated, renewed. I am also exhausted by the time I paddle back out. I sit up and try to catch my breath; it's been elusive of late.

I am grateful to see Sámara once again from this vantage point out here on the warm water. It is stunningly beautiful now that we're nearing the tropical wet season. Clouds, every shade between glistening white and dark, smoky gray, compete for sky above the jungle covered hills surrounding the town. Rain will start soon. I sit mesmerized. Thunder echoes from far away. My mind let's go, my breath calms. There is no anger, frustration, or sorrow here. My body shivers as it let's go of the cares that have been bothering me.

I am at peace. I close my eyes.

I hear a voice yell toward me, "Wait!"

I open my eyes and about 15 meters away is Didier, a local Costa Rican surf instructor, who is paddling outward and staring back at me.

What's he mean, "Wait?" I tilt my head. He points in front of him, and yells again, "WAVES!"

I look behind me to where he's pointing and I see a rogue swell of large overhead waves which are going to break right on top of where I am daydreaming. I had misunderstood Didier's first warning; he had said "waves" not "wait." He was looking at me with a bewildered smirk on his face, like, "Paddle you fool!"

Oh crap, they are kinda big! I paddle hard, huffing and puffing towards the growing wall of water approaching to eat me. My heart ricochets off various ribs before seeking comfort in my neck. The wave is almost cresting and I'm either going to just barely make it or I'm going to get destroyed. I'm gassed. With the strength of a twig, I press the tip of the board downward and duck dive into the vertical wall in front of me. The immense liquid power passes around, through, and past me, but luckily doesn't grab me. I pop out on the other side with an audible gasp

and compel my arms to keep paddling, knowing I still have to get past a few more waves. Where did these come from? And why do my arms feel like two wet noodles?

I finally get outside this freaky swell and find myself panting next to Didier. He's young, strong, in great shape, and maybe has 3 percent body fat covering his six-pack abs. He sits up on his board, crosses his arms like a disappointed father ready to lecture his son. He pauses as he watches this decrepit, old gringo try to recover, and says calmly, "Less hanging out, more surfing, OK, my friend"? and he paddles off and catches the next wave with ease. The wave brings its energy, Didier brings his. They combine together synergistically. Words to live by Didier, words to live by.

I got home and rinsed the sand off my feet as the rain started. I plopped down in a chair and came across this in a surf magazine:

"I realized that those waves were like the challenges life throws at you. Some of them are small enough that you can plank through them, others are too big, and the best way to handle those is to dive, right before it hits you, and then to relax as it washes over you. And

most importantly, when it feels like you're absolutely out of control, do not panic. When you do that and you keep paddling, then eventually you'll paddle all the way out. Out there it's a whole different world, it's calm and it's peaceful. You can just sit on your board, bobbing up and down on the ocean and enjoy the view while waiting for the perfect wave to surf."

How perfect! I might add one thing to this article ... make sure you paddle all the way out! Seems like a rogue set can still get you in that calm and peaceful world.

So, for those going through a rough time now ... and it seems a lot are, it helps to remember what I had forgotten: Gratitude = Happiness. Pay attention to the quiet subtlety of life, but don't turn your back to reality... and keep paddling ... and breathing. As they say, you can't stop the waves, but you can select which ones to ride out.

Geoff Hull is a retired fire service Captain and Paramedic from California. He and his family have lived in Playa Sámara since he retired in 2010. He spends his days beach-bumming, surfing, gardening, and wrestling his memoirs into a future book. Read excerpts from them at: www.fireflashbacks.wordpress.com

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Teenage Mutant Ninjas...

Turtles are fascinating, and people here are very aware of them, with tourists going to visit the beaches to see their eggs and watch their struggles as they are born. Funny that everyone is so aware of the large sea turtles, yet almost nobody knows or speaks of their smaller cousins, who are around perpetually.

With a large variety of species, from mud turtles, to freshwater, and even snapping turtles, there are actually very few areas in Costa Rica that do not host some species of these small, armored reptiles. Of course, different species inhabit various locations, so if you were on a hunt to view them all you would have to do some extensive traveling. Two of the varieties that may be encountered more widely are the amarilla and the snapping turtle.

Though their habitats can be found from coast to coast, the snapping turtle is not necessarily easy to find. They can be quite large, up to 34kg and 50cm long. This variety has been abnormally persecuted by humans for their aggressive demeanor and prized flesh, a detriment to their being large. Generally they move slowly and stay out of sight, even if stepped on in water. When approached, they will simply pull their heads into their shell.

The amarilla is also ubiquitous. A much smaller turtle at 16 cm, they are very easy to distinguish by the broad yellow stripes on the side of the head and neck. They live in a variety of aquatic locations, including small ponds and streams as well as on land in wet and damp forests.

The very small (12 cm) *Kinosternon angustipons* is more commonly found on the Caribbean side of the country. That area also hosts a large variety of other species, including the brown forest turtle, the black river turtle, and the tropical slider turtle, a moderately sized aquatic species.

The Pacific side is where the *tortuga candado*, measuring about 27cm, can be found. It resides in various lowland terrains and waters. In the same general area is the red turtle, of which the local variety, at 16-20 cm, is counted among the most beautiful turtles worldwide; their head, neck, limbs, and carapace are usually marked with bright red, orange and/or yellow stripes. These can be discovered in aquatic or moist habitats throughout most of the northwest area of Costa Rica.

Turtles really are creatures of beauty, and are survivors, with specimens having been discovered dating back over 200 million years. They feed on a variety of substances and creatures, and have been able to adapt long term to many environments, both on land and in water. They are really very interesting, and even fun, to observe and enjoy, more so in their own habitats.

Added to these, there are the varieties of saltwater species that can be viewed around the coastlines here, and it is easy to see that the turtle has held a very special place in the history of the region, dating well back to the first peoples who inhabited the land. Why, it's enough to create a whole new sector of tourism based on these ancient creatures – maybe we should call it Tour-tle-ing?



Map of Palmares



Places of interest

1. Parque de Palmares
2. Reserva Nat. Madre Verde
3. Plaza La Recta
4. Plaza Buenos Aires
5. Polideportivo
6. Piscinas Municipales
7. Municipalidad de Palmares
8. Mercado Municipal
9. Feria del Agricultor
10. Conservatorio de Música
11. Redondel de Palmares
12. Escuela Central de Palmares
13. Colegio San Agustín
14. Col. Bilingüe de Palmares
15. UNED

16. Cementerio de Palmares
17. Correos de Costa Rica
18. Estación de bomberos
19. Campo ferial de Palmares
20. Centro Médico San Rafael
21. Estadio Jorge Solís
22. Cancha de fútbol 8
23. Parroquia de Palmares
24. Terminal buses ATP /
Terminal buses Carbachez
25. Banco Nacional
26. Banco de Costa Rica
27. BAC Credomatic
28. Gasolinera

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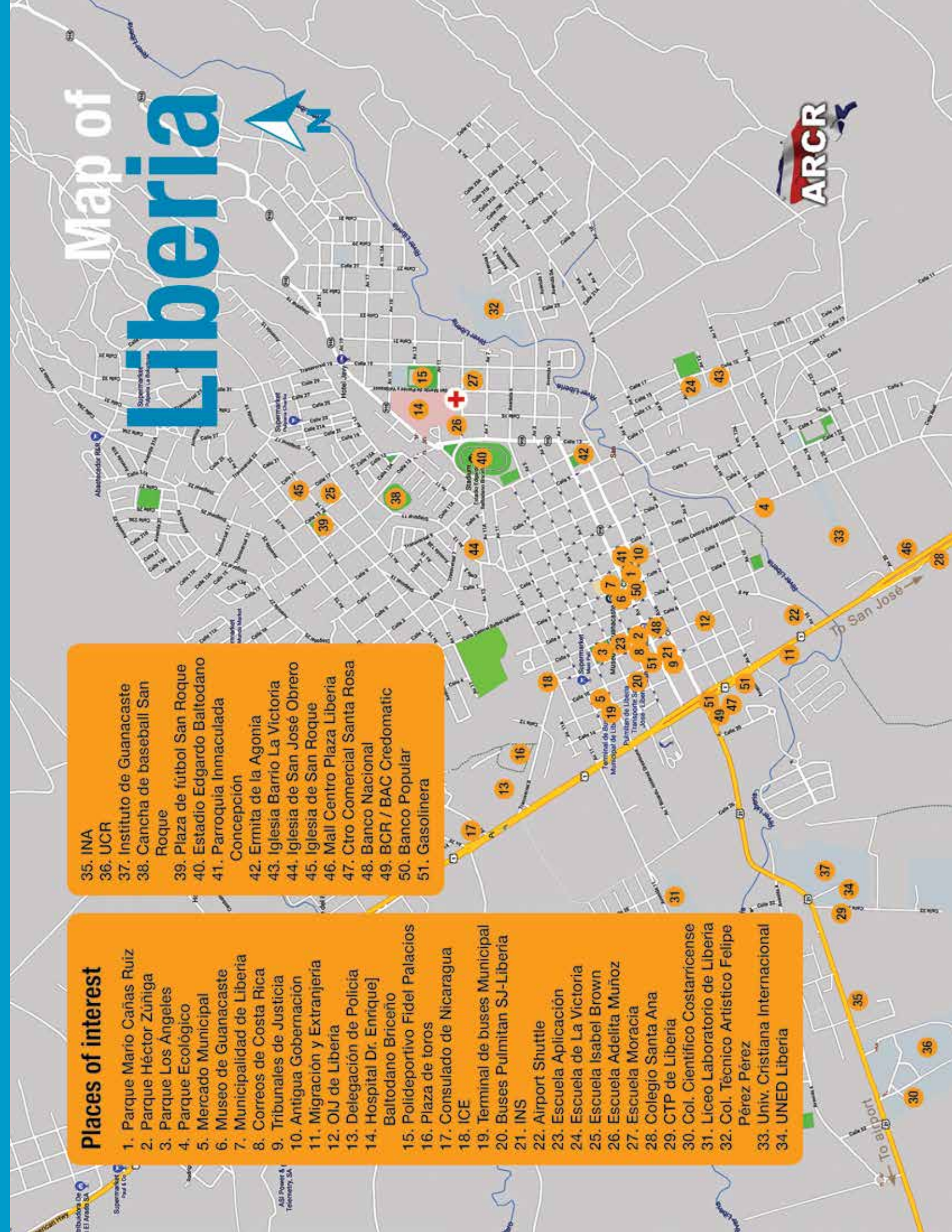
Map of Liberia




Places of interest

1. Parque Mario Cañas Ruiz
2. Parque Héctor Zúñiga
3. Parque Los Angeles
4. Parque Ecológico
5. Mercado Municipal
6. Museo de Guanacaste
7. Municipalidad de Liberia
8. Correos de Costa Rica
9. Tribunales de Justicia
10. Antigua Gobernación
11. Migración y Extranjería
12. OIJ de Liberia
13. Delegación de Policía
14. Hospital Dr. Enrique] Baltodano Briceño
15. Polideportivo Fidel Palacios
16. Plaza de toros
17. Consulado de Nicaragua
18. ICE
19. Terminal de buses Municipal
20. Buses Pulmitan SJ-Liberia
21. INS
22. Airport Shuttle
23. Escuela Aplicación
24. Escuela de La Victoria
25. Escuela Isabel Brown
26. Escuela Adelita Muñoz
27. Escuela Moracia
28. Colegio Santa Ana
29. CTP de Liberia
30. Col. Científico Costarricense
31. Liceo Laboratorio de Liberia
32. Col. Técnico Artístico Felipe Pérez Pérez
33. Univ. Cristiana Internacional
34. UNED Liberia

35. INA
36. UCR
37. Instituto de Guanacaste
38. Cancha de baseball San Roque
39. Plaza de fútbol San Roque
40. Estadio Edgardo Baltodano
41. Parroquia Inmaculada Concepción
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43. Iglesia Barrio La Victoria
44. Iglesia de San José Obrero
45. Iglesia de San Roque
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FROM THE EMBASSIES

25



Just arrived in Costa Rica? This is an incredible country with unsurpassed natural beauty and a friendly, laid back culture. There are, however, some precautions that every visitor should take. Below are some tips and common sense steps you should make to assure your stay is a pleasant and safe one.

Know Your Environment: Costa Rica lies in an active seismic zone; small earthquakes are commonplace and authorities sometimes limit access to national parks near active volcanoes for safety. During the rainy season, from May to November, heavy rains can cause flooding, wash out roads, or even temporarily cut off some destinations. Pay attention to instructions from emergency responders and exercise caution in the event of a shift in prevailing conditions.

Do not travel or walk alone after dark or in isolated areas. Be particularly cautious on secluded beaches; criminals target such isolated areas. When traveling, use only clearly marked buses or taxis, as unlicensed taxi drivers have been linked to a variety of crimes.

Beach Safety: Costa Rica boasts world-famous beaches, but many have dangerous rip currents with neither lifeguards nor warning signs. Even strong swimmers should exercise extreme caution when swimming in the ocean. Surf can be unpredictable; rogue waves have the ability to knock you down and drag you out where it is very difficult to swim. Do not swim while drinking.

Drink Responsibly: The vast majority of arrests, accidents, and violent crimes suffered by U.S. citizens in Costa Rica involve excessive alcohol. Know your drinking companions and stay in a group of friends who have your safety in mind when in clubs, bars, out walking in dimly-lit areas, or in a taxi at night. Visitors found alone or incapacitated have been victims of sexual assault, robbery, and physical assault. Watch your drink at all times. Intoxicated young women may be targeted for assault.

Driving and Vehicle Rentals: Costa Rican roads may not always be fully developed with many major highways only having two lanes. To reach many common tourist destinations, one must drive on unimproved

roads or through particularly challenging terrain. The road network is a key component of the Costa Rican commercial transportation system, with frequent instances of agricultural machinery and large trucks slowing travel. Allow additional time for any trips to offset probable delays. Please avoid dangerous maneuvers, such as passing in no passing zones.

Remember that street traffic in Costa Rica can be unpredictable or difficult to navigate. Watch out for pedestrians crossing streets unpredictably, and be sure to use a marked cross walk yourself!

Take extra care if you choose to rent a car. Inspect equipment carefully and avoid old or rundown vehicles. Ask to see a copy of the operator's business license and inquire about their medical and liability insurance coverage in the event of accident or injury. Consider taking your valuables with you if leaving your car; never assume a locked vehicle is 100 percent secure. And, never drive after drinking.

Hospitalization in Costa Rica: Accidents in Costa Rica can result in difficult and expensive medical situations. Local doctors and hospitals may not accept U.S. medical insurance policies or Medicare/Medicaid, and private medical providers typically expect immediate cash payment before rendering medical services. Medical evacuations to the United States easily cost in excess of \$15,000. Consider purchasing separate traveler's insurance for medical costs, or review your existing plan's overseas coverage before you travel.

Getting Help from the Embassy: An arrest during your travels can result in a messy legal situation. Your U.S. citizenship will not help you and will not exempt you from prosecution under the Costa Rican criminal justice system. U.S. Embassy officials can visit you in jail, provide information about Costa Rica's legal system, and give you a list of local attorneys or doctors. We cannot arrange for reduction of charges, your release from jail, or payment of medical, hospital, or other bills; you are responsible for your own costs. Contact the Embassy if you are a victim of crime or your passport has been lost or stolen.

Still have questions or want to know more? Visit our web site at cr.usembassy.gov, where you can find this article with some embedded handy links with more information. You can also contact us via phone at +506 2519-2000 or by email at ACSSanJose@state.gov. Pura vida!



Wellbeing for All

In early June, the British Embassy was pleased to collaborate with the Costa Rican government in its mission to promote the country's involvement in the Wellbeing Economies Alliance, a movement aimed at achieving sustainable wellbeing for all, rather than focussing narrowly on GDP as a measure of growth.

The Wellbeing Economies Alliance, or WE All for short, promotes initiatives that lead to more inclusive growth, such as promoting the use of renewable energies, conscious capitalism, a more comprehensive education system and access to healthcare, among other sustainable goals.



The Ambassador with WE All co-founder, Katherine Trebeck, at right.

The Embassy financed the attendance of Ms. Katherine Trebeck, co-founder of the Wellbeing Economies Alliance, at the OMINA Summit, a meeting point for entrepreneurs, innovators and people interested in building a collective future based on sustainable practices.

For the UK in particular, this global commitment to achieving sustainable wellbeing, and its link to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, is key to successfully facing global challenges such as eliminating poverty and hunger, reducing gender inequality and inequality in general, taking urgent action against climate change, and restoring land and marine ecosystems.

The Embassy hosted a reception for OMINA Summit attendees, and the British Ambassador, Ross Denny, was pleased to have had the chance to chat with many of them and to learn about their work and experience in this area.



The Ambassador Ross Denny with designer Donna Karan.

This initiative has many positive implications for Costa Rica's economic development, and it is hoped that it will allow the country to position itself as a leader in innovative and high impact sustainable investment.

The UK welcomes Costa Rica's visionary thinking and dedication to a more sustainable and inclusive kind of growth and looks forward to working alongside the Costa Rican government to promote the countries' shared values and commitments.



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by Michael Miller

Why I Choose to Live Downtown

I am often asked why I live in downtown San José. The question usually comes from fellow expats who are quick to point out that I could be living in a picturesque beach community on the Pacific Coast, or I could rent a nice modern house near scenic Lake Arenal. Or, perhaps, I could live on an acre or two near Atenas or Grecia and grow my own vegetables.

All those locations, and all those lifestyles, have their advantages. But I have chosen to live in San José ... not in the upscale suburbs of San José like Escazú or Santa Ana, but right in the heart of San José Centro. The real San José.

There are three main reasons why I think downtown San José, with all its imperfections, is a great place to live:

The Weather

The city brags that if you live downtown you do not need a heater or an air conditioner for your home. And that is true. Most people get along just fine with only an overhead fan. Sleeping with all the windows open, when you wake up in the morning the temperature is usually near 60 degrees, and peaks out in the afternoon at about 75 degrees (Fahrenheit). This very

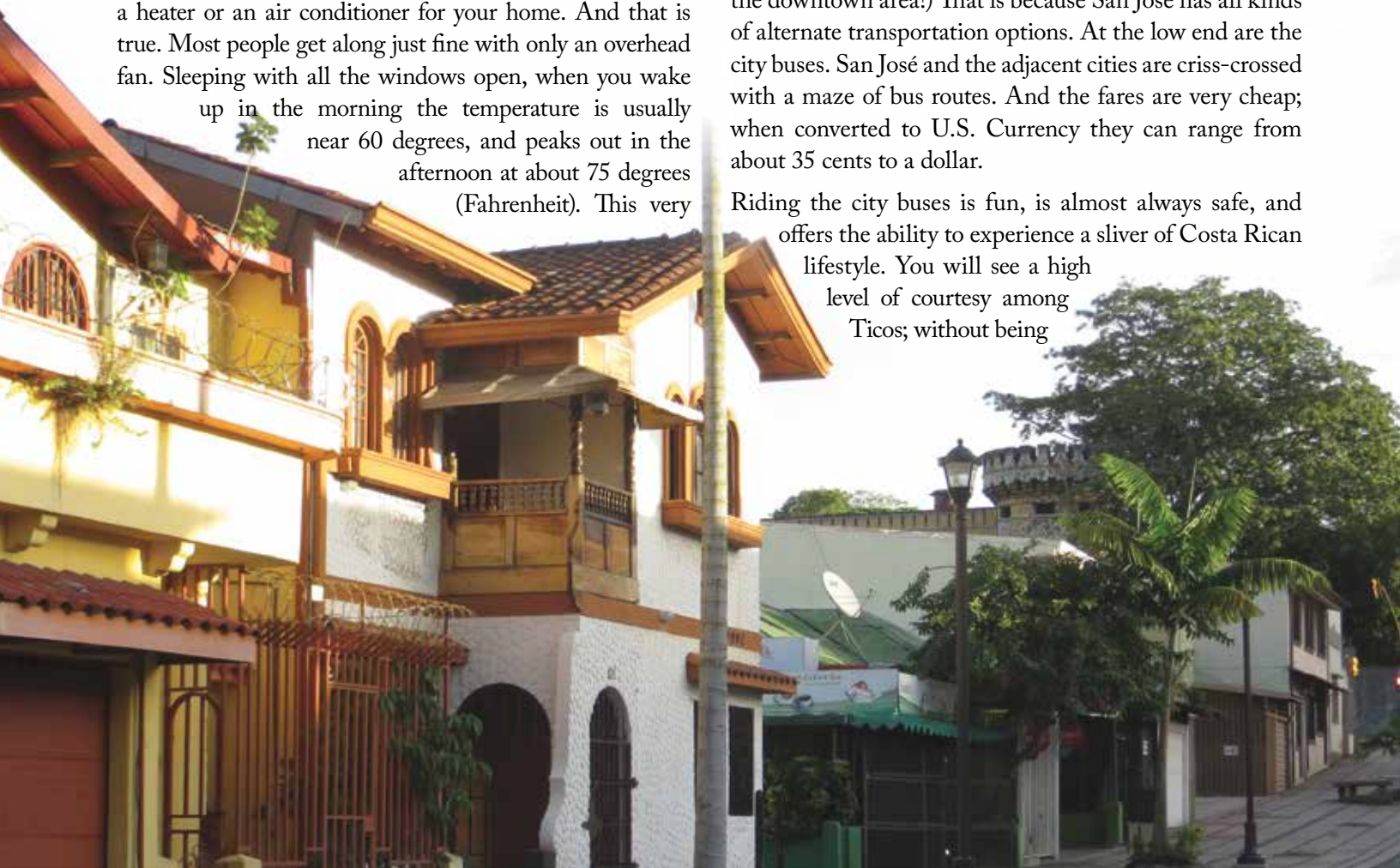
comfortable range of temperatures is consistent throughout the entire year.

By contrast, if you drive west to the popular town of Atenas, the afternoon temperature can be 10 degrees hotter in the daytime and much cooler at night. And if you drop down to the coastal lowlands (either coast) it is guaranteed to be very hot and very humid all day long. Keep in mind that Costa Rica lies only 687 miles north of the equator, so when you are at sea level you will be very aware that you are in the tropics. San José is almost 4,000 feet above sea level and that means you will enjoy a cooler, more comfortable temperature range.

Transportation

A second reason I like living in San José is that I don't have to own a car. (In fact, I think it is crazy to drive in the downtown area!) That is because San José has all kinds of alternate transportation options. At the low end are the city buses. San José and the adjacent cities are criss-crossed with a maze of bus routes. And the fares are very cheap; when converted to U.S. Currency they can range from about 35 cents to a dollar.

Riding the city buses is fun, is almost always safe, and offers the ability to experience a sliver of Costa Rican lifestyle. You will see a high level of courtesy among Ticos; without being



told, when waiting for a bus, they will form a line on the sidewalk and board in an orderly manner. Once on the bus, seats will be offered to the handicapped, the elderly, and always to a woman carrying a baby. Occasionally, a musician will be allowed on the bus to play guitar and sing for tips, or a vendor will come aboard to sell candy or homemade snacks. Try getting those in your car!

Then there are the taxis. The drivers are usually friendly, although they rarely speak much English, but are very reasonably priced when compared to their North American counterparts. The fares are tallied with a device, called a maria, which is regulated by the Costa Rican government, and of course, if you use Uber, the fares are pre-set and are charged to your credit card.

My personal choice of the best way to get around downtown is to walk. Assuming that you are in good health and are mobile, most everything in downtown is within walking distance. I find that I put in a couple of healthy miles a day going to the Mercado Central or one of the grocery stores, or to a coffee shop or restaurant.

In addition, downtown is a travel center. Besides the local bus routes, all the major long-distance bus lines are based in San José, so it is easy to hop on one to get anywhere in the country. Or, you can take a commuter train to some interesting suburban cities.

Shopping

San José is where Costa Rica shops; it is the retail hub of the nation. Not only is there a huge variety of places to shop for groceries, but there is a tremendous selection of them; there are modern grocery stores, small convenience stores, streetside fruit and vegetable stands, traditional Latino mercados, and once a week there are a couple of fantastic farmer's markets (ferias). The variety and selection of the food items that are available

to a shopper in San José simply cannot be matched in a small town.

Take one example, bread. There are bakeries all over Costa Rica (they are called panadarias in Spanish). However, no place offers you the variety and quality of baked goods that you can buy in an Auto Mercado super market. There you will find all the major industrial bakeries represented, along with a wonderful selection of Auto Mercado's own freshly baked products, including a large variety of whole grain, organic, and artisanal breads, as well as fluffy pastries stuffed with meats; along with cookies, cakes, and other sweet things.

In addition to groceries, you can find most anything else that you might need in downtown San José. The city's Avenida Central has been called "the biggest mall in Central America." Of course it is not a mall, but rather it is 11 blocks that have been turned into a pedestrian-only walkway, lined with stores. Here you can find department stores, clothing stores, more shoe stores than you can count, book stores, jewelry stores, electronics stores... there is even an authorized Apple/Macintosh dealer. Avenida Central is packed with Ticos shopping from sunup to sundown.

Those are just three of the reasons why I find downtown San José to be a great place to live, but there is much more. Downtown has some of the finest medical facilities in the country, including the world-class hospital, Clinica Biblica. You can find the country's best coffee and some terrific chocolatiers, and more recently the downtown has become a center for Costa Rica's internationally recognized craft beers. And of course, downtown San José is the center for the nation's banks, finance, and government.

If you have been a reader of my previous articles you know that I have been highlighting some of the wonderful features of downtown San José. It has the magnificent National Theatre, the home of the National Symphony Orchestra. It has the inspirational Metropolitan Cathedral. It has a good



Two boys on their way to school pass some fine old homes in the Barrio Amón and Barrio Otoya neighborhoods of Downtown San José



Farmers from all over Costa Rica display a vast selection of food products every Saturday morning at the Avenida 20 Farmer's Market in San José.



If you spend a little time looking around, you will find that San José has lots of neighborhoods with plenty of charm.

selection of fine restaurants. It has art everywhere, some in galleries and some out on the streets. And where else can you walk into a plaza and sit down on a park bench next to a statue of John Lennon?

Let me leave you with these thoughts. As you travel around Costa Rica you will run into expats who will tell you that they never go to Downtown San José. They will talk about it with disdain; they say it is dirty, noisy, has too much traffic. It has crime.

Well, they are right about all of those things. And so does every other city of its size. And quite frankly, San José is not a beautiful city. It does not have a dramatic ocean-front skyline like Panama City or Rio de Janeiro. It does not have a quaint colonial center like Cartagena. But it does have a spirit, an ambiance, and a presence, that no other city or town in Costa Rica has. I believe that those people who completely write-off downtown San José are short-changing themselves; it has much to offer. San José may not be pretty, but it is fascinating.

I live in downtown San José and I know that it's not for everybody. But, in my opinion, if you want to really live in this country, if you want to learn about it and to become a part of it, you need to spend at least some of your time downtown. You will learn volumes about this beautiful country and its wonderful people, and you even might learn something about yourself.

Pura Vida!

*Michael Miller is the author of the first and only guide book that focuses on Downtown San José, Costa Rica titled *The Real San José*. Paperback copies are available at the ARCR office. An electronic version of *The Real San José* is available at Amazon/Kindle. You can see additional stories that Michael has written about Downtown San José at his website: TheRealSanJose.com*

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By Tom Zachystal

U.S. Brokerage Firms Closing Accounts for American Expats

Many American citizens living abroad have recently been contacted by their U.S. brokerage firms to inform them that their accounts have either been frozen such that they can no longer change their investments or that they need to close their accounts entirely.

Fidelity, Wells-Fargo, Merrill Lynch, and others in many instances no longer want to deal with non-U.S. resident clients through their U.S. offices. Often there is little in the way of explanation, just a letter in the mail or a phone call from a broker who is following instructions and really doesn't understand the issue. At the same time, non-U.S. offices of these firms often do not have the knowledge or cannot accommodate accounts such as IRAs or 401(k) plans, or do not offer good investment options or adequate investor protection for regular brokerage accounts.

There are two regulations that govern U.S. brokerage firms' and banks' reporting and due diligence responsibilities with respect to dealing with non-U.S. residents: The "Know Your Customer" (KYC) rule and FATCA (Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act) regulations. Each is intended to make financial institutions responsible for ensuring that their clients do not partake in money laundering or tax evasion activities.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of Americans living abroad who are simply trying to maintain U.S. bank or brokerage accounts are also affected, since in many instances, rather than comply with the additional reporting and surveillance burden imposed by these regulations, their financial institution will simply close their account. If the client has many millions of dollars to invest then it is worthwhile for the U.S. financial institution to undertake the additional due diligence and reporting but, even in the case of a several-million-dollar account, for large institutions the relationship may not be valuable enough to bother with the extra reporting and oversight.

The Know Your Customer rule mandates, among other things, that a financial institution know the identity and tax status of the account owner and anyone with power of attorney on the account. Furthermore, the transactions within the account need to be monitored for signs of money-laundering activity—which involves deciding what types of transactions are "normal" based on the profile of the account owner and questioning any transactions that do not fall within these criteria. As you can imagine, this is a somewhat arbitrary standard and this is where the difficulty lies for the financial institutions. In addition, it is not just the U.S. that has KYC rules, other countries have them as well and they may differ from the U.S. rules. So the financial institution also has to worry about the KYC rules in the expat's country of residence whereas for U.S.-based clients it is only the U.S. rules that apply – an additional burden when dealing with non-U.S. residents.

Then there is FATCA. These regulations, which started phasing in at the beginning of 2013, but have really fully been put into effect in just the last year, are intended to assist IRS



efforts regarding tax compliance for U.S. taxpayers with financial accounts outside the USA. In effect, FATCA seeks to turn non-U.S. financial institutions into reporting agencies for the IRS and compels participating institutions to report to the IRS on their U.S. taxpayer-owned accounts or on any account where the owner might be a U.S. person.

While FATCA was intended to help the IRS catch U.S. tax evaders it has actually turned into a global tax compliance effort by many participating countries. In order for FATCA to work, there has to be agreement with the government of another country to make available information regarding owners of financial accounts in their jurisdiction to the United States government (specifically the IRS).

You may ask how this affects the non-U.S. resident with a U.S.-based account. The answer is that, in many cases, the agreement that countries have insisted on with respect to FATCA is reciprocal. In other words, a country will say “yes” they are willing to exchange information on financial accounts with the USA but the key word is “exchange” – that is, in return, U.S. financial institutions must also agree to provide information regarding their clients who are citizens or residents of the country

entering into the FATCA agreement with the USA. This reciprocity is the crux of the whole issue: U.S. banks and brokerage firms have to report to foreign governments on their accounts for residents of these other countries, and in many

instances they would rather shut down the account instead of doing the reporting.

Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley have recently been sending letters to many of their U.S. citizen clients living outside the USA saying that their accounts will be closed as of a certain date in the very near future. The letter

typically states something like the following:

We have conducted an extensive review of our non-U.S. resident client business to determine whether

we had the ability to continue to effectively serve your wealth and investment needs under increasing business requirements and regulatory restrictions. Having completed this analysis, we believe you would be better served by a firm or firms that can meet your comprehensive wealth and investment management needs. Therefore we will no longer be servicing your Merrill Lynch Wealth Management account(s) and/or credit facilities – effective.

The letter goes on to offer two options:

- Transfer the accounts to another financial institution.
- Have the assets distributed to you.

The two options in the letter are easier said than done. The second option may not be very attractive if it is a tax-deferred account like an IRA because there may be substantial tax and, possibly early withdrawal penalties, should the money simply be distributed. The first option may not be so easy either because there are fewer and fewer U.S. brokerage firms willing to deal with American expats.

So what can you do if you have received this letter or a similar one from another brokerage firm?

The best solution is the first option, because, if you can find a U.S. brokerage firm or investment advisor who will work with you then the accounts can simply be transferred electronically without tax consequences and without having to sell the underlying investments. The key, though, is to find a broker or advisor that specializes in U.S. expatriate clients because otherwise you risk having to go through the process again at some point in the future when maybe there will be even fewer options available.

Tom Zachystal, CFA, CFP™, is President of International Asset Management (IAM), a U.S. Registered Investment Advisor specializing in investment management and financial planning for Americans living abroad. He is a past President of the Financial Planning Association of San Francisco.

International Asset Management has been specializing in investment management and financial planning for Americans living abroad since 2002. If you need help with these issues, please contact Peter Brahm at: peterb@iamadvisors.com.

This article is for informational purposes only; it is not intended to offer advice or guidance on legal, tax, or investment matters. Such advice can be given only with full understanding of a person's specific situation.

Editor's Note: This article previously appeared in the on-line newspaper, AM Costa Rica. It is reprinted here with permission of the author.



by Jack Donnelly

Yuca: Getting to the Root of Tico Cuisine

Yuca is not yucca and it's not at all yucky. Yuca is cassava in English. It is one of a number of starchy roots important to the tropical diet. It is often sold protected with a layer of paraffin, like rutabagas in the United States.

Yuca is common in drier areas of the Americas and the Caribbean and is often used as an ornamental plant. The only part of the yucca that is edible is the lovely white flower called flor de itabo in Costa Rica. The rest of the yucca plant is poisonous. The root is highly toxic and was used by Native Americans to poison and collect fish for human consumption – illegal today.

In Tico cuisine yuca is prepared in a variety of ways. It appears in all manner of dishes – fried, boiled, stewed, etc. I can't tell you how many times I've had gringos tell me how odd the potatoes are here – they were eating yuca.

I like yuca in all its splendiferous forms, but my favorite is the enyucado. This is easily the least common way to partake of yuca and it may take some work to locate a purveyor. However, your stomach will be forever appreciative of your effort.

Enyucados are labor intensive to make. First, you boil yuca until it's very soft and mushy. The soft yuca is then mashed into a sort of dough so it can be worked into a thick oblong form – highly variable, but akin to the shape of a hot dog roll. During the process a filling is worked into the center of the enyucado. This is usually carne mechada con salsa, pulled meat with sauce, but I have seen cheese and other delights. The entire enyucado is then deep fried and eaten hot.

Enyucados can often be found in small restaurants, sodas, or stands with glass cases on the street. One good-sized enyucado makes for a decent light meal or a hearty snack. This delicacy gets my vote for the best street food in Costa Rica.

Yuca frita is simply small chunks – like thick French fries – of yuca that are deep fried. It does not absorb as much oil as potatoes do, and sits very comfortably in your stomach.



Enyucado with
meat and sauce filling

It is also far tastier and has a much more interesting texture than potatoes. If you don't want your yuca frita slathered with mayonnaise and ketchup, you should ask for the salsas to be served on the side when you order. A small plate can easily be shared by two or more people.

Yuca is also frequently boiled or stewed until it is cooked but still firm. Yuca chips are a common salty-crunchy snack – they don't absorb as much frying oil as potato chips, so they're not as calorie-laden.

Finally, yuca warrants some special attention as probably the best belly ballast for imbibing you can find. A little yuca in your system will help you soldier through the toughest pub crawl.

The name yuca comes from the Taíno language. The Taínos were one of the first New World groups encountered by Columbus in the Caribbean. Yuca bread, provided by the locals, was a dietary staple for Columbus and his crews on his voyages. The Yucatan Peninsula was so named because it was rich in yuca.

If yuca is not already part of your diet, you are missing out on a tasty aspect of Costa Rican cuisine.

Jack Donnelly has been a life-long enthusiast of Latin American folk culture. He graduated from the Universidad de las Americas in Mexico City with a degree in cultural anthropology. Donnelly is the author of COSTA RICA: Folk Culture, Traditions, and Cuisine which is available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle, also in the ARCR office. This article previously published in the Costa Rica Star.

By Allen Dickinson

Waco!

No, not the city in Texas, I am referring to the Costarrican word (pronounced “wahkoh”) used for potholes, big and small, that materialize in the paved streets and roads here. There is no prior warning of their appearance, like a sign saying, “Look out, there’s gonna be a hole here soon!” They just appear.

To be clear, there are generally three types of wacos commonly found here. Type 1 is where the top layer of asphalt has disappeared due to the effects of nature and/or pounding traffic. In this rant I am ignoring this type, because they are caused by nature (possibly assisted by poor maintenance), and concentrating on the others I’ll call Types 2 and 3, which are man-made. You know – the ones that weren’t there when you left to go shopping a couple of hours ago, but are magically there when you return.

Type 2 wacos are the square ones. They are obviously made by professionals; you can tell because they are

usually larger and have straight-cut sides. I believe these are accomplished by Master Waco Diggers. They are often neatly filled with dirt and rocks, which will quickly disappear and leave a tire-eating hole that is difficult to see at night and during the rainy season.

But it is Type 3 which is more of a concern to me. These wacos are apparently dug by what I believe to be non-professional, possibly amateur or beginning, hole-diggers. They are the smaller, round (or were originally of circular shape) variety. Generally, these have ragged edges and give the appearance of being created with a spoon and large hammer. These are even harder to spot from a distance, particularly at night. Encountered early in their life, they may seem benign; small holes, filled with loose dirt and/or rubble and debris, which are an inconvenience, and aren’t large enough to cause major vehicular damage. But be aware, later, like their larger brethren, when the fill material has been driven out by pounding tires, they will quickly expand in size, particularly in the rainy season, and then become hazardous, voracious, suspension-consuming beasts.

The sudden appearance of Type 3 has always mystified me. Nobody I know has ever seen anyone digging one of these holes; they just appear, often without obvious reason. When I encounter one of them as I am driving (after hollering “YIKES!” and frantically turning the steering wheel in an effort to avoid it), I ask myself, Why here? Why now?

And, I think I may have figured it out. I’m not totally sure, but here are a few possibilities I have narrowed it down to:

1. Type 3 wacos are created as part of a plot perpetrated by a secret society made up of dwarfs hired by the Professional Street Repair Masters. These small holes are dug to give the Masters more justification for their jobs.
2. Alternately, maybe these smaller holes are “training holes,” dug by Apprentices to the Masters; new hires that aren’t yet trusted to operate the high-tech tools used to make the square-sided holes, until they have proven themselves with a thousand, roughly-cut, smaller, round holes.



3. Or, perhaps these holes are dug by a clandestine group of people contracted by the car-tire and suspension component retailers, in collusion with car mechanics and garages; they are hired to go out and randomly dig what will become tire and suspension killing holes. But now that I think of it, that doesn't make sense – it requires too much collusion for Ticos.
4. OK, so what about the alignment stores? Probably not; the same collusion argument applies.
5. My last guess is that the cause could be a breed of asphalt eating termites, indigenous to Costa Rica. Maybe. That makes as much sense any of the other possibilities.

What brings this to mind is that I recently I had an up-close and personal encounter with both Type 2 and Type 3 wacos. One hundred meters of a road near my home, over which I travel five or six times a day, was completely dug up, curb to curb, and re-paved. Within 48-hours of completion of the installation of the new pavement a hole, a Type 2 square sided hole, about one meter per side, appeared. That there would soon appear a waco at that spot was foreseeable; there was a leak underneath the new paving and the water was bubbling up through the asphalt. The leak had been created by the road builders when they were laying down the new substrate, before the paving was installed. I could see that the hole was rectangular, so it had to have been dug by Masters.

But then, no more than two days later, within three meters of the first hole, one of the Type 3 wacos appeared. It was smaller, roughly 30 centimeters in diameter, and oval and with ragged edges, right there in the middle of the right hand lane; obviously not the work of Masters. I'd seen no additional leaks, no new construction nearby, nothing that explained its appearance, but there it was when I headed out the next morning. (It had appeared between 5 p.m. the previous evening and 10 a.m. the following morning, so maybe I'm not so far off and it was made by nocturnal, asphalt eating termites who feasted on the new macadam during the night.) In any case, the objective and expense of the new paving was utterly defeated by those two wacos.

And then there is a somewhat funny side to this tale. Ticos have an incredible sense of humor. Perhaps you have run across one or some of these creative warning and protest plantings in your travels? Well-meaning Ticos place various objects, including trees and plants in the most obnoxious wacos as a warning to drivers, and perhaps a notice to the municipalities (Masters) that a bit of repair is needed.



Regardless of what the originating cause for any of the wacos, one thing I have learned is that constant attention, vigilant scanning of the roadway ahead, and quick reflexes are a prerequisite for driving in Costa Rica!

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By Ivo Henfling

What are Considered Fixtures when Buying or Selling a Home?

Fixtures are one of those things about which both sides in a real estate transaction often tend to forget.

You're buying this beautiful house that you fell in love with, but after the closing you go to look at your new abode, you find out that much of what you liked is gone. Did you make a mistake? Let's see what we are talking about here.

What is a fixture? USLegal.com defines a fixture as follows: "A fixture is an item of personal property attached permanently to real estate, such as drapery rods, toilets, wet bar, or other items which could damage the premises by their removal."

Another example is a typical U.S. state statute defining a fixture: "A thing is deemed to be affixed to land when it is:

1. Attached to it by roots, as in the case of trees, vines, or shrubs.
2. Imbedded in it, as in the case of walls.
3. Permanently resting upon it, as in the case of buildings.
4. Permanently attached to what is thus permanent as by means of cement, plaster, nails, bolts, or screws."

Basically, it's pretty much common sense: personal property includes movable things, items that are fixed are not.

In Costa Rica, however, the law does not define fixtures in a real estate transaction. So, unless you include them yourself, as a buyer or a seller, you could end up fighting over them.

And, just because something is a fixture does not mean it has to stay with the home. In fact, a home seller can specifically exclude a fixture from being part of the deal. For example, one would expect a toilet to be a fixture that would stay with the home; no one would take a toilet, right? I've seen different.

Common sense aside, does it really stay? In Costa Rica it is the purchase contract which ultimately controls

what happens with a fixture. For this reason, written offers are mandatory in our offices. If a property is sold turnkey, the offer will include an inventory list attached to the "option to purchase – sales agreement" (the final agreement is written by the buyer's attorney when earnest money goes into escrow).

What's included: Often, real estate agents do not discuss what is included in the sale with the sellers; except maybe the appliances, grandmother's dining table lamp, and the curtains. Other details are forgotten and can create a problem just before closing. Therefore, it is important to try to be extremely careful, and register everything in the contract.

Appliances: In Costa Rica, appliances are almost never included in the sale, unless mentioned separately. When making the inventory list in the offer, take down the brand and model of appliances. I have seen a top of the line refrigerator and stove changed for old, non-functioning appliances on the day of the closing.

Often ovens, dishwashers, and microwaves are "built-in," but in Costa Rica, this doesn't mean they will stay.

Curtains: Curtains often stay because they won't fit the windows of another house, but don't take this for granted. You might not like the curtains because they won't match your furniture, but ask for them to stay until you get new ones made; sunrise is usually around 5:30 a.m. here, which might be a bit too early to sleep without curtains in your bedroom.

Equipment: All the equipment that is needed for the normal functioning of the house will stay with the house: power back-up, water pump, pressure tank, pool equipment, hot water tank, timer, and doorbell are the usual ones. Don't worry about the septic system, nobody will take that.

Other items: There are many other fixtures that you might not think about. Ask your agent to point them out to you. For instance:

- A kitchen island, fixed or on wheels, will match the rest of the kitchen. Therefore, the kitchen island should stay.
- Kitchen and bathroom cabinetry are fixed and should stay.
- A flat screen TV may be affixed to the wall, but it's usually not included in the sale.
- The surround sound system might have the speakers built into walls and ceilings. Discuss what will happen to these and if the sellers will repair any damage after their removal.

Walk-through: I always do a thorough walk-through of the property with my clients on the day of the closing. Is everything in place as promised? Is the water connected? Does the hot water tank still function? Is the power on? Are the appliances as promised? Is the house delivered broom clean?

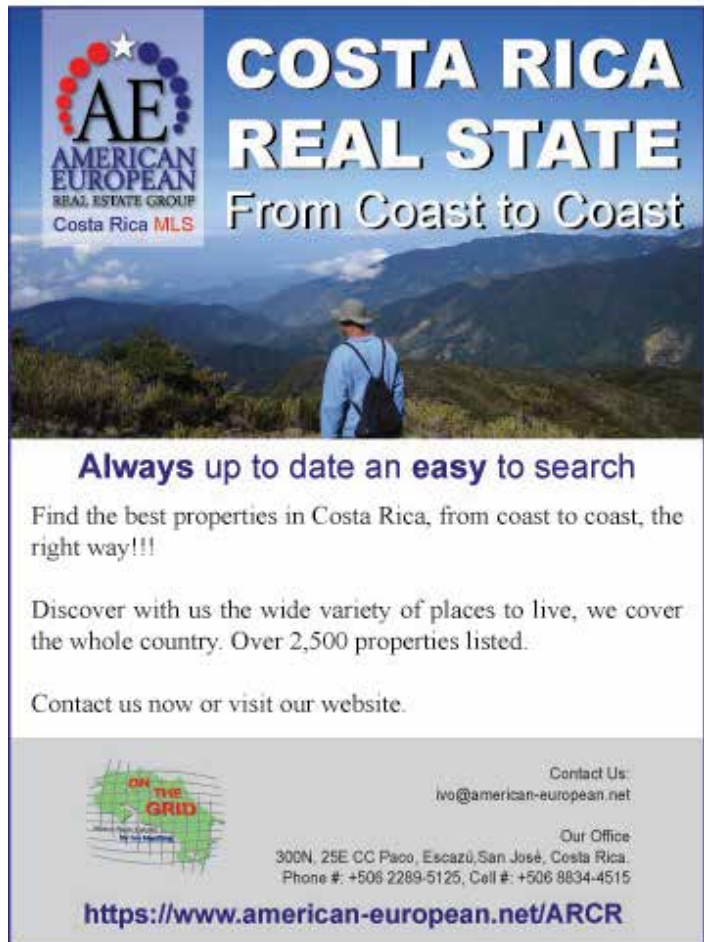
Once, in the beginning of my real estate career, I didn't think it was necessary to do a walk-through before

closing. After closing we found out the house flooded because a water pipe had broken; the seller had moved out and had not been in the house for two weeks. Who was now responsible for the damage?

Closing might not occur if everything is not in order and as agreed in the option to purchase. So, I go, with buyer and seller, right after the walk-through, to the closing. This way, all responsibilities are taken care of.

If you purchase a FSBO property, or through a real estate agent, you now know how to protect yourself. Do not make the same mistake so many others made before you!

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



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By Steve Johnson

Spanglish

According to the Urban Dictionary, Spanglish is “not quite English, not quite Spanish. It is used by Hispanic Americans to speak to other Hispanic Americans whom can understand both Spanish and English.” My Tica wife and I first heard Spanglish when we moved to New Jersey in 1972 and made friends with some Puerto Ricans. We heard things like, “Mi hermano es muy annoying” and “Voy a vacumar the rug.” We laughed at first, but then on our first Christmas Eve there, to my dismay, I heard Maria exclaim, “Ay, que lindo Christmas tree.”

I vowed never to speak Spanglish, but alas, found it almost impossible not to do so. English words tend to be shorter than Spanish words, something I probably learned in beginning Spanish class in junior high, but forgot about for many years. If your tongue is lazy, as most people’s are, you will invariably go with the shorter word, regardless of the language. When we moved back to Costa Rica in 2009 almost everyone was using the term inalámbrico (a word I could barely pronounce), but these days Ticos, just say the shorter English version, wireless or wifi (frequently pronounced weefee in Spanish). When our ten-year-old grandson hears weefee, he invariably breaks out giggling, but I have gotten used to it and actually say it myself.

My first grocery shopping list after returning to Costa Rica was in English. At one time I had been proficient in Spanish, but I was having to relearn, and believe me, at age 64, it wasn’t easy. But everyone goes shopping, right? So what better way to begin than with a shopping list? Lista de compras, and my second list was in Spanish. Now, after shopping for several years the list has settled down to something like this:

Naranjas, Wine, Apples, Beer, Piña, Peanut butter, Carrots, Café, Beets, Sugar, Milk, Rice, Butter, Beans, Dog food, Eggs, Oil, Helado, Pan.

An aside here. We shop at Auto Mercado and it is a fact that if it weren’t for Auto Mercado we wouldn’t even be living in Costa Rica. When I broached the idea of moving here I wanted to live in Monteverde or San Gerardo de Rivas. When I mentioned that, Maria had two questions: 1) Are the roads paved, and 2) Are there Auto Mercados in those towns? I got a sinking feeling as I said, no, and no. My last ditch argument was, can’t we just shop at the

local pulpería, like we did 40 years ago? The discussion ended with a firm, no way José! For her, living near an Auto Mercado was a non-negotiable condition. So now we live 17 minutes and 36 seconds from the nearest one, depending on traffic. I tend to avoid arguing about trivial things and we are both happy with the location we chose.

Grocery shopping is an excellent way to learn Spanish, and also to learn the customs. For example, when I began shopping I was pushing my cart at the same pace I was used to back in the States, I go to point A, point B, point C, and then to the cash register and I’m out the door – boom, boom, boom, bang. Ticos may drive their cars aggressively, but the opposite is true when they shop. After getting constantly tangled up in shopping-cart traffic and scaring the Ticos half out of their wits, plus getting some dirty looks, I learned to slow down a little. It makes for a less stressful and more simpático experience.

So, finally, we arrive at the question, why is my shopping list in Spanglish? One day I noticed this phenomenon and began to wonder. I mean, I made the list, surely I should know why it was in both English and Spanish. After a few seconds of pondering, the answer was obvious; brevity.

My list, I think, provides some pretty good examples of the difference between the two languages. Dog food is probably the best one. In English it is two words, two syllables and seven letters. The Spanish (alimento de perro) is three words, six syllables and 14 letters. Carrots is another good one; the English has only two syllables and seven letters, while the Spanish (zanahorias) has five syllables and ten letters. Quite the mouthful (no pun intended). On the other hand, the Spanish word is sometimes shorter. Some good examples include piña for pineapple and pan for bread. Grapefruit is an exception. If you look on the Internet it will tell you grapefruit in Spanish is toronja. But in Costa Rica, toronja is a particular kind of bitter grapefruit that is used for making candied grapefruit peel. For some reason Ticos use the English for the eating variety of grapefruit. I wonder how that happened?

Although I now sometimes resort to Spanglish, I find it difficult to listen to. Someone will be speaking Spanish in rapid fire and suddenly there is a word mixed in that completely throws me, usually an English word for which

my ears are not ready. So even though I speak Spanglish, I sometimes find it difficult to understand. I guess that makes me some kind of lingua-hypocrite.

Oh, and by-the-way, when I was trying to relearn Spanish I remembered a technique I had used when I got stuck in a conversation and didn't know the word in Spanish – just add an a or o at the end of the English word, or sometimes at the beginning. Occasionally it works; other times it can provide laugh-out-loud comic relief to the listener. For example, modern becomes moderno, car becomes carro, and sugar becomes azucar. But when you change milk to milko, it can provide endless confusion and amusement to Spanish-speakers.

Hasta la vista, baby!

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

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Is Your Head a “Safe Space”?

Much attention has been given to current college students’ demands for “safe spaces” – areas where they are protected from uncomfortable ideas, concepts, philosophies, and opinions expressed by others. What those students are demanding is freedom from being exposed to new external thoughts, concepts, ideas; things that dispute, and even defy, what those students internally hold as true – what they consider as undeniable and unchallengeable truth.

These students are seeking protection from external ideas and points of views that threaten their own. For some of us, the threat lies within. Some need protection from their own judgements and criticisms that threaten and can destroy one’s worth, competence, and integrity. A “safe space” from one’s own Inner Critic.

Everyone, at times, judges and criticizes themselves. We all need some internal guidance system to help us avoid bad decisions and actions. But for some that feedback is harsh, excessive, and unfair. Crushing our positive feelings about ourselves, damaging our self-concept and happiness.

We all have an IC. Some might think of it as our conscience, and it is similar, but it is much more than that; it is a sense within ourselves with which we constantly examine and judge every aspect of our own behavior, our actions, even our thoughts. Our IC is how think of and treat ourselves.

Our Inner Critic is influenced by our treatment by others; it is learned, formed by the way our parents and family treat us. Parents who are kind and patient with us model such treatment as the pattern for our own self-treatment. Such fortunate children are usually calm, confident, free of anxiety, and self-doubt. Children whose parents are demanding, critical, never satisfied, learn to be as fault finding and dissatisfied with themselves as their parents were with them.

From those teachings, our Inner Critic is developed - observing, evaluating, judging, and in the worst case condemning ourselves every moment of every day. Depending on it’s origin, our IC can be positive or negative. What I want to look at today is how a negative IC can affect

our lives and how we have the power to determine which kind of reaction our IC has to inputs from the outside, etc. Learning to better handle them can help us control the impact others have on our IC.

It’s been said that for some., their heads are a “dangerous neighborhood”; a place where they are routinely attacked by their persistent, unrelenting “Inner Critic”, ever alert for the slightest misstep to condemn both themselves and perhaps others as well.

As painful as such judgements may be, some are reluctant to turn off the inner voice of their mom and dad. They believe that without that critic they would get nowhere and be no one. These individuals are often chronically anxious and depressed, trying to live up to impossible expectations, hopelessly feeling they will never be good enough. Some drown their IC’s voice in drugs, alcohol, or perfectionist work habits. Others may further develop their IC after a disastrous decision or action, believing it will protect them from repeating such mistakes. Often they fail to realize the painful emotional price such “protection” costs them.

Some of us need a different sort of safe space; one that we can take everywhere we go, available at all times, not just outside the college library. We need a safe space in the private world of our inner life; somewhere that we are protected from the merciless criticism and ridicule of our own self-judgement.

To silence that critic we need to understand how it functions. Here’s an example of how my IC was influenced by something someone said:

In just three words, she ruined my day. She said, “You’re a _____.” (Fill in the blank with the most painful possible criticism that someone can level against you; the one that hits your most vulnerable aspect of self.)

That hurt! I went over the incident again and again, not finding what I was seeking because I didn’t quite know what I hoped my ruminations should provide. Gradually, as my day became busy and I was preoccupied by other concerns, the urgency of my search declined and eventually disappeared altogether.

I was involved with my day and slowly the sting of the rebuke was gone.

Until I was in bed at night.

Mentally I returned to the incident and realized I was looking for some justification for the action that had been criticized; some way to silence my Inner Critic which had the validated that woman's criticism and judgement of me. I was looking for a defense of myself. Something that would silence the IC that said, "she's right."

But I couldn't find it. Because she WAS right.

And that was a blow to how I saw myself as a decent capable person. I had to own her judgement of me. It wouldn't be honest, or demonstrate integrity, to deny it.

But she was also wrong. And I couldn't quite say exactly how.

Gradually, I realized that she took one example of my bad behavior and in criticizing it, extended it to my entire being. "You're a TOTAL _____" is what I "heard" her saying. And my IC took her side.

She was right, up to a point. I was an "_____" - in THAT moment. Then I found my safe space; I realized that I'm not like that in every moment of my life nor in every interaction. And, with that self knowledge I could accept that I did behave poorly at times - especially during the moment in question. But, I also understood that the criticism did not correctly portray who I am. It greatly exaggerated this failing of mine.

The good news? I could have integrity, self-respect, and growth by accepting her judgement of me in that moment as true. I could preserve the good parts of myself by realizing that she and my IC had overreacted and over-generalized about my character.

There was a painful-opportunity here. We all need a safe space; a way to own our shortcomings so we can overcome them and have a better sense of self and life. To avoid a HARSH Inner Critic, which does damage to some part of our sense of self, we need both: some inner guidance system which is a rational and fair judge of our behavior, keeping us in touch with our reality, and on track for a good life. A safe space where an inner supporter with an openness to the validity of the outside and inside critic, can be examined and dealt with.

Challenging Our Inner Critic.

Our inner critic has validity and power because it's correct... to a certain degree. It hits home, even if we

deny that. Think about being called "an asparagus", we'd laugh it off as silly. But when the IC is partially correct, even when it exaggerates, we accept its judgement as totally correct. Our IC accepts both its kernel of truth, and its exaggerations, as valid.

So we often need to ask ourselves, "Is that REALLY true? Am I really THAT bad?" AND, "What's correct about this criticism? Where might I need to face a painful reality and grow?" We can productively handle inner and outer criticism by owning the part that's true and rejecting the exaggeration.

Lest You Think the Complete Elimination of the IC is Warranted...

I have a friend who, to put it delicately, has trouble keeping a job. He's lost 5 in the last 5 or so years. And it's always someone else's fault. He never has any role or responsibility in his own setbacks. If it's not a "demanding, tyrannical boss who expects perfection" (those do exist), it's "jealous, envious coworkers who sabotage me because they can't perform as superbly as I do!"

I've never heard him criticize himself in any way. So he may be the exact opposite of the harsh IC we've been discussing. And I THINK he pays an employment and financial security price for lacking any inner feedback system.

The IC and Its Role in Relationships.

You've heard that we tend to see in others what we refuse to see in ourselves. Remember "seeing the dust in someone else's eye while failing to see the beam in our own"? At those times we may redirect our Inner Critic outward toward our partner who may share - in even the slightest way - the problem we have with ourselves. Not a good plan for a healthy and enduring connection. But it does work to direct our anger and disappointment with ourselves onto our loved one - momentarily - until they strike back. Ever go through that?

The Inner Critic originates outside us, become internalized, and is disowned by projecting on others. And it goes on until we create relationship problems that come back to haunt us in bed at night.

Finding that balance between harsh and healthy self-criticism is good for us, our partner, AND our happiness!

NEXT TIME: More on the self, relationships, and happiness.

Tony Johnson is a retired university mental health psychologist who lives and tries to learn from his mistakes in Ojochal. He can be reached for consultations at: johnson.tony4536@gmail.com

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

► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

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

► **Al-Anon Meetings**

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

► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

Meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 11AM at the Casa de España in Sabana Norte. Casa de España has an elevator so the building is handicap accessible. If you wish to attend please call 4034-0788, 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**

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

► **American Legion Auxiliary**

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

► **Bird Watching Club**

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

► **Canadian Club**

The Canadian Club welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons, and at our special annual events, like our Canada Day Celebration, no passport required. There is no fee or dues to pay, just sign up with your email address and we will keep you informed of Canadian Events. For information visit our website: www.canadianclubcr.com or email Pat at: canadianclubcr@yahoo.com to sign up.

► **Costa Ballena Women's Network**

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

► **Costa Rica Writers Group**

Published authors and writers; newbies, and wanna-bes make up this group, dedicated to helping and improving all authors' work, with resources for publishing, printing, editing, cover design; every aspect of the writing process. Third Thursday, January through November, Henry's Beach Café, Escazú, 11:00 a.m. Contact: bbrashears0@gmail.com, 8684-2526.

► **Democrats Abroad**

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

► **First Friday Lunch**

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

► **Little Theatre Group**

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

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

► Marine Corps League

Meets the 2nd Saturday of the month at 11AM at the Tap House at City Place in Santa Ana. We are looking for new members. Former Marines and Navy Corpsmen can be regular members. All other service members are welcome to join as associate members. For information call Andy Pucek at 8721 6636 or email andy@marinecorpsleaguecr.com

► Newcomers Club

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

► PC Club of Costa Rica

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

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

PZIWC was formed in November 2009 to promote friendship between English speaking women in Pérez Zeledón and, through friendship, to make positive contributions to our local community. The PZWIC meets for luncheons on the SECOND Tuesday of the month, hosts Walkers Day on the THIRD Tuesday of the month, and has a Games Day (board and card games) on the FOURTH Tuesday of each month. Event sites change frequently, so call or check our website for locations. More information can be obtained from Jane Gregson at 8899-6859 or Cathy Carrolan at 8384-8281, or email to: pzwomansclub@gmail.com. Please visit our website at: www.pzwomansclub.org

► Professional Women's Network

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

students, and professionals. PWN sponsors service and outreach programs to "give back" to the community. The meeting charge is 4,000 colones for visitors, members 3,000. Membership fee is 12,000 colones and includes listing in the business directory, if desired. Meetings schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Helen at 2280-4362. Location: Tin Jo Restaurant in San José, Calle 11, Av. 6-8. Or email us at: pwn.costarica@gmail.com.

PWN website is www.pwn-cr.com

► Radio Control Sailing Club

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

► Wine Club of Costa Rica

The wine club usually meets at 1 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Join us to tantalize your taste buds and expand your education. For more information on upcoming events please contact us at 2279-8927.

► Women's Club of Costa Rica

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

► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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

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

BUSINESS DIRECTORY (43)

Important dates in Costa Rica:

July 25, Día de la Anexión del partido de Nicoya (aka Anexión de Guanacaste). (Office closed.)

July 26/27, ARCR Seminar for expats. Location TBA.

August 2, Día de la Patrona de Costa Rica, La Virgen de los Ángeles. (Office closed.)

August 15, Día de la Madre. (Office closed.)

August 30/31, ARCR Seminar for expats. Location TBA.

Funniest One Liners

"Why do Americans choose from just two people to run for president and 50 for Miss America?"

"It's not the fall that kills you; it's the sudden stop at the end."

"Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity."

"Always borrow money from a pessimist. He won't expect it back."

"He who smiles in a crisis has found someone to blame."

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WHAT CAN ARCR MEMBERSHIP DO FOR YOU?

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



- Assistance in applying for Costa Rica residency.
 - Help for obtaining a Costa Rica driver license.
 - Guidance in opening a Costa Rica bank account.
 - Discounted enrollment in Costa Rica national health insurance.
 - Expert information on moving and shipping household goods.
 - Reduced prices for insurance for home, health, and vehicles.
 - References to proven businesses who can assist arrivals obtain desired products and services.
 - Discounted general medical services (by appointment).
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- A permanent or temporary mail forwarding address.
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 - Free maps of the country.
 - Book exchange library.
 - Personal email answers to your questions about moving to Costa Rica.
 - An entertaining and informative bi-monthly magazine for members with the latest information about Costa Rica laws, plus interesting features and tips that can make life simpler.



For information about how to join thousands of other expats living the **Pura Vida lifestyle**, visit our website at: www.arcr.net, call us at (506) 4052-4052 or come by our offices at Av. 14, Calle 42, in San Jose, **today!**