



Costa Rica's English language newsletter

January / February 2016

El Residente

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Taste the tropics:
Pitaya

Costa Rica Seminar

One Seminar, One Source to learn everything you need to know about traveling, living, retiring, or working in Costa Rica.

Join us on the **last Thursday and Friday of any month** (except December) in San José to find out more about what it is like to live in Costa Rica and how to go about getting things done here. We invite professionals from each field to share their knowledge and expertise with you. Hear what they have to say and ask them the questions for which you have not found an answer.

NB: Watch for our next seminar for the Southern Zone. Call the Uvita ARCR office at 2743-8416 or 2743-8619 for information. Space is limited.

Subjects covered in the seminars:

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

See what past attendees have said about the seminar:

"The ARCR is doing a terrific job. I feel as though I already have a support system."

"Great seminar, excellent topics, excellent speakers."

"This was a very informative seminar, and over an excellent lunch we were given the opportunity to meet some new friends."

Occasionally seminars are now offered in the Pacific coast region as well, mid-month. Contact us for the schedule.

All seminars are available to ARCR members for only \$50, which will cover the cost of lunches and coffee breaks both days.

The cost for non-members is \$70 (including the lunches and coffee), but if you join by the end of the Friday seminar, \$20 will be deducted from the membership fee!

Please make your **reservation** by calling:

(506) 4052-4052

or by email at: **info@arcr.net**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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Communication is the life-blood of ARCR, and that is the purpose of this newsletter. But we can only serve our members well if we know what their issues are. So tell us. A 2016 goal of ARCR is to improve not only our services, but to make sure that our members know to call or write us for help with their problems. If there is something you need, don't hesitate to give the office a quick call.

Welcome back to the column by Michael Miller, *The View from Downtown*. In this issue Miller takes us on a tour of some of the great public art located throughout downtown San Jose. Now that we are in the dry season it is a great time to follow his directions and take a leisurely walk to enjoy some of the unique and inspiring public art works which are often overlooked in the daily hubbub of life in the city.

If you prefer a more nature-oriented respite, Carol Vaughn has provided us with information on, and directions to, a little known tourist attraction in the southern zone. It is well worth the effort to take a day trip to enjoy the scenic site she's found and detailed for us in *Life in the Southern Zone*.

On the legal front, Allan Garro's *Legal Update* column gives us an overview on some evolutionary changes to Costa Rican law which could have a long ranging effect on Costa Rican businesses and individuals alike.

Struggling with a relationship? Read Tony Johnson's continuing series, *Paradise, We Have a Problem* on how to overcome a disagreement . . . before it becomes fatal.

And, as usual, there are other informative and entertaining pieces here to keep you informed.

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.

If you wish to place an ad in El Residente, please contact the ARCR main office or the Marketing Director at the contact addresses located in the masthead. Goods & services offered are paid advertisements. Neither ARCR Administration nor El Residente research the companies and take no responsibility for the quality of such goods and services.

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Across the Board

Here's some good news to start the new year! The Tico Times reported on August 13, 2015, that, "... to free up traffic police to address other issues and clear the country's congested roadways from unnecessary traffic jams, ..." the rules requiring an investigation of all traffic accidents by a Transito officer has been modified. The article states, "President Luis Guillermo Solís and Public Works and Transport Minister Carlos Segnini signed a decree earlier this week that will allow motorists who get into minor accidents to move their vehicles out of traffic before they exchange insurance information." The decree, which became law 120 days after its publication in the government newspaper La Gaceta, applies to accidents involving damage to vehicles only, and in cases where both drivers can come to an agreement.

The Tico Times went on to explain, "... both parties would need to fill out a minor accident declaration provided by their insurer, along with photographs, video, or other evidence to accompany the claim. If, however, the drivers cannot come to an agreement, they would contact the traffic police and sit blocking traffic — as usual." To read the full article, go to: <http://www.ticotimes.net/2015/08/13/costa-rican-motorists-soon-wont-wait-police-resolve-car-accidents>

A reminder: As previously reported in a U.S. Embassy, Dear ACS column, after December 31, 2015, no more extra visa pages will be added to U.S. passports. Instead, 52-page passport books will be issued at no extra cost to U.S. citizens applying from outside the United States. This policy aims to lessen the burden that may be placed on frequent travelers who need more pages and those customers who may need to update residence permits or foreign entry/exit visas to comply with foreign country immigration practices. The determination to eliminate the visa page insert service was made to enhance the security of the passport and to abide by international passport standards.

The fee for first-time passport applicants is \$135, for passport renewals, \$110.

A few people have complained that sometimes the online ARCR Forums are difficult to access. That was done deliberately to protect the site and its participants from spam and intrusion by undesirable posters. So, be patient, follow the directions carefully, and you'll get access to all the great information there.

Everyone should now be aware that the old ARCR office in San Isidro de General was closed and has reopened at a new location in Uvita. See the masthead in this issue for the new location and contact information.

The Local Authors Library is up and running in the ARCR Office. Over 28 titles by expats are available for review and some are in stock for immediate purchase. A reminder; a limited number of artists are invited to display their work in the office and offer them for sale. If you have something you'd like to sell, contact the receptionist for details.

Finally, a BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE to those members who donated to the ARCR Tree of Hope. Their kind generosity made some sick children very happy! Thank you!



ARCR Board members:
From the left, back row, Terry Wise, Ray Hagist, Allen Dickinson, Terry Renfer. Front row, Linda Leake, Martha Rollins, Mel Goldberg. Not present: Earl Tomlinson.



Are you a member of ARCR?

JOIN TODAY!



Discover the benefits of membership

Complete residency application services include:

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Bi-monthly newsletter containing the latest updates on living in Costa Rica.

Enroll now and receive all these benefits and more!

For more information or to enroll online, go to our website at: www.arcr.net, email us at: info@arcr.net, call ARCR Administration at: (506) 4052-4052, or drop by our offices on Calle 42, Avenida 14, in San José. Satellite offices: in Uvita at Uvita Law Firm at The Dome Commercial Center, 2nd floor offices 14 & 15: (506) 2743-8416 and (506) 2743-8619; or in Barú - Dominical next to the Charter Restaurant: (506) 2787-8017.





LUB

CORNER

► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

Groups meet daily throughout the country; times and places change frequently. Call for up-to-date information. San José 2222-1880 (Anchor Club, also serves Narcotics Anonymous) Av 6 Calle 1, 2nd floor Maryland Building. Heredia (Laura) 2267-7466, Puerto Viejo Limón 2750-0080, Zancudo 2776-0012, Tamarindo 2653-0897, Flamingo (Don) 2654- 4902, Manuel Antonio (Jennifer) 2777-1548, Jacó (Nancy) 2637-8824, Zoo Group Escazú 2293-4322. Grecia (Jay) 2494-0578. Southern Zone, meetings in English & Spanish, 8634-9241.

► **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. Meetings are one hour long and held twice each week in Escazú centro, above the Buena Tierra Restaurant, 25 meters south of the San Miguel Catholic Church. Tuesdays at noon and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. Tel: 8993-1762 (Rosemary) and/or 2228-1049 (Barbara) email: rosemaryzitek@yahoo.com.

► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

The A.L. Post 10 has relocated the monthly meetings to Casa de España in Sabana norte. There is an elevator so those with a handicap will not have a problem entering the building or reaching the meeting area. If you wish to attend please e-mail or call for directions. Terry Wise, cell#: 8893-4021, Claudio Pacheco, cell#: 8876-1394, home#: 2225-4239.

► **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.

► **Asociación Caritativa Canadiense**

The activities of this charity began in 2000 as part of the Canadian Club of Costa Rica. Our Vision is that every student has access to a clean, secure, well-maintained and healthy physical environment in which to learn and grow. We use our donations to complement what the locals can raise. Our volunteer membership is made up of both Canadians and

Costa Ricans, male and female. If you would like to contribute or learn more please contact Fred Boden, fredrick.boden@gmail.com

► **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, Escazu, 11:00 a.m. Contact: bbrashears@gmail.com, 8684-2526.

► **Democrats Abroad**

Democrats Abroad meets on the last Saturday of every month at the Aurola Holiday Inn, San José. Contact Nelleke Bruyn, 2279-3553, 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. Call the ARCR office for location and directions.”

► 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.littletheatregroup.org

► Marine Corps League

Meets at 11 a.m. the 2nd Saturday of every month, at Tres Hermanas Restaurant on the service road opposite Hospital Mexico. Look for the big bull statue in front. For information call Bill Enell at 8812-0126 or write to mcleaguecr@gmail.com

► Newcomer's Club

Newcomer's Club of Costa Rica (for women) meets the first Tuesday of every month, September through May. Contact: 2416-1111, 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 Chuck Jennings, 2266-0123, or visit our website at: www.pcclub.net

► Perez Zeledon International Women's Club

PZIWC was formed in November 2009 to promote friendship between English speaking women in Perez Zeledon 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. Monthly meetings are open to the public with an entrance fee of 3,000 colones. Meetings schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Helen at: 2221-7605 or 2257-3622. Location: Tin Jo Restaurant in San José, Calle 11, Av. 6-8. Or email us at: pwn.costarica@gmail.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. English language group in Cariari de Belén, English-Spanish group in Heredia, Spanish language group in San José. 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.”

by Fatmah Radovich

When I was a high school student I fantasized about living in a foreign country. In 2000, after spending two weeks in Costa Rica with my husband on our honeymoon, we decided to retire here. Five years later we sold our house, left Northern California, and our dream of retirement in Costa Rica became a reality.

Our everyday life in Costa Rica has been active, challenging and adventurous. We spend our days exploring tourist sites and different regions, enjoying great restaurants, hiking nature trails and beaches, going to hot springs resorts and English speaking theater plays, socializing with our friends, and much more. We have found that the Ticos are a welcoming, hospitable, family oriented people and human interaction is important to them; we have made some lifetime friends. Learning to speak Spanish is ongoing fun and it is helpful to know that many Ticos speak English and welcome an opportunity to practice. The year-round warm, tropical climate is great.

Although, the cost of living has increased since we first moved here, it is still more affordable than California. After being in Costa Rica ten years, living my girlhood dream has been more than I ever hoped it would be.

Here are five cultural differences we have encountered. Knowing them may give you a heads up if you are visiting or decide to live in this beautiful and fascinating country.

1. Unlike banks in the US, only one adult can stand at a bank teller window in Costa Rica. In addition, the guard may politely ask you to remove your hat or cap.
2. Stray dogs are common. There are cats but they are more obscure. Some private owners might have several dogs; one we know has owned eleven. Dogs are more valued in Costa Rica because they guard and protect property. More often than not, you will see dog owners walking their dogs without a leash. There is no “pooper scooper” law in Costa Rica, and Ticos do not clean up after their dogs in public streets, so watch your step!
3. My husband and I went to a rental car office in the capital city, San Jose, to reserve a car. After the paperwork was completed and we offered our credit card to the agent, we learned that they do not accept credit cards without a raised letter and number pattern on the surface. The agent demonstrated how their credit card imprinter does not work with our card, which has a smooth surface with embedded numbers and letters. We walked a block away to another rental car office and the agent told us the same. At a different agency we were again informed our card couldn't be used. At the last minute we used a friend's credit card to rent a car for us. To be sure, I recommend that you call the rental car office first and ask what kind of

credit card is acceptable before going to the office or reserving a car online.

4. Costa Rica has a roadway custom that you should know. If you decide to drive on Costa Rica's highways you might observe motorists who are driving in the opposite direction flashing their headlights on and off. They are warning you that there is a policia up ahead and to slow down if you are speeding.
5. The first time I had to use the women's public bathroom at a mall I was aghast to see something that I had never seen in the US - a cleaning man in the women's bathroom while women were using the facility! When I walked into the bathroom, I just starred at the young man for a minute, not sure whether I wanted to stay or not. Other women acted as if he was invisible as he kept mopping the floor. His presence made me feel so uncomfortable that I turned around and walked out. I couldn't wait to tell my husband about my experience. You can imagine the exchange when he told me about the first time he saw a woman

cleaning the sinks in the men's room while men were using it. Eventually, we adjusted to the custom, but it still baffles us to this day.

There are many cultural differences to life in Costa Rica and, when you spend time here, you will not only learn more about the Costa Rican culture, but you will discover more about yourself. Your frame of reference will expand and your perception of the world will become bigger than ever. *Ticos* will captivate you because no matter how little they may have in the way of material possessions, they are happy people. Family, food, fiesta, and simplicity make them content, and every sunrise brings another Pura Vida! day.

Fatmah Radovich is a member of ARCR. She retired after 42 years employment in various corporate administrative capacities in the US workforce, as well as, self-employment enterprises. She attended Emmanuel College, Vista College and New York University. She is a songwriter and the published author of the autobiography entitled: As Tender As A Mother's Love for her First Born. She can be reached at: fatmahonthemove@hotmail.com.

All CR Insurance Companies under one roof



Prisma Insurance Broker gives you advice on: **life, health, car, property, workers comp**, and all other registered/authorized insurance in the Costa Rican market. Take advantage of our expertise, with over 12 companies registered in CR. Both collective and individual plans.

You may call us at the following locations in Costa Rica:

Province	Location	Phone number
San José	San Pedro Montes de Oca	2281 3364
	Santa Ana	4010 0228
	Guadalupe	2234 4058
	San Sebastián	4081 7041
	Moravia	2241 3350
Guanacaste	Liberia	2665 6711
	Cañas	2668 6302
	Upala	2470 4044
Limón	Puerto Viejo	8870 8029
	Guápiles	2764 2087
Alajuela	Alajuela Centro	2440 0514
	San Carlos	2460 8787
	Grecia	8989 3588
Cartago	Downtown Cartago	8368 3853
	Turrialba	7204 2238
Puntarenas	Downtown Puntarenas	7010 4156

(10) THE VIEW FROM DOWNTOWN

by Michael Milller

Experiencing the Public Art of 4th Avenue

Many expats find Downtown San José to be a bit intimidating. This is true for visitors as well as for the long-time residents who have elected to live outside the capital city.

However, there are many places one can go in downtown San José that are easy to access, relatively safe, and well worth the time. I often recommend to friends, who would like to explore a bit of San José, to take a walk along Avenida Cuatro (4th Avenue) which parallels the big, broad Avenida Segundo (2nd Avenue) that runs through the length of Downtown. 4th Avenue is one block to the south of 2nd Avenue.

4th Avenue is known as San José's "Other Pedestrian Walkway." The more famous pedestrian walkway, Avenida Central, boasts the National Theater, museums, book stores, and many up-scale shops. By contrast, this street caters more to the working-class Costa Rican. Along the avenue you will find some fascinating pieces of public art; statues which are some of the wonderful surprises of downtown.

Start your walk at the eastern end of the 4th Avenue Pedestrian Walkway. It is easy to find, just look for the Chinese archway that designates Barrio Chino on Avenida 2. (This is actually Calle 9.) Walk one block south from the archway and you will quickly come to an open plaza that has been designated the Plaza de las Artes. The picturesque Soledad Church will be on your left.

As you enter the Plaza de las Artes, you will notice a contemporary looking statue of a man who appears to be playing a base violin. There is also a bust nearby of José Artigas, a hero from the struggle for independence in Uruguay.

There is, however, another statue in the Plaza that overwhelmingly commands the most attention. Look around the Plaza and you will see a number of park benches and on one you will find a bronze statue of a man sitting. This "man" is John Lennon. Beside him is a small brass plaque that contains a line, in Spanish, from the song Imagine. The statue is actually a replica of one in Havana, Cuba, which was created by the renowned Cuban sculptor, José Ramón Villa Soberón.

The John Lennon statue is one of the most popular pieces of art in San José. All day long you will see visitors and locals sitting on the bench next to it to have their picture taken with the famous Beatle.

From the Plaza de las Artes, walk west several blocks up the pleasant pedestrian walkway of 4th Avenue. Along the way you will see small shops, large office buildings, fast food outlets . . . all the things that you would expect to see in a busy vibrant city.



Commemorating the working man in bronze is this statue of a man sweeping the Parque Central.



This statue of Pope John Paul II, was created by world famous Costa Rican artist Jorge Jimenez Deredia, is located on the grounds of the Cathedral Metropolitana.

When you get to Calle Central, you will have Parque Central in front of you and the magnificent Cathedral Metropolitana on the right. Walk past the front of the Cathedral, to the corner of 2nd Avenue and Calle Central.

Here, on the grounds of the Cathedral, you will see a large modern-style, white statue of a man in ecclesiastic attire. This is an image of Pope John Paul II (or Papa Juan Pablo Segundo, as our Tico friends would say.) The statue, made from classic Italian Carrara Marble, was created by Costa Rican sculptor Jorge Jimenez Deredia, one of the few Costa Rican artists to break through to the top levels of the world art scene. Currently living in Italy, his works can be seen in The Vatican, and throughout Europe and the Americas.

Across the street, in the always bustling Parque Central, you will find statues of men working, one of which appears to be sweeping the park. Around this one-square-block park there are a wide variety of restaurants, shops, and banks.

Finally, return to 4th Avenue, next to the Cathedral. Just outside the wrought-iron fencing that surrounds the Cathedral grounds, is one of the most poignant works of art in all of Costa Rica. It is a small, inconspicuous bronze statue of a young girl standing on a waist-high pedestal. Thousands of people walk by this statue every day without ever noticing it. Or, if they do notice it, most of them have no idea who the girl is.

The girl on the pedestal is looking heavenward and, if you look closely, you will see that her hands are bound. The girl depicted is Anne Frank, the 15-year old Jewish girl who wrote the famous diary and was later led away by the Germans to a concentration camp where she later died.

This touching statue was created by Dutch sculptor, Joep Coppens. It was a gift from the people of Holland, a country that suffered greatly in World War II, to the peace-loving people of Costa Rica. It was presented by the Dutch embassy in 2008 to serve as a painful reminder of the horrors of Nazism.

San Jose is a city with many surprises. Those mentioned here are just a few. There is no question that San José, especially downtown San José, has its share of big-city problems. But if you exercise a little caution, and use the same common sense you would use in any big city, you will find that downtown San José has much to offer.

And if you want to know about this beautiful country, remember that you don't really know Costa Rica until you know San José.

I want to thank Jeff Mezza, a Tico tour guide who specializes in Downtown San José. His vast knowledge of the city helped me with some of the details in this article.

Michael Miller is the author of the first and only guide book that focuses on Downtown San José, titled: 'The Real San José. Paperback copies are available for sale at the ARCR Office, and the electronic version is available at Amazon/Kindle.



This bronze statue of Beatle, John Lennon, seated on a park bench in front of the Soledad Church on 4th Avenue, is one of the most popular pieces of art in the city.

DEAR ACS...

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by American Citizen Services

My U.S. passport is due to expire soon and I need to renew it. I also need a document notarized, but it takes three hours to drive to the U.S. Embassy in San José. Do I have any other options?

Dreading the Drive

Dear Dreading: We are keenly aware of the time and effort needed to drive from distant locations in Costa Rica to San José to take care of these matters. In order to meet the needs of American citizens throughout Costa Rica, the ACS Unit will send a team to various locations through the U.S. Citizens Outreach Program. Almost every other month in 2016 the ACS Unit team will travel to a different area of Costa Rica to provide limited consular services to U.S. citizens.

What services will be provided?

Adult passport renewals: We can receive applications for adult passport renewals only. Your passport must not have expired 15 years or more from the "Date of Issue". Please review the information on the Embassy website and complete Form DS 82 located at: <http://costarica.usembassy.gov/passports.html>

When you meet us, please provide the fully completed Form DS 82 along with a 2" x 2" photo from the top of the head to upper chest. The cost per application is 59,900 colones (subject to fluctuations in the exchange rate) and exact change preferred. This fee will be collected at the time we receive your application. Additionally, you will need to bring your prior passport in order for us to verify your identity and citizenship.

Social Security Card applications: We can collect application forms for replacement Social Security cards or Social Security cards for minors under the age of 12. You can find an application at the following website: <http://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>

For minors under 12 years of age, we will also need a copy of your child's Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a copy of parents' U.S. passports or Costa Rican cedula, if one biological parent is not a U.S. citizen. (For U.S. citizens, a valid U.S. passport is the only acceptable form of identification). We will also need a copy of your child's Costa Rican birth certificate, issued from the Civil Registry. Please bring the original as well as a copy

of those items to the local outreach event and we will transmit your application to the Federal Benefits Unit at the Embassy upon our return.

Notaries: We can notarize a maximum of three documents per applicant. The fee per notary is 27,200 colones (subject to fluctuations in the exchange rate) and exact change preferred.

Here is the tentative schedule for 2016:

February	Playa del Coco
April	Perez Zeledon
June	Quepos/Manuel Antonio
August	Puerto Viejo/Limon
October	Tamarindo

NOTE: Exact dates and locations will be published via our Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), so please be sure you are enrolled. In order to be sure you do not miss any future updates on these outreaches, we highly encourage you to enroll in STEP today.

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by Allen Dickinson

The holidays are passed and now it's time for a little reflection about gifts. My wife asked me what I wanted for Christmas and I responded, "Nothing." I have reached an age when gifts aren't too important to me.

Maybe it's a holdover from my younger days – my mother had a very poorly developed ability to select gifts for me that I would like – once, when I was about 14 years old, it was a shoe shine station. Another time she bought me a fold-up music stand so I could practice the clarinet at home. Not exactly what an eleven year old hopes to find under the tree! (I hated playing the clarinet, and I'm using the word "playing" loosely. It was my mother's instrument and I was compelled to play it in the school band for several years – until I accidentally cut the tip of my right-hand middle finger, off. Not having to play the clarinet any longer was the only good thing that came out of that accident, unless you count the ability to give people two-thirds of a "bird" salute for the next 50+ years. But then, it does inhibit my typing of the letter K.)

Of course my wife couldn't let my Christmas suggestion of "nothing" go, so she bought me a bright pink T-shirt that says "Sophomores," on the front and "Class of 2012" on the back. She doesn't read English very well, but she liked the color. It's not one I would pick, but my wife gave it to me – and you know what that means.

Speaking of my wife. In a previous column I wrote about her amazing Tica eyes; how she can read signs written in pencil, in letters no more than an inch high, posted on a gate 20 feet away, as we speed by in the car. I don't even see the signs! But in fairness I am attending to driving. Regardless, it's excellent eyesight! Or maybe I'm just getting older.

That's not her only sensory attribute; she has the most sensitive nose in the world! She can detect an odor at a

concentration that only the most sophisticated chemical analysis machines can match. To her, everything smells. I know that sometimes those smells are only in her imagination, but there's no convincing her! That means

I'm constantly searching out the source of some odor she's detected – often finding nothing. Of course "nothing" is not a satisfactory answer for her and I have to search again.

Sometimes, however, she's right.

Recently we had a mouse in the house. I found out how it had gotten in, sealed the hole, and the mouse died somewhere inside the wall. Of course, there was a smell that lasted a few days. Nothing could be done about it, short of tearing the house down, but for the next two weeks, according to her, there were at least a hundred dead "meeces" decomposing somewhere in the building and stinking up our home! I'm too old to be climbing up in the attic, and my son is getting really tired of going up there for me.

Another source of "mal olor" is that the drain line to a hand sink in one bathroom. It was built without the benefit of a P-Trap being installed. That unobstructed line, of course, allows sewer gas to sneak into the room if the wind is blowing just so. That was a pretty easy fix, once I discovered the source of the odor, a task which was much in demand by my wife.

But some smells are just, I am sure, a matter of her imagination. A constant (supposed) source of "mal olor" are my feet. I can be straight out of the shower and she'll assert my feet, freshly scrubbed, "stink." Now I'll admit that sometimes they can have a slight odor, something that never happened when I lived up North, so I don't think it should happen here either. (Apparently there are some different stink causing bio-organisms here in Costa Rica and my feet like them.) Anyway, saying I just washed them is an explanation that cuts no ice with her; I have to wash them again.



Maybe the issue of my lack of smell-ability is my advancing age (which by the way, is coming at a really bad time.) I guess probably like they say in the South, "My smeller don't work too awful very good no more."

Now that I have brought up the subject of age, here's a poem I wrote during some contemplation of my lack of odor detecting skills:

There's hair in my nose, hair in my ears,
and my eyebrows have gone "bushy."

I'm still in good shape,
though my stomach is a little "mushy."

My manhood used to spring to attention
when pretty girls walked by.

Now I take some blue pills
to make sure I can try.

I must wear glasses,
there's something wrong with one eye.

What's happened to my youth?
The middle has passed me by.

Yesterday I was young,
today I'm an old man.

But in my memory those things I can't,
I still can

Inside I'm not older,
but the container seems to have matured.

The time to read a good book
is now more easily endured.

I have all my own teeth,
though some I had to buy.

What's happened to my youth?
The middle has passed me by.

Climbing steps takes longer,
but my mind has stayed engaged.

If I didn't spend so much time being
nostalgic, I'd be enraged.

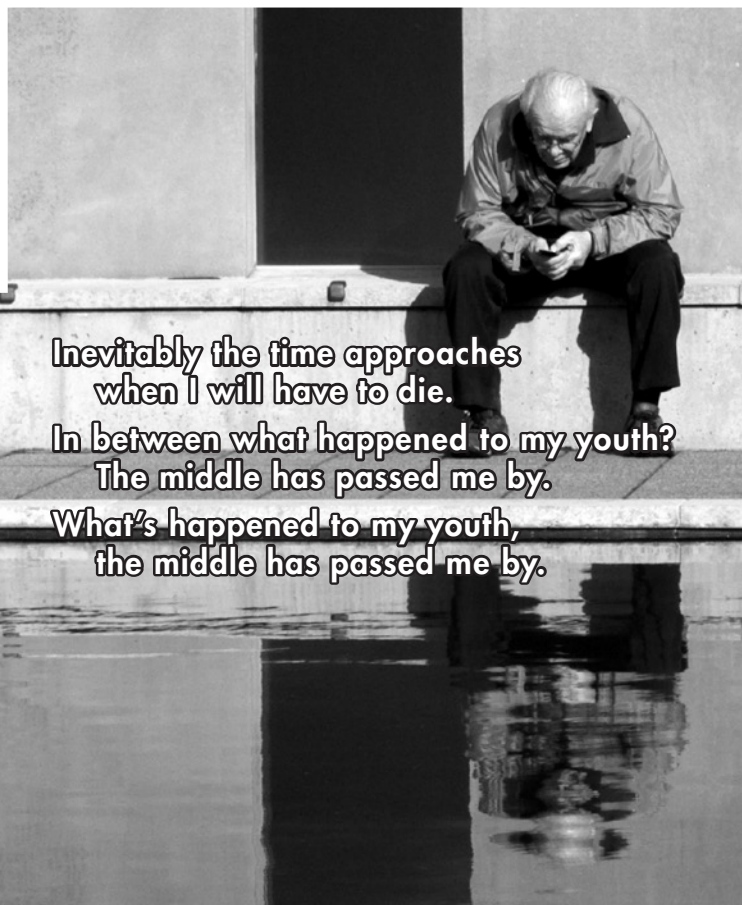
Looking forward no longer has such
enticing charm.

More often, peering backwards beckons
with a flabby arm.

Inevitably the time approaches
when I will have to die.

In between what happened to my youth?
The middle has passed me by.

What's happened to my youth,
the middle has passed me by.



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Happy New Year to everyone. I hope your 2016 is odorless, in all the senses of the word. Now I have to stop writing and go up in the attic.

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PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

17

by Tony Johnson

TOWARDS A MORE PERFECT... OK, A MORE SATISFYING, UNION

We're in yet another conflict with our partner and we've done our best to reach a mutually satisfying resolution, but no matter what do we do, our partner won't take "yes" for an answer.

It feels so good when a conflict is smoothly and agreeably resolved. That problem is checked off our list and it's a big relief from the recent tension. We feel proud that our efforts and skills have worked and that we have reconnected with our partner in a positive way. Harmony and love have been restored and now, together, you and your partner can go back to solving those other problems which life always presents us.

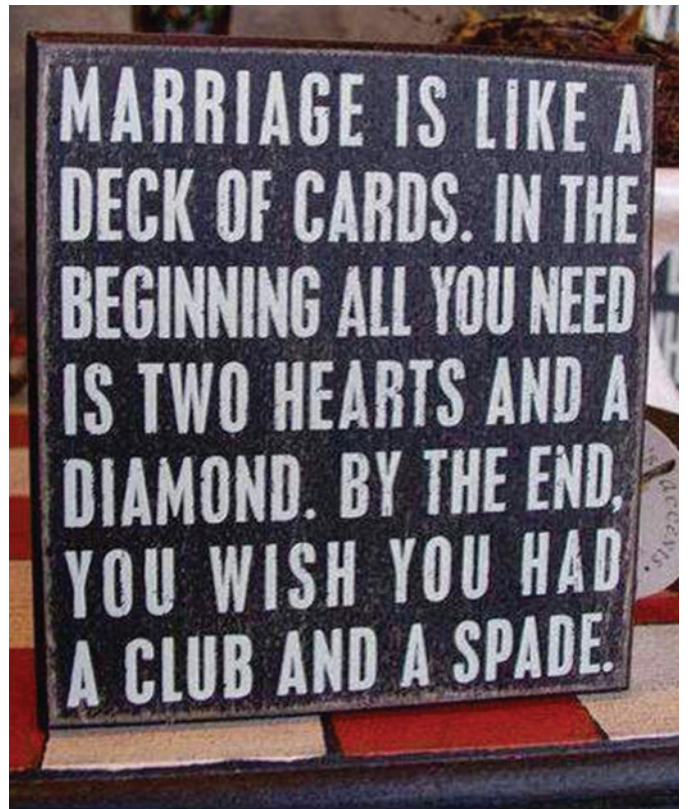
But not this time.

We hate it when a conflict goes on and on. Even when away from our partner, we obsess over the issues in dispute. We review where we're "right" and where our partner is "wrong," and reassure ourselves that we're "not the bad guy here." All the while longing for the real, deep relief of a resolution.

But not this time.

Past experience has taught us the benefits of actually listening to our partner's concerns and trying to meet their needs. Past PAINFUL experience has powerfully taught us to focus on the issues and NOT on attacking their ego. Past embarrassing experience has taught us that our partner can be right and we can be wrong.

So we've approached our partner with a SOFT START UP, no attacks. We made a REQUEST to discuss the issues, instead of a demand. We've taken a LEARNING STANCE, being truly open minded to our partner's concerns, and especially, their feelings. And, we made what we thought was an EFFECTIVE APOLOGY - we set aside our ego and expressed genuine concern for how we had hurt our partner, even if it was accidental.



But our partner remains angry, cold, and distant.

What's wrong? We tried all the stuff that El Rez guy said would work, but we got nowhere.

We even agreed to everything our partner asked for (actually demanded, but who's keeping score?) Yet they continue to refuse to reconcile with us. They're still P.O.'d with us and not letting go.

What's going on here? What now??

Some possibilities to consider...

There may be some UNADDRESSED issues, some unexpressed feelings that are creating this impasse. And, there may be a RELUCTANCE TO SURRENDER THE POWER that their anger gives them over us.

ADDRESSING THE UNADDRESSED, THE UNSPOKEN

Conflicts occur not only because there has been some disagreement over issues; often they are the result of the HURT FEELINGS about those issues.

A conflict is a dispute that arouses strong negative feelings. Remember, not every disagreement, not every dispute, becomes a conflict; like when we're playfully arguing over who's the best basketball player or the best way to prepare a steak. That kind of dispute is fun.

A friendly dispute or disagreement can become a conflict, however, when it slides into attacks on each other's egos, their sense of worth, competence, intelligence, or their integrity. At those times resolution requires addressing those hurt feelings - not just reviewing player stats or meat-heat chemistry.

But you thought you had carefully and sensitively addressed your partner's feelings. You thought that you truly understood their sense of hurt, empathized with it, and offered an apology that put their feelings ahead of your pride. And they're still upset.

What's happening is that YOU may have done your best but your partner may feel so hurt, so vulnerable, that THEY never fully expressed how they fully felt. Without knowing those deeper issues there was no way for you to address the actual feelings at the heart of the conflict.

Your partner isn't lying. They might just be afraid.

Unbeknownst to you, the conflict may have touched on a particularly sensitive nerve, one which may have involved an especially vulnerable element of your partner's identity. And it is a part of themselves they don't want to reveal because they anticipate more hurt, or fear some ridicule for being so touchy about the issue.

— Charles Zeller —

from

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So, because their feelings are kept carefully guarded and are left out of the resolution discussion, because what most needs to be addressed feels most threatening to our partner, the conflict doesn't get resolved.

What, then, can we do? We may start to feel angry, unappreciated, impatient, and frustrated ourselves. As the pressure within us grows we may explode: "Damn it! I've given you everything you asked for, and you're still being a cold, hostile jerk! It's time for you to do your share of solving this problem. Why can't you just let things go and move on?"

That explosion may feel good, briefly, until we realize that we've made things worse. Our partner may not have been warm and friendly but at least they weren't screaming at us. Now the volume is so high we can't hear ourselves think. Or even worse, the silence is so deep and all encompassing we feel like we are living in a barren, dead world.

Any other options? Before we blow up again (understandable because we're now starting to feel hurt too), try another "soft start up." You can always "drop the bomb" later if this doesn't work. But remember, it's hard to recall the bomb once it's left the bay.

Try: "I'm really confused, and I must admit, I'm frustrated. I've tried to give you everything that you asked for, but you're still upset with me. I don't know what else to do. Can you give me some suggestions? Is there something else you need from me to resolve this? Is there something else we need to discuss? Is there something else bothering you? I'm willing to work with you on this. I hope you see my efforts have been genuine. Please, tell me what else WE can do to resolve this?"

Hopefully this approach will have made your partner feel safe enough to discuss the vulnerability they've been concealing.

If this one effort doesn't work, realize that it may take a few tries to convince them that they are truly safe. Your patience (understandably running short) can be more powerful than any words that you speak; it shows them that they're really safe.

Throw the ball into their court and wait.

THE ANGER ADVANTAGE

Another reason our partner may be unwilling to fully resolve a conflict might be the advantages that anger provides.

Anger is an emotion built into us to provide a boost of power and confidence to overcome fear, so we can act to protect ourselves. Staying angry with us might enable our partner to maintain the upper hand. They may remain angry because it says to us, in effect, "I'm still upset with you and you are NOT off the hook yet! You've got a lot of repair work to do. Yeah, you've given me what I want, but I won't let down my guard until you PROVE you're for real; prove to me that I can trust you."

Staying angry with us might also enable our partner to deny their role in the problem. Anger can say, "I'm the totally innocent party here. You're the totally guilty party." Their anger may let THEM off the hook of their own guilt, keeping us solely to blame. (Does that position sound familiar? Does it sound anything like your approach when you were allowing your emotions to control your behavior?) They are using their anger to keep us on "our best behavior" - as long as they don't push us too far. That feels great for them, not so much for us.

Do we have any options?

Again, remaining calm (admittedly, increasingly hard to do under the circumstances) and refraining from making things worse by making an angry, aggressive outburst of our own, is always a helpful option. At least things don't revert to open warfare.

Maybe we begin to feel that it's unfair, that we're "doing all the work/making all the concessions." Agreed! That may be so. And that can be very hard for us to do, but it can give them the safety they need to let down their guard; to become vulnerable and open up to us about the hurt that most needs to be addressed and healed. It can also show them that they can trust our efforts; that they ARE sincere and won't end as soon as they become friendly again.

All this can set the tone for future conflicts. Imagine how good it feels to trust that your partner will really try to hear and understand your feelings and concerns. Imagine how much better the relationship will be if that becomes the standard for conflict resolution in your relationship. What you do now not only has an impact on this conflict, but also on those that WILL occur in the future.

NEXT TIME: We'll look at the notion (incorrect, you will see) that emotions must be excluded from any successful conflict resolution.

Always want to hear your comments: paradise.we.have.a.problem@gmail.com

by Allan Garro

Damages Compensation System Might Improve in Costa Rica

Costa Rica has always had a Justice system that can be likened to a maze of epic proportions where it was often easy to get lost or simply abandon the challenge of bringing a lawsuit to an end; many take between five and ten years to get resolved. The reasons are multiple: the lengthy and formalistic procedures, excess of appeals allowed, slow times to resolve by the Courts of Appeal, and the lack of training of judges in courts located in rural areas, to name a few.

The damage compensation system is also unfair, sometimes breaking the balance of the scales of Justice. The country has established an all-or-nothing system to compensate for damages to the victim, and it benefits the person or entity responsible for repairing the damages, protecting them from liability of any kind. The problem is that civil jurisprudence has established that the damages must be certain and present, often ignoring the liability for potential future harm to those who were damaged.

As an example, "Person A" rents a farm for 10 years to grow pineapple, for which he or she acquires equipment and hires employees. Just before starting the operation, "Person B" invades the farm, destroys the machinery, and prevents the farm from being cultivated. "Person A" then sues "Person B" for damages, being likely to get the value of the machinery, starting salaries of the employees, plus statutory interest on that investment. The existing system, however, does not grant "Person A" any compensation for any future profits they have lost.

In recent years a trend of indexing certain amounts awarded by the judges on issues of liability was instituted. Indexing means computing past damage amounts in a formula that arrives at present value. The formula used is based on changes in the Consumer Price Index whose computation is carried out by the Institute of Statistics and Census. Thus a person who claims an amount of

damages that should have been paid in 2008, and an award is granted in 2015, may request that the 2008 sum is converted to present value using the indexing tool prepared by of Statistics and Census.

This works well for determining the present value of past damages, but does nothing to calculate present value of future damages.

In recent times, however, a tendency to award future damages, based on a theory called "loss of opportunity," has been gaining strength. The loss of opportunity is defined as the disappearance of the real and serious chance of a favorable event. Under this theory the Plaintiff can be compensated for present losses as a result of asset impairments of economic nature, and the loss of opportunities to earn a profit or save certain costs in the future. To be granted, the opportunity has to be serious and have a reasonable chance of realization.

In Costa Rica this theory was derived from the French doctrine proposed by a university professor, Federico Torrealba Navas. For him, a main element of determining the amount of the future loss of opportunity is the interruption of the normal course of events by an action attributable to facts which can be demonstrated as being the cause of the elimination, or weakening, of the existing opportunity.

Thanks to Professor Torrealba Navas's theories, the Costa Rican courts granted such compensation in an arbitration process during 2001. The compensation was initially awarded in an arbitration procedure, and required that the same be approved by the courts.

It was not until 2009 that the Supreme Court issued a ruling which mentions the possibility that the loss of opportunity theory applied. The decision immediately raised a series of questions.

The decree stated there was a necessity for the Plaintiff to proof the previous existence of a situation of real advantage which was frustrated as a result of an unlawful action.

Finally, in 2012, the Supreme Court issued a judgment granting compensation for loss of opportunity arguing that, *“...this Court considers that there is room for compensation of the financial injury resulting from unlawful conduct, which was following the allocation of a real and serious possibility of making a profit or future situation of advantage, not a mere chance, a hypothesis or a mere risk, as was said, but in a secured probability, a high degree of certainty for the realization of the final energy supply contract.”*

The case was a lawsuit started by a producer of electrical energy which was affected by ICE – the Costa Rican electricity company – by ICE’s cancellation of the possibility of participating in a contract, after the Plaintiff had made a sizable investment. The Plaintiff was granted the equivalent of 10% of the profits it would have generated from the project over the 15-year period that the contract would have lasted. This amount represents a lot of money that, under the past regulations, would have never have been granted.

There are other possible scenarios for damage claims resulting from loss of opportunity. One we can mention is the case of a person who studied medicine, achieving excellent grades and establishing great potential to become a great doctor. The student was struck by a careless driver and his injuries reduced his opportunity to achieve his potential as a doctor. In this example, a compensation claim was filed based on the lost, future income that could have been obtained by the Plaintiff for practicing in his chosen profession over a number of years. To obtain a favorable judgment, it is necessary to prove the serious existence of such opportunity.

From the above we can conclude that a door is finally being opened for the judicial system to award damage compensation in a more just and equitable manner than the current system, which grants only existing damages when an unlawful act occurs. Hopefully in the near future more claims will be resolved and accepted in this direction. This can only improve our justice system significantly and grant fair compensations to all of those victims who suffer major damages due to the illegal actions of others.

ALLAN GARRO N.

Attorney at Law

www.garrolaw.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I am starting a MONTHLY HAPPY HOUR for expats. The best way to make those events a success is to get the word out to the largest number of people possible. Would you please print the below invitation in El Residente so ARCR members can give me suggestions on what kind of gathering they would like to attend.

Thank you.

Xander

EXPAT HAPPY HOUR IS COMING TO SAN JOSE IN 2016!

In February 2016, the expat community is invited to attend the first in a series of monthly happy hours.

The EXPAT HAPPY HOUR is a way to meet other people living in Costa Rica, all under one roof, to enjoy discount drinks, free appetizers, special guests, entertainment, and other surprises. It’s an opportunity to gather with old friends and meet new ones as we share our joys and struggles of living in Costa Rica.

Here are some ideas for future events:

MEET: Once a month at a large venue (Hooters, etc) with FREE appetizers and discounted drinks.

MUSIC: Live band or Live DJ.

DOOR PRIZES: Donated giveaways possibly including dinners, jewelry, gift certificates, clothing.

CHARITY RAFFLE: \$1,000 Colone tickets for a chance to win a prize, with proceeds benefiting a local charity.

I need your help! Email me telling me your ideas on what will make the Expat Happy Hour a success! What will make YOU want to come to the event? Send your ideas to XanderCostaRica@yahoo.com, I want to hear them! I will work hard to answer everybody.

If you want to guarantee that you will be notified of February’s inaugural event, email me to be put on the mailing list.

Pura Vida!

by Carol Vaughn

Nauyaca Waterfalls

Beautiful Costa Rica is known for its wonderful beaches, ziplines (which were invented here), and charming ecolodges. But for some, Costa Rica is celebrated most of all for its assortment of awesome waterfalls.

James Kaiser, award-winning travel writer and photographer, as well as author of Costa Rica: The Complete Guide, Eco-Adventures in Paradise, has created a list of Waterfall Stars, and it includes the Southern Zone's very own Nauyaca Waterfalls (Cataratas Nauyaca). And what a treat this waterfall is for those who hike or horseback ride to this two-tiered natural beauty!

Costa Rica's abundant rainfall and rugged mountains create many rivers which often spill over jagged rocky precipices on their way to the sea, creating our magnificent, signature waterfalls, and Nauyaca Waterfalls, located 26 kilometers from San Isidro, and 10 kilometers from Dominical, is one of the largest in the entire country. It is privately, Tico-owned by Don Lulo and Doña Ruth, who manage the falls as well as the trails to the falls, and the horseback riding tours available to non-hikers.

Don Lulo and Doña Ruth came to the area as newlyweds fifty years ago to work as farmhands and caretakers of the property. Eventually they scrimped and saved enough to purchase the land with the falls, adding neighboring tracts to create this amazing tourist attraction. They called it Nauyaca, which is an Aztec name for a poisonous snake which we now call a terciopelo (fer-de-lance).

Don Lulo and Doña Ruth built their family and their lives around the falls, eventually incorporating their children into the business, and becoming a tourist destination for those wanting an authentic, yet adventurous Tico experience. They officially joined the list of tourist attractions in 1992 and became one of the pioneering Tico-owned tourist enterprises. Don Lulo and Doña Ruth's motto is, "*Life is worth living, and living until our last day.*"

There are two levels of falls at Nauyaca. Both are accessible via steps, but the lower tier is the real attraction with a

65-meter (215 feet) drop into a perfect, crystal clear, giant pool where swimming is allowed. The water is, however, cold and there is a current in the middle which is a bit scary, but some bring their own inner tubes to enjoy the Jacuzzi effect. Sometimes one of the horseback tour guides will swan dive into the lower pool; fun to see but not a stunt for the faint of heart.

If you look around as you experience the thundering sound of falling water with its cooling spray, you will see that the site is surrounded by mountains and rainforest, flora and fauna. *This is the REAL Pura Vida...*

Visiting is a one-day fun and adventure excursion to a lesser-known Tico site which offers magnificent views of the Nauyaca Falls, glimpses of monkeys, birds, and butterflies, all set against a background of the overwhelming lushness for which this country is famous.

How to get there

From Dominical, take Route 243 off the Costanera Highway toward San Isidro. Go 10 kilometers (6 miles), and look for a small Don Lulo office. From San Isidro, go 26 kilometers towards Dominical. Stop at the office to purchase the \$8 ticket to the falls. Take the first road on the right after Don Lulo's office. This is a dirt road, quite steep, and usually requires four-wheel drive, especially in the rainy season.

The trailhead is 2 kilometers (1.25 miles) from the main road, where you will see a parking area. Leave your car (No Valuables Inside) and begin your hike, or pick up the horseback ride tour. The trail for hikers and horseback riders is the same – well-maintained and paralleling the Barucito River before climbing sharply down to the falls.

The hike is about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles), and is rated easy to moderate in difficulty, with the hardest and rockiest part closest to the falls. The adventure will be more enjoyable if you arrive early in the day.

Bring a swimsuit and towel, insect repellent, sun block, camera, along with long pants and close-toed shoes if you are taking the horse tour. Nonslip water shoes are recommended for the rocks and steps near the falls.

There are large flat rocks on which to sunbathe or picnic, if you'd like, and there are changing facilities and a restroom by the steps leading to the first waterfall.

Horseback Tour: Advanced Reservations Required

Nauyaca Horse Tours: \$70.00, which includes a 12 kilometer route with three rest periods. Breakfast is provided, which includes local fruits, homemade bread, cheese tarts, juice, and coffee. Lunch is also supplied and includes rice, beans, mashed potatoes, vegetable salad, chicken, tortillas, and a fruit drink and coffee. Both meals are eaten in the comfort of Don Lulo's home.

Tour leaders narrate in English throughout, and are knowledgeable about the falls and Costa Rica -- and Fun!

Recent participants in the horseback tour report the horses were a little "tired" looking, but certainly knew the way to the falls and back without drama.

Contact Information

Email: info@cataratasnauyaca.com, or www.nauyacawaterfallscostarica.com/

+506.2787.0541 or +506.2787.0542



by Maxima van Houten

Pitaya



Worldwide there are more than 100 varieties and hybrids of Pitaya; the skin can be either red or yellow and the flesh can be white or red depending on the species. The three most common varieties found in Costa Rica are the Pitaya roja, or red-fleshed Pitaya, (*Hylocereus costaricensis*) which is red-skinned with red flesh, the yellow Pitaya (*Hylocereus megalantus*) which has a yellow-skin with white flesh, and the *Hylocereus undantus* which is red-skinned with white flesh.

All Pitaya (also known as: jaina, strawberry pear, dragon fruit, night blooming cereus, or in Spanish, the pitahaya, tuna, nopal, or pitajaya) are all of the cactus family, endemic to the Americas, and found in countries like Mexico, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Haiti, and Venezuela, though the world's number one exporter of this fruit is Vietnam. The name "Pitahaya" was given by the Haitians and means "scaly fruit," which accurately describes the leaf-like scales of its peel.

The name dragon fruit is derived from its appearance, which reminds one of the scales of a red dragon, and comes from an Asian legend. According to legend, the

fruit was created thousands of years ago by fire breathing dragons. During a battle when the dragon would breathe fire, the last thing to come out would be the fruit.

After the dragon was slain the fruit was collected and presented to the Emperor as a coveted treasure and indication of victory. The soldiers would then butcher the dragon and eat the flesh. It was believed that those who feasted on the dragon's flesh would be endowed with its strength and ferocity. The fruit was treasured by all who were privileged enough to taste it, and it is believed that man's thirst for the dragon fruit is what led to the destruction and eventual extinction of all of the dragons.

This vining epiphytic cactus from subtropical and tropical regions of Central Mexico south through Central America and into South America is found as far south as Peru and as far east as Guyana. It grows on nearly every island in the Caribbean and is cultivated throughout the tropics, from sea level up to 1,800 meters of altitude. The best specimens are found at around 800 meters above sea level. It can endure temperatures as low as 10 Celsius and as high as 40 Celsius.

The vines may grow to more than six meters. Three ribs normally occur but four ribs per stem are common in some



species. Stems may be straight or undulating, and may have spines arising from the areoles or be nearly spineless.

Their Pitaya's flowers are white or greenish, big in size reaching 30 cm wide, and are valued for their impressive size and ornamental potential. *Hylocereus* blooms only at night; the large, fragrant flowers are of the typical cactus flower shape and are among those called "moonflower" or "Queen of the Night." Pitayas are also grown as ornamental plants, used in gardens as a flowering vine, or indoors as a house plant.

The fruit is ovoid, about the size of a mango, and weight can range between 500 grams and 1,500 grams. Depending on the variety, the pulp can be white or reddish purple with very small, abundant and edible dark brown seeds. Its kiwi-like taste and texture is sweet or sour depending on the variety and ripeness of the fruit.

Some benefits and uses

Most Pitayas are consumed fresh. The frozen pulp can be used to make ice cream, yogurt, jelly, preserves, marmalade, juice, candy, and pastries. The food and cosmetic industries use red Pitayas as a color ingredient. They are also used in gourmet dishes and salads. Unopened flower buds can be cooked and eaten as a vegetable.

The Pitaya is valued for its high content of vitamin C, which aids in bone formation, the strengthening of teeth, and of the immune system. Its seeds contain an oil that has a sure and mild laxative effect, useful for digestive disorders or constipation. The habitual consumption of the fruit fights liquid retention; it prevents kidney stones and stimulates digestive functions. It is an excellent complement for diets seeking to fight obesity. The *H. costaricensis* variety, with its vibrant red flesh, is filled with antioxidants, similar to those in beets.

Cultivation

A climbing plant, the cactus is easily cultivated. To grow the Pitaya start with some seeds and bury them shallowly in some growing medium; a bed of compost and plenty of humus will work well. It can be grown in semi-shade or full sun, though extra light will stimulate budding. Since it is a cactus it does not need much watering and too much moisture may actually harm to the plant. One thing to keep in mind is that since the Pitaya is a vine, it needs a trellising support system to grow to its fullest potential.

How to eat a Pitaya

The fruit has a creamy pulp and a delicate aroma. Enjoying it is very easy; simply cut it in half and scoop the pulp out. If you follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2If4Do1b4Rg> you will see a person picking and eating a Pitaya. The pulp can be blended with ice and a bit of sugar to make a delicious frozen drink.

Eating fruit regularly is a crucial part of a healthy diet and people living in Costa Rica are blessed with access to a wide selection of some of the world's most delicious and exotic varieties. The unfamiliar fruits may sometimes appear funny or strange looking to new arrivals, but don't be fooled by appearances; the Pitaya might look like a dragon, but there is nothing to fear!






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Brazilian Real	4.04
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Canadian Dollar	1.41
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Chinese Yuan	6.53
Columbian Peso	3270.90
Danish Krone	6.83
Dominican Peso	45.53
Euro	0.92
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A Touch of Wisdom

Wisdom has taught us to be
calm and meek, / To take
one blow, and turn the other
cheek; / It is not written
what a man shall do / If the
rude caitiff smite the other
too!

- *Oliver Wendell Holmes*

Six essential qualities that
are the key to success:
Sincerity, personal integrity,
humility, courtesy, wisdom,
charity.

- *William Menninger*

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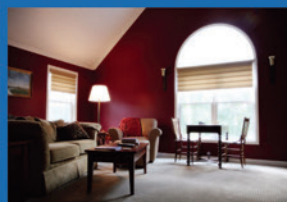
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