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# El Residente



Following a Dream:

# Leigh Westcott

Also in this issue:

The Laugh of the Gecko  
Searching for Timbres

Monteverde Moments  
The Bus Ninja of Costa Rica

**FREE MAPS**  
inside



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## STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

And the winners are... Thanks to members' response to our "contest," we received more than 200 new books for the library! The people bringing in the most books were Mel Goldberg and Carol Perlman. They can pick up their free ARCR ball caps from Ivy in the office. Well done! And a big THANK YOU! to everyone who "competed"—we are all winners.

Correction: In the last issue we misspelled the names of two of the office staff; the security guard's name should have been Braulio Mora, and the Receptionist is Daniela Rivera. We apologize for the error.

Welcome back Carol Blair Vaughn! Carol, who lives in San Isidro de El General, previously graced these pages with her "Life in the Southern Zone" column. She has taken time out from promoting her soon to be released book, Crazy Jungle Love: Murder, Madness, Money & Monkeys; the intriguing true story of Ann Bender, and the mysterious death of her millionaire husband John Bender, in the depths of the Costa Rican jungle. In this issue she has given us an interesting tale about Rob Evans, the "Bus Ninja" who rides public buses throughout Costa Rica. Check it out!

Be sure to read the Across the Board column—it contains news of important events and changes you will not get anywhere else!

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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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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Cover photo credit: Allen Dickinson.



# ACROSS THE BOARD

## Notes and News from the Board of Directors

**C**ONFIRM YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS WITH ARCR: Sometimes people change their address and forget to notify us. Without a correct email address on file, ARCR cannot serve our members to the fullest and they may not receive important messages. Please check and either confirm, or update your address with the office (and please ask any other members you know to do the same.) To confirm or update your email address, send an email to: [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net). Subject Line: Email address update.

**CAJA RATE INCREASE:** According to a news article published June 3, 2017, in The Tico Times, the Caja (Costarricense del Seguro Social) Board of Directors took a step designed to avoid the bankruptcy of the Caja's Pension System by voting to enforce a one-percent raise in the monthly salary deduction of all workers. The key word in that article is "workers." ARCR members are enrolled in the Caja under a special agreement, and therefore **the action by the CCSS Board of Directors does not apply to our members.** ARCR will inform our members if and when the Caja notifies us of any increase under that special agreement.

**NEED HELP AT IMMIGRATION?** ARCR has an associate attorney **inside** Migración. If needed, English speaking, Lic. Sergio Pacheco can be called directly at 8902-8852 for assistance.

**RESIDENCY NEWS:** Costa Rica Migración has established a target file processing time for residency applications - 14-16 months **after** they have received the last document needed to complete the file. Applicants not receiving action by the thirteenth month after completing their file may ask for a review. Contact the ARCR office for the review request procedure.

**RE-ENTERING COSTA RICA:** If an application for residency is in process, but residency has not yet been granted, that person's legal status in Costa Rica is "in limbo." Therefore, if the applicant leaves the country, they **MUST** have a valid exit ticket in their possession to re-enter the country.

**AIRLINE TICKETS:** The BoD has been advised that full-price, refundable airline tickets may no longer be available at some on-line travel sites. Depending on the airline, these tickets **MAY** be available on the airline's home site, however, it might take some diligent searching to find them. (Hint: Look for an "advanced" tab or button.) If obtaining a full-price, refundable airline ticket is important to you, a detailed search of a carrier's website may be necessary.

We have also been informed that rather than giving refunds for full-price tickets, some airlines are only offering to exchange unused, full-price tickets for new tickets for different dates and/or destinations, within a set period of time. Be sure to check with your airline before purchasing your ticket.

**UBER ALTERNATIVE:** A new low-cost, Uber style, taxi service is coming! NOVA, a strictly Costa Rica based company, expects to begin operations July 24, 2017. They plan to operate similarly to Uber, but to keep fare rates low their vehicles may be slightly older. The precise area of Nova's services has not been disclosed at the time of this writing.

**VEHICLE INSPECTIONS:** The charge for the mandatory annual vehicle inspection, sometimes called Riteve or RTV, has gone up. In early May 2017 the price for the inspection of cars, vans, SUVs, and small trucks was increased by 950 colones and is now 10,920. The re-inspection charge has increased to 5,460. The price for inspection of all other types of vehicles has also increased.

**NEED A DOCTOR?** Dr. Esteban Piercy is now available for general practice through ARCR. Dr. Piercy can conduct the necessary examinations for obtaining a drivers license, can write prescriptions, make referrals to the Caja, and more. By appointment only. (Call the office to arrange an appointment.)

**CAJA CARNET:** Members should be aware that the period of validity for the carnet (the card showing current enrollment in the CCSS) has been changed from four to two years. Check your card for the expiration date.



# WHAT CAN ARCR MEMBERSHIP DO FOR YOU?

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



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- References to proven businesses who can assist arrivals obtain desired products and services.
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# 6 THE VIEW FROM DOWNTOWN

by Michael Miller

## Paseo Gastronómico La Luz, San José's Exciting Restaurant Row

Over the past few years the city of San José has created an exciting new “restaurant row” close to downtown. It stretches along six blocks of Calle 33 in the trendy Barrio Escalante district, midway between the National Theatre and the San Pedro Mall. Our Tico friends call this restaurant row Paseo Gastronomico La Luz. It remains almost completely undiscovered by the millions of tourists who visit Costa Rica annually, and it is virtually unknown to the thousands of expatriates who are living here. But Ticos are flocking to it.

I recently met with Jeanyna Soborio, owner of Keidas Lounge, an attractive tapas bar in the center of the restaurant district. She told me, “We wanted to create a dining alternative to Escazú, and now Paseo Gastronomico is a clean and safe street with a wide variety of restaurants and lounges that has become a popular destination for residents from this part of the Valley.”

“Popular” is an understatement. Paseo Gastronómico has become the go-to place for after-work cocktails, dinner-dates, casual dining, and for just a fun place to hang out. After 7:00 p.m., Calle 33 glows from the lights of nearly twenty restaurants, cocktail lounges, bakeries and coffee shops.

If you venture to Paseo Gastronomico on a Friday or Saturday night, you will find many of the restaurants packed with happy patrons, and the street jammed with cars trying to find a place to park. The bars are filled with laughter and conversation, and local couples are strolling from one venue to the next. Without a reservation you may have to join a line outside the more sought-after restaurants to get a table.

Perhaps the two most popular restaurants on Paseo Gastronomico are Sofia Mediterráneo and Restaurante Olio. Sofia Mediterráneo specializes in eastern Mediterranean food and it boasts the largest selection of lamb dishes in Costa Rica. (Their lamb is raised on their own ranches in Guanacaste.)



**Above:** The Costa Rican Beer Factory offers casual dining and beers from around the world. **Right:** The bar at the inviting Keidas Lounge, features many small “tapas” size offerings, allowing patrons to sample a number of dishes.



Restaurante Olio features what it calls international fare. This artfully renovated 100-year-old brick warehouse sits just inches from the railroad tracks. It draws a hip, young crowd to its bar and restaurant with its large selection of Spanish style tapas and its up-scale dishes. Part of the fun of dining at Olio is feeling the shaking and the roar of San José's commuter trains as they rumble by.

One of the reasons for Paseo Gastronomico's popularity is that the street has become an epicenter for Costa Rica's flourishing artisanal beer scene. Over the past decade, Costa Ricans have become enamored with locally brewed craft beers. While you can find some Costa Rican micro-brews at many of the restaurants on the street, two places have dedicated themselves to highlighting Costa Rica's artisanal beers; the Costa Rica Beer Factory and Wilk Craft Beer and Grub. These two restaurants are a block from each other and within these two venues you will find literally hundreds of examples of this country's fascinating craft beers.

One of the ways you can tell that the Paseo Gastronomico is doing well is that the number of restaurants is growing.



Two new places have been getting great reviews: Puro Perú and Isolina.

As its name implies, Puro Perú is a pure Peruvian restaurant. In fact, their promotional material states that its dishes are definitely not part of a fusion fad, but are strictly from Perú. The restaurant is the creation of Peruvian native, Luis Salas. In a recent meeting with Sr. Salas, I learned that he and his family take great care to provide traditional dishes from his native land, made with authentic ingredients.

If you think that the only food that comes from Perú is potatoes, you are in for a big surprise. The wide ranging cuisine of this South American country reflects the tremendous variations in its micro-climates; from the tropical coastal areas to the frigid slopes of the Andes Mountains. Diners will find excellent steaks and some amazing seafood dishes. And, you can start your meal off with a classic pisco sour or a bottle of Cusqueña beer.

At the other end of the restaurant row is Isolina. I talked with Fernando Crespo, one of the founders. He told me that the building was once the house of his great-grandmother, Anita Escalante, part of the family that settled in that part of San José. Sr. Crespo said that their chef creates dishes with fresh local ingredients using French techniques.



**Left:** An old brick building next to the railroad tracks is the site of Olio, one of the most popular restaurants on San José's Paseo Gastronomico La Luz. **Below:** Food, drink and good cheer were the order of the day at a Food Festival for Paseo Gastronomico La Luz. The restaurant row holds two outdoor festivals a year, one in December and one in April.



What will definitely get your attention when you arrive at Isolina is that the restaurant features a large walk-in, temperature controlled wine room. Sr. Crespo says that when patrons arrive they are shown to their table, asked to look over the menu, and are then invited into the wine room. There the staff will guide them and encourage them in selecting a wine that will best complement their dinner choices.

The Paseo Gastronomico restaurant district is becoming so popular that it is spilling beyond its original boundaries of Calle 33. A block away, on Calle 31, is the new version of Kalú. Originally in Barrio Amón, Kalú is noted for its fresh and natural dishes and for its coffee shop, Cafeoteca, which many believe to be the best place in all of San José to get a cup of freshly brewed coffee.

On Avenida 1, around the corner from Calle 33, is Uncle Charly Restaurante (that is the way they spell it). Uncle Charly is notable since it is the creation of the renowned chef, Marco Caldi. He was the owner/chef of the celebrated Italian restaurant Il Ritorno, in the Los Yoses district. After an absence from the San José restaurant scene, this marks Sr. Caldi's return. And he is already getting excellent reviews.

While you can find good restaurants all over San José, Paseo Gastronomico La Luz is, indeed, becoming the go-to place for a night out. This exciting new restaurant row is finding its niche with the growing affluence of Costa Rica's hi-tech workers and expanding, upper-middle class white-collar workers. The patrons tend to be twenty to forty-somethings, affluent, educated and, judging by the menus and the wine lists, sophisticated diners.

And its location seems to be a big plus. Paseo Gastronomico La Luz is just east of downtown in a quiet area which has a growing number of schools and professional office buildings. If you wish to find Paseo Gastronomico La Luz by car or taxi from downtown San José, take Avenida 2 east toward San Pedro. The "restaurant row" begins 200 meters north of Avenida 2.

No compensation has been asked for, nor received, for this article.

*Michael Miller is the author of the first and only guide book that focuses on Downtown San José, Costa Rica: The Real San José. Paperback copies of The Real San José are available at the office of the Association of Residents of Costa Rica. An electronic version is available at Amazon/Kindle.*

*You can see additional stories that Michael has written about Downtown San José at his website: [TheRealSanJosé.com](http://TheRealSanJosé.com)*



by Rómulo Pacheco

## I Want To Fire My Maid. Oops, She's Pregnant!

**T**his is a good time to go over the situation of the pregnant employee that an employer wants to fire. The first thing we have to do is give a little historical analysis of how this special circumstance came to affect the relationship between a maid, or other worker, and their employer:

With the issuance of the Labor Section of The Constitution in 1943, protection was given to workers. As it says in article 94 of the law, "It is prohibited for the employer to layoff a worker because of pregnancy or nursing. Any justified layoff of this type of worker has to be previously notified to the Labor Authorities." As this is written, the prohibition was limited only to pregnancy or nursing causes; any other cause could be notified and executed.

Then, in the Labor Code of 1948, the relationship between workers and employers became regulated by articles 1169

to 1174 of the Civil Code, written in relation to the renting of services. The articles did not, however, contemplate any type of protection for the pregnant worker.

Since then the internationally accepted, fundamental dispositions that have the intention of protecting women, as it is in the case of CONVENTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ANY TYPE OF DISCRIMINATIONS AGAINST WOMEN signed by the United Nations on 18 December, 1979, have been adopted and made a part of all Costa Rican Legislation since 1984.

So, to make sense of this, in the case that an employer fires a worker without just cause, and that worker happens to be pregnant, and the employer knew about the pregnancy, the employer is legally obligated to pay for the following items:

- The salaries pending from the day of firing until the eighth month of pregnancy.
- The salaries of the one month before the birth.
- The salary that would be paid for the three months after the birth.
- Cesantía (unemployment)
- Preaviso (worker's compensation)
- Vacaciones (vacations)
- Aguinaldo (Christmas bonus)

So, employers who wish to fire a pregnant worker should be prepared to reach into their pocket. The law is designed to assist the newborn and mother to have a safe birth, and to give them the sufficient amount of time necessary for this purpose. Remember that neither you nor I would be here without the law for women becoming pregnant; the law of nature.

If you need more information on the subject, please contact me at:

**Rómulo Pacheco**

*Attorney at Law, Notary Public*

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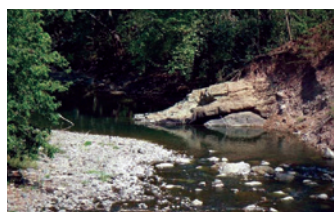
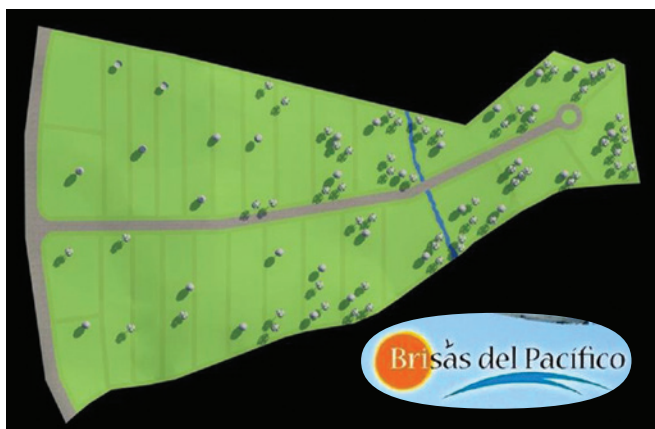


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# 10 GUANACASTE... FROM A HAMMOCK

by Geoff Hull

## The Laugh of the Gecko

I live in the hot, humid Pacific tropics and I am surrounded by many different sounds from this jungle where I've made my home.

I have no need for an alarm clock; I am awakened daily by the rumbling growls of an entire troop of howler monkeys. Each sunrise begins with a loud, throaty noise that sounds like a roaring "Ooooh" while inhaling. Then it warbles into a team effort of the whole troop.

I also have three dogs, and they have taught me I can't make coffee in the morning without feeding them too. So, when the howlers announce the start of another day, and I don't exit the bedroom soon enough for the dogs liking, some very loud dog-games begin right outside my door.

At 7:20 a.m., and 5:20 p.m. every day (you could literally set your watch by them), parrots fly overhead going to the beach in the morning and returning to the jungle in the evening. They can't fly without bickering, arguing, and screeching at each other. These multi-colored beauties amaze me at how they will absolutely disappear once they have landed in a tree; twenty of them will land at once, continue chastising each other for a full minute, then become silent—and invisible.

Throughout the day I am serenaded by various species of birds, and some of the songs stop me in my tracks. The "squeaky-door" bird sounds like a screen-porch door with rusty hinges. And there is a falcon here that screams like a woman in the throes of passion, bringing a slightly uncomfortable giggle and blush to anyone listening to it.

But, there is one particular sound that personifies life in the tropics. Those who have lived for any amount of time in the humidity of an equatorial latitude know the laughing sound that usually emanates from a point high overhead. It comes from the tiny Pacific house

gecko, a coveted pet to have here in the jungle because it has a voracious appetite for bugs. It loves mosquitoes, cockroaches, spiders, gnats, and scorpions. What I lack in non-desirable insects, however, is more than made up for in tiny gecko poop, which takes some effort to wash out of a favorite shirt or towel.

It is a miserable day, one of those where nothing goes right, and as I enter my house, out of breath after arriving in a pouring rain that has soaked me through to my core, and the mud has pulled a shoe off my foot, that I am greeted by the very unsympathetic laugh of my house gecko. Seems the more sour my attitude, the heartier the laugh becomes. As I stand there with one mud-caked shoe and one muddy bare foot, the laugh of the gecko can't help but generate a smile. He understands that life is a slapstick comedy and he can only laugh at my predicament.

I look at my sorry self, beet red, mad, dripping mud everywhere, with one angry red foot to match my face, and hear the gecko—it honestly sounds like he's rolling on his back and holding his sides as a sarcastic giggle erupts from his gut—and I can't help but crack up at my tantrum over nothing.

My gecko is a laughing Buddha who sees the folly of life. He teaches me the "5 and 5 rule" about frustration—if it won't matter in five years, don't give it five minutes. Perhaps the most important thing in life is being taught to me by a minuscule reptile with a chronic laugh. I am striving to learn from my little friend.

*Geoff Hull is a retired fire service Captain and Paramedic from California. He and his family have lived in Playa Samara 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](http://www.fireflashbacks.wordpress.com)*





# Love

*in translation*  
LETTERS TO MY  
COSTA RICAN  
DAUGHTER



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# (12) IT HAPPENED TO ME

by Rich Sulzer



## Searching for Timbres

*This series is about some of the hiccups, mazes, and successes expats have encountered as they attempted to navigate the sometimes unfamiliar paths of the Costa Rican culture. We present these stories in the hope that by knowing them, other member's forays into unfamiliar and confusing territory might become a little easier. If you have a cultural adventure you would like to share, please let us know.*

I am 70+ years old and, naturally, have some medical issues, and I use the Caja (CCSS) for my medical care. The details of my recent, extended medical treatment are too complicated and boring to go into here, other than to say this episode started with my experiencing some pain in my neck. This is about one aspect of the events that ensued which I want to share.

Through a series of medical missteps, bureaucratic complexities, miscommunications, and general SNAFUs, I recently needed to have a medication changed (due to a bad reaction to the one I had been prescribed).

After a bus trip from my home near Ciudad Colón to downtown San José, my wife and I went to the Hospital Raul Blanco Cervantes to request the change in the medication; a dermatologist had told me I had had a negative reaction to the drug I had been prescribed and needed to switch to another, newer drug. At the hospital we were told that to complete the steps for obtaining the new prescription, I had to buy seven Timbres.

We were told the necessary Timbres (in English, tax stamps) could be purchased at a bank, the Red Cross, the CCSS Registry Office in San José, or at a local Post Office. The first five would cost 100 colones each. Another, which was a Timbre de Cruz Roja (Red Cross Stamp), was 200 colones, and the last, a 5 colones stamp, was to be archived with my file. Our search for the correct Timbres began in Ciudad Colón.

We first tried the bank, but struck out. Next we walked up to the Red Cross where they had the five 100 colones stamps and the single 200 colones Red Cross stamp, all neatly stapled in one package. They did not, however, have the 5 colones archive stamp but said to try the Post Office. The P.O., however, didn't have it either and sent

us to a local book and office supply store. Nope, not available there either. Since the necessary archival stamp was important to make sure I got the new prescription, it seemed worth searching in San José, and we saved the hunt for the day of my next appointment.

On that day we arrived early and disembarked the bus at "La Coca Cola" bus terminal and quickly found a book store, where we were denied our final stamp. We then trudged to a farmacia across the street from Hospital San Juan De Dios, where the eyes of the pharmacist lit up with recognition. He, however, did not have the stamp but directed my wife across the street to a lottery peddler.

The lottery peddler, when queried, looked at my wife in disdain and promptly pulled out the needed 5 colones stamp...and demanded payment of 100 colones! A contentious, verbal discussion started, but before the vendor could stash his prize away and tell my wife to walk to the Banco Nacional, where a 5 colones archival stamp could actually be purchased for 5 colones, she dug through her purse for a 100 colones coin and completed the purchase. There was nary a *gracias* from either party.

Now, armed with all the required Timbres, we were just in time for a 1:00 P.M. cita with the Head Medical Doctor at the hospital. She looked through my file, which had all the original paperwork, and then informed me that there was a missing ingredient; a note from the dermatologist saying I needed the medication change...and that note MUST be obtained before the new medication could be ordered.

I have a cita with the dermatologist next month.

We have yet to use the Timbres. What a pain in the neck!

*Rich Sulzer is the author of "The Hut, Adventures of Coming of Age in the '50's". Copies of the book are available at the ARCR office and on-line.*



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# 14 FROM THE EMBASSIES



Digging through our mailbag these past few weeks, we've gotten quite a few inquiries on the new look of the Embassy web site. We really appreciated the feedback and wanted to point out a few key changes for visitors looking for Consular services.

## How do I find info on U.S. Citizen Services?

Clicking on "U.S. Citizen Services" at the top of the page will take you to our Consular landing page. A quick scroll down and you'll see the usual categories—passports, Social Security, Security Messages, Voting, Births, etc. Click on any one of these links and you'll find the same information as on the old website design, including fees, required documents, and the link to our appointment system.

Want a shortcut? Just hover your mouse over "U.S. Citizen Services" to see direct links to each of these pages. Our doctors and lawyers lists are under "Local Resources for U.S. Citizens," for example.

## What about Social Security and other federal benefits?

Click on the "Social Security" link on our U.S. citizen services landing page to review all the information about our Regional Federal Benefits Unit (FBU). Did you know you can save yourself a phone call or a visit to the Embassy for common inquiries, such as address changes and direct deposit enrollments? Most of the information is on our web page.

Otherwise, fill out FBU's online inquiry form and one of their specialists will get back to you if you can't find the information you need. Just bear in mind that in order to better serve beneficiaries throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America, they are closed to the public on Fridays.

## I want to make a notarial appointment! Where's that link?

Look on the right side of the "U.S. Citizen Services" landing page. You should see a link to "Notaries Public." We're working to get a shortcut placed on our landing page, but we're still working on sanding down a few rough edges.

## I'm trying to find something specific, but I'm not sure where to look!

Fortunately our technical wizards have come to our rescue. In the upper right corner of every page you'll see a magnifying glass icon. Click on this to bring up a search field, where you can enter your query and see if we have the information available.

## I have an inquiry anyway. How do I reach your staff?

If you cannot find the information on our web page, we still want to help. Send us an email inquiry to [acssanjose@state.gov](mailto:acssanjose@state.gov). You can also give us a call +506-2519-2000 during business hours and follow the phone tree to be transferred to "American Citizen Services." However, we also provide information on common inquiries over this phone tree too, so be sure to listen to the recording and you might save yourself some time!



On this occasion, we'd like to introduce you to our **Chevening Scholarship Programme**, a fantastic opportunity for Costa Ricans to study at top UK universities, while immersing themselves in British culture and strengthening ties between these two nations.

The programme is open to nationals of Costa Rica, so if you have friends or family members who might be interested in doing a Masters at a UK university, then by all means, do encourage them to find out more about the programme and apply!

## About Chevening

Chevening Scholarships are awarded to individuals with demonstrable leadership potential who also have strong academic backgrounds. The scholarship offers financial support to study for any one-year, full-time master's degree at any UK university and the opportunity to become a part of an influential global network of more than 46,000 alumni.

The programme began in 1983 and has developed into a prestigious international awards scheme. Chevening Scholars come from over 160 countries and territories worldwide (excluding the USA and the EU), and more than 1,500 scholarships were awarded in 2016/2017.



## What do we look for?

We are looking for established or future leaders who create and promote positive change. Cheveners come from a wide range of fields and backgrounds, must have relevant professional experience and meet the English language requirements. Chevening connects future leaders, influencers and decision-makers from all over the world to develop professionally and academically, network extensively, experience the UK culture and build lasting positive relationships with the UK. We welcome applicants of all ages.

## What are the benefits?

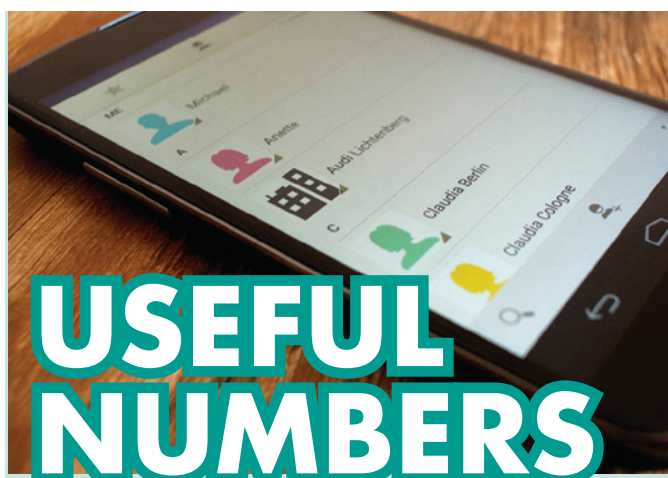
- Fully covered\* tuition fees, set living expenses, and return flights to the UK

- A vast programme of networking events, volunteering opportunities, talks, workshops, and trips across the UK
- Joining over 46,000 other Chevening Alumni who together form an influential and highly regarded global network

\*Some exceptions apply.

If you know anyone who might be interested in this unique opportunity, make sure to direct them to [www.chevening.org](http://www.chevening.org) and [www.facebook.com/ukincostarica](https://www.facebook.com/ukincostarica)

Also, look for our Chevening promotional events that will be happening between August and October this year. These live events provide the perfect opportunity to clear up doubts on the application process and to talk to past scholars about their experience!



### United States of America Embassy

Phone: (506) 2519 2000

Address: Vía 104, Calle 98, San José

Hours: 8AM–4:30PM

American Citizens Services: (506) 2519-2590

Fraud prevention Department: (506) 2519-2117

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

### United Kingdom Embassy

Phone: (506) 2258 2025

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

Hours: 8AM–12PM, 12:30–4PM

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

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

### Canadian Embassy

Phone: (506) 2242 4400

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

Hours: 7:30AM–4PM

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

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

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

### French Embassy

Phone: (506) 2234 4167

Address: A022, San José, Curridabat

Hours: 7:30AM–12:00PM

Email: [ambafrcr@gmail.com](mailto:ambafrcr@gmail.com)

### Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

Address: Calle 32, San José

Hours: 8AM–4AM

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

Emergency assistance: (506) 6050 9853

### Venezuelan Embassy

Phone: (506) 2231 0974

Address: Boulevard de Rohrmoser, Calle 80A, San José

Email: [embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com](mailto:embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com)

Hours: 9AM–12:30PM, 2–4PM

# (16) MONTEVERDE MOMENTS

by Marshall Cobb

*"Something there is that doesn't love a wall..."*

**T**his passage is the opening to Robert Frost's poem, "Mending Wall". The most famous, oft-quoted part of that poem is, "Good fences make good neighbors." This particular poem and the tension between the protagonist—who does not want the wall—and his neighbor who insists upon rebuilding it each year, always spoke to me.

Lest you get ahead of yourself, Gentle Reader, my story has nothing to do with the Mexican border, but instead involves the small fence I recently had to erect around our property here in Monteverde (technically in Cerro Plano, part of the Monte Verde district). I, like the protagonist in Frost's poem, did not want or need a fence. I liked the idea of sharing the greater area with our neighbors and letting all involved politely roam free—as we have for the past couple of years while we rented the house.

My idyllic dream quickly died when I went to get insurance on our newly purchased home. My dream was not by any means the first killed by an insurance agent, but it was indeed smothered through a cautionary tale spoken in rapid-fire, not-very-Robert-Frost-like, Spanish.

In summary, and in English: should someone fall or otherwise hurt themselves on my unmarked, unfenced property, I was likely going to be hearing from a lawyer. The insurance I was paying for would, unfortunately, not cover me.

This didn't ring true. Locals in my newly-adopted country do not see dollar signs when they fall down. Generally speaking, they just get back up and move along, dragging along whatever limb ails them. Ticos, to my way of thinking, were not a looming liability.

What I had not thought about was the tens of thousands of tourists from all over the world that come to this area each year. Back in Texas there was always that nagging, likely valid suspicion that wandering on to someone else's property might end in gunfire. Take a Texan, however, and send him to Costa Rica and it's amazing how quickly their attitude becomes equivalent to, "...my plane ticket also gives me an all-access pass to anywhere I want to go—including your yard."

The response you get when you ask a tourist why they're sitting on your porch is typically something like, "Oh, I was just looking." The most bold will then ask you for the WIFI password.

As I succumbed to the notion that I'd soon be building a fence I realized another important point that the insurance agent hadn't brought up; nudity. While I now saw the risks involving tourists I also now recalled the dangers of having any Ticos catch a glimpse of my naked body.

I've always taken the approach that anyone who looks in my house and sees me naked has my apologies but only themselves to blame. Costa Rican law, however, prohibits public nudity (including any flesh that may be seen by peering through your windows). One of my friends, a recovering hippie that's lived in Costa Rica for forty-plus years, loves to tell the story of how a large number of her friends were permanently deported when the neighbors complained to the authorities about the lack of clothing utilized in their hippie commune.

And so, the protagonist in Mr. Frost's poem and I both have walls and fences we really did not want. Whether or not we actually need them is to be determined but, either way, I encourage all involved to avoid looking in my windows.

<p>20 100</p> <p>20 100</p> <p>20 100</p> <p>20 100</p>	<p><b>TIME</b></p> <p><b>FOR YOUR</b></p> <p><b>EYE EXAM?</b></p> <p><b>COME SEE US!</b></p>	 <p><b>ENGLISH SPOKEN</b></p>	<p><b>Dr. Adrián Chavarria Chaves</b> Optometrist / code 66-0339</p> <p><b>email:</b> <a href="mailto:opticasveo119@gmail.com">opticasveo119@gmail.com</a>  <b>Tel.:</b> 2282-5521  <b>Address:</b> Santa Ana, 500 m. east of Cruz Roja.  <b>Hours:</b> Monday - Saturday 9am - 7:30pm          Sunday 10am - 2pm</p>
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# Map of Rohrmoser and Pavas

## Places of interest

1. Terminal de buses de Pavas
2. Escuela María Reina
3. Escuela Finca San Juan
4. Escuela Rincón Grande
5. Escuela Lic. Daniel Oduber
6. Escuela Carlos Sanabria M.
7. Colegio Británico
8. Liceo de Pavas
9. Parque La Montaña
10. Colegio Rincón Grande
11. ICE
12. A y A (Acueductos)
13. Estación de Bomberos
14. Embajada Estados Unidos
15. Aeropuerto Tobías Bolaños
16. INA
17. Jack's
18. Plaza de Pavas
19. Estadio Ernesto Rohrmoser
20. Correos de CR
21. Ministerio de Salud
22. Centro Goethe
23. Cementerio de Pavas
24. Cementerio Metropolitano
25. Parque de Diversiones
26. Hospital de Pavas
27. Centro Cívico y Cultural

28. Parque Empresarial del O.
29. Delegación de Policía
30. Banco Nacional
31. Banco de Costa Rica
32. BAC San José
33. Farmacia
34. Palí
35. Perimercado Pavas
36. Maxi Palí Pavas
37. Banco de alimentos
38. Gasolinera La Favorita
39. Plaza Rohrmoser



# Map of downtown San José

## Museums

1. M. de Arte Costarricense
2. M. de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo (FANAL)
3. M. Nacional
4. M. del Ferrocarril
5. M. de Jade
6. M. de Criminología
7. M. de Oro y Numismática
8. M. Filatélico y Telegráfico
9. M. de los Niños

## Hospitals

1. H. Calderón Guardia
2. H. San Juan de Dios
3. H. Nacional de Niños
4. H. de la Mujer
5. H. México
6. Cruz Roja Costarricense
7. H. Clínica Santa Rita
8. H. Clínica Bíblica
9. H. Clínica Católica

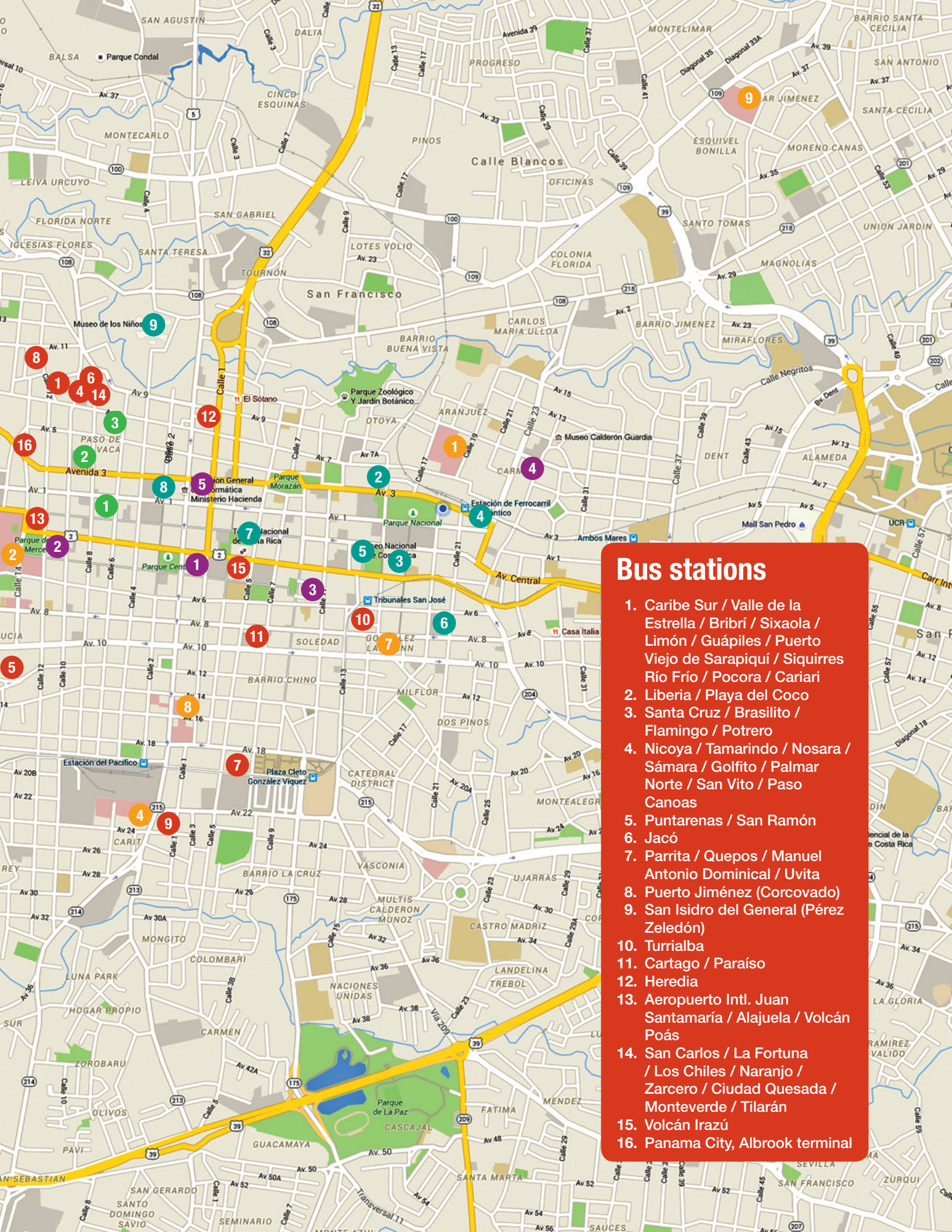
## Markets

1. Mercado Central
2. Mercado Borbón
3. Mercado Paso de la Vaca
4. Mercado de Mayoreo
5. Mercado de la Coca Cola

## Churches

1. Catedral Metropolitana
2. Iglesia La Merced
3. La Soledad
4. Santa Teresita
5. El Carmen





## Bus stations

1. Caribe Sur / Valle de la Estrella / Bribri / Sixaola / Limón / Guápiles / Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí / Siquirres / Río Frío / Pocora / Cariari
2. Liberia / Playa del Coco
3. Santa Cruz / Brasilito / Flamingo / Potrero
4. Nicoya / Tamarindo / Nosara / Sámara / Golfito / Palmar Norte / San Vito / Paso Canoas
5. Puntarenas / San Ramón
6. Jacó
7. Parrita / Quepos / Manuel Antonio Dominical / Uvita
8. Puerto Jiménez (Corcovado)
9. San Isidro del General (Pérez Zeledón)
10. Turrialba
11. Cartago / Paraíso
12. Heredia
13. Aeropuerto Intl. Juan Santamaría / Alajuela / Volcán Poás
14. San Carlos / La Fortuna / Los Chiles / Naranjo / Zarcero / Ciudad Quesada / Monteverde / Tilarán
15. Volcán Irazú
16. Panama City, Albrook terminal



# Map of San Pedro



## Places of interest

1. Fuente de la Hispanidad
2. Rotonda de la Bandera
3. Rotonda Betania
4. Plaza de Francia
5. Parque de Los Yoses
6. Parque Viviana Gallardo
7. Escuela Franklin Roosevelt
8. Escuela Barrio Pinto
9. Colegio Calasanz
10. Colegio Monterrey
11. Embajada de Panamá
12. Embajada de Chile
13. Embajada de Venezuela
14. Embajada de Italia
15. Embajada de Colombia
16. Calle de la Amargura
17. Cementerio de San Pedro
18. Teatro Eugene O'Neill
19. Universidad Americana
20. UNED
21. Universidad de Costa Rica
22. Universidad Creativa
23. Universidad Latina
24. Universidad Fidelitas
25. IMAS
26. ICE
27. Municip. de Montes de Oca
28. Correos de Costa Rica
29. Muñoz y Nanne
30. Casa Italia
31. Mall San Pedro
32. Plaza Antares
33. Auto Mercado
34. Boliche Dent
35. Iglesia de Fátima
36. Iglesia de San Pedro
37. Banco de Costa Rica
38. Banco Nacional
39. BAC San José



by Rich Sulzer

## Leigh Westcott, Hotdog Impresario

**O**n a hot and muggy Sunday morning in June, I disembarked the San José bus in front of Walmart and proceeded to walk the half mile or so towards my appointed destination. We had set an interview time of between 12:00 and 12:30 and I was early, so I stopped up the street from my destination and sipped a cup of coffee to while away the time. Our meeting was to be at Mr. Westcott's hotdog emporium, known as Perro Loco, located on the busiest corner in the heart of lower Escazú. I was thinking of the fast food competition that nearly surrounds him, and was wondering how he could hold on. Heck, I was drinking coffee in that fast food giant, McDonalds!

I strolled out of the Golden Arches, crossed the normally busy four-lane roadway, and easily found Leigh hard at work repairing an exterior menu sign that had been sun-faded on one side and water-stained on the other. Clearing my throat softly so as not to startle him, I said "Hi" and introduced myself.

"You're early" said the nonplussed Leigh Westcott. "Gringo Time" I replied, and we both grinned and shook hands. As he slipped a new menu into the now-removed frame, I began setting up my camera; I knew it would rain before too long and I wanted to take a few pictures first. He advised me that on Sundays he opens his stand at four o'clock in the afternoon to give his night crew a 35 hour work-week, while his day crew works the normal 48 hours. Leigh prides himself on "Quality, Big Portions, and Affordability," the three tenets of his philosophy for success, so I was a bit disappointed in not being able to sample one of his prized hot dogs.

Leigh was born in Vancouver, Canada in 1951 and, as he grew up, he and his family migrated to several Canadian towns, as well as living for a short while in the USA. As a young man he worked in construction, becoming a premier cabinet maker. Those skills were parlayed into a job with a large furniture maker in Saskatchewan where he started as a Factory Representative. That then led to



a promotion to a Product Development and Designer. Twenty-four years ago he took the biggest step of his life and moved to Costa Rica. For roughly his first four years here he relied on his skills in construction, providing building as well as renovation work on houses. Over time he began to formulate an idea; he saw an opening in the late night food trade, people were leaving work tending bars or closing movie theaters, etc. so why not feed them? When asked "Why hot dogs?" he replied that while he was not from a service industry background, the idea had hit him as an epiphany in 1997, and he then set out to explore the possibilities.

After finding his existing site in Escazú, he held several informal meetings with Ticos and Extranjeros at his home, passing out cold beers and homemade hot dogs with several different toppings, as samplers. At the end of the gatherings he handed everyone a piece of paper and asked for comments to rate each offering. Their responses can be seen on the current menu, which has barely changed since opening.

Another thing which evolved from one of those meetings was the name of his now popular business. He asked for ideas from the group and from somewhere in the back of the crowd came a booming "Perro Loco!" And so it has been called ever since. He began working the night shift with a helper to capture hungry late-night workers, hiring more workers to keep the stand open during the day. By word-of-mouth the business grew and he slowly filled the niche he had predicted.

Perro Loco's hot dogs are now custom made to Leigh's specifications, as are the ample rolls. At first it wasn't so

easy; it was hard to find sources for supplying the wieners. It was especially difficult to source the fresh rolls, and he would spend hours with the “midnight bakers” until the texture and flavor he wanted was correctly produced. Today he gets daily delivery of wieners and rolls. His hot dogs come in two sizes: he offers the “standard” size (five and one-half inch) version, but his pride, and biggest seller, is the succulent eight-inch “gourmet” hot dog. On either size, diners have a choice of a huge array of condiments and toppings, ranging from the traditional ketchup, mustard, relish (and maybe some onions) to numerous more exotic selections such as guacamole, bacon, pineapple, and crushed potato chips. All these choices and different combinations will satisfy many different palates.

At one point he decided to explore the idea of adding a couple of food trucks, to be taken to concerts and other venues, but with stiff government regulations he found this to be a losing proposition, as was his once-leased small space in an existing Santa Ana store. Problems with the landlady there caused the deal to fall apart and his legal case in court collapsed to a minor settlement when his lawyer recused himself from the case, leaving Leigh alone on his side of the bench.

Today, twenty years later he has added chili, burritos, and French fries to his menu. His annual sales of hot dogs

are in the 50,000 range, and he goes through about 250 kilos of cheese a year, using more cheese than many pizza makers. Two other popular sellers are his chili (made from a secret recipe) and French fries; he sells 500 kilos of potatoes and about 200 gallons of chili, annually.

The immediate future will have Perro Loco setting up a second unique location in Santa Ana inside of a gas station located across from the Red Cross building. There he will lease space, but due to fire regulations, cannot have a smoke extractor and thus no French fries, for which he will substitute nachos. He will also add ice cream and natural drinks to the offerings. And, because he expects more day trade, he will be including coffee and pastries to round out the new menu.

It's been a long ride from his days in Canada constructing furniture to following a dream of building a profitable hot dog stand, and the key to Leigh's success is following his three part formula of “Quality, Big Portions, and Affordability”. Stop by and try one of his huge selection of delicious hot dogs. You'll be back!

*Rich Sulzer moved to Costa Rica in July, 2007. He's the author of a book entitled “The Hut, Adventures of Growing up in the '50's”, available on Amazon in both book and Kindle versions, also in the Local Authors Library in the ARCR office. He lives with his wife in El Rodeo, San José Province.*





## Heredia Robber Frog

**H**ear Ye! Hear Ye! I had planned to write about a completely different species, but this news is just too big to not pass on. Imagine a known amphibian species that disappeared in 1986, and was declared extinct by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) in 2004, has now been re-discovered! It is the Heredia Robber Frog, and you can read all about it here!

*Craugastor escoces*, as it is known by its scientific name, was a species in great abundance when it was first discovered. Thought to be exclusive to Costa Rica, its range extended over the Cordillera Central mountain range, on the slopes of the volcanoes Barva, Irazú, and Turrialba. The species had been collected frequently and studied quite extensively. Its home was from 1,100 to 2,100 meters elevation, and it would frequent streams and rain forest areas, breeding on land near the streams where the young frogs hatched directly from eggs.

On average, males of the species measured 4.5 cm while females could reach up to 7.2 cm in length. Dark-green colored with a belly of reddish-orange, the Heredia Robber Frog was considered to be in a safe habitat, well protected within the Braulio Carrillo National Park, away from the dangers frequently faced by many other species.

But then, in 1986, something drastically affected several frog species, and suddenly their populations entered into rapid decline. Possible causes were thought to be related to global warming issues, as well as a disease, chytridiomycosis. Early on, at this time, it was believed that any surviving specimens could be used as a basis for a captive breeding program—but then they were gone.

Along with the Heredia Robber Frog, known in Costa Rica as *rana de vientre rojo* (the frog with red belly), two other species also disappeared; the Holdridge's toad and

the Golden toad. Despite multiple directed searches over the years, there were no further recordings of these species and finally, in 2004, all three were declared extinct. Further searches continued in the years following, but with no results.

Then, on a clear night in September 2016, with the sky full of stars (poor conditions to find any frogs) there she sat, hiding in a small cavern on a bluff at about 1,800 meters. A female Robber Frog, measuring about 6.2 cm in length, she is the only one of her kind seen in over three decades, and is now housed under protection at the University of Costa Rica. A great triumph after the hard blow of the loss of a species.

This discovery is extremely good news, of great interest for the wildlife community, and specifically for the University. The discovery location is being protected to avoid mass visitation to the area, and additional searches for another eight species have been amplified to try and uncover other hidden treasures in the rain forests. We wish the searchers much luck!



by Carol Blair Vaughn

## The Bus Ninja of Costa Rica

According to the United States Embassy, there are currently 100,000 U.S. Citizens living in Costa Rica, 4,000 of them collecting their Social Security checks here—Baby Boomers in paradise.

The Canadian Embassy reports 10,000 of their countrymen are currently residing in Costa Rica. Add to that the 1.5 million or so Anglophone tourists who visit Costa Rica annually, and you have one healthy population of English-speakers hanging out in this little jewel of a Central American country. Probably not all of them are surfing, zip-lining, eco-touring, or chugging Imperials all day long.

What do all these people do with themselves? How do they spend their time, energy and money? The expat blogs and forums are full of people asking what they will do with their lives once they have pulled up stakes and made their BIG MOVE to Ticolandia.

The **Bus Ninja** came up with a creative and useful hobby, one which allows him to get to know the country, while helping his fellow expats move around the isthmus. He rides local and long-distance buses, photographs his adventures, then posts them on his blog—with helpful bus schedules—for those wanting to follow in his tire tracks of exploration. This is Rob Evans' retirement passion—the Zen of the Bus. Rob Evans is the Bus Ninja.

Thane Rosenbaum of the *New York Times* sums up the attraction of bus travel like this, "For many bus riders, it's about the journey, not the destination."

Evans himself describes his pastime in his blog *Costa Rica by Bus*, "I love riding the buses in Costa Rica. Maybe it is like the lore of riding the rails in the U.S. It is easy, fun, and inexpensive. So I created a group, 'Costa Rica by Bus,' so other like-minded folks can join me in documenting their travels and provide help and tips to others."

Rob Evans and his wife Jeni have been in Costa Rica for two years, first in San Ramón, and now in San José. They have no car, but prefer to ride the bus to do their shopping, sightseeing, and visiting with friends around

town. This pastime helps them fulfill one of their goals for moving to Costa Rica—it encourages them to walk more, and improve their health in the process. Senior Citizens in Costa Rica ride local buses for free by showing their cédulas (national ID cards) to the bus driver, but bus fares are incredibly reasonable, buses are usually clean, run regularly, and mostly on schedule. Most buses are made by Mercedes-Benz, and bus travel tends to be far safer than automobile travel. For Rob Evans, buses are his jam, he is a bus aficionado through-and-through.

Rob says, "There was a time in my life when I always had to be somewhere at some time, but now riding the bus and taking my time to get places has become a hobby. I pay the equivalent of \$1 for the bus and I enjoy the scenery, and I don't really care when I arrive at my destination."

Have you tried riding buses in Costa Rica? They might not be comfortable for very large people (Ticos are generally smaller than North Americans), and the huge first step up is challenging for those with mobility issues, but once tucked into your seat, the view afforded by being higher up off the ground than cars makes buses a much more enjoyable and interesting method of travel. It's the perfect place to practice your developing language skills with your fellow passengers, and learn about the local culture while exploring your new hometown. Or to just zone-out and admire the scenery and people you see pass by.

Rob Evans is not the first American to find himself smitten with bus travel in Costa Rica. In 2000, John R. Wood wrote "Costa Rica by Bus, The Insider's Guide to Budget Travel," which is still available in paperback through Amazon for \$37.44. It's a bit outdated and expensive, but is also descriptive of the bus experience so many expats have learned to love. Wood writes that his book is a "travel guide that gives you complete, up-to-date information about Costa Rica's extensive, inexpensive public transportation system, a system that can take you anywhere in this remarkably beautiful country, border to border and coast to coast at minimal cost." Another bus nerd!

Evans maintains both a blog and a Facebook page devoted to his bus obsession. He has helped countless



stranded and wandering bus riders—an invaluable service for newcomers, especially those who have not yet perfected their skills in Spanish. With few street signs, unmarked bus stops, and 300 different bus companies, Costa Rica can be an overwhelmingly tricky place to hop the bus around town.

One of Rob's blog readers described his experience, "Having been in Costa Rica only two months, and not speaking Spanish, we were a little overwhelmed by the process, but Rob Evans is our hero. We found this site invaluable, and Rob is patient answering thousands of questions."

Here are two places to find Rob Evans helpful bus information:

<https://costaricabybus.wordpress.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CostaRicaByBus/>

So get out there expats, and join the Bus Ninja rolling around town in style and comfort. Happy Trails!!

*Reprinted from The Costa Rica Star.*



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Mercedes Castro

by Allen Dickinson

## Down On My Hands and Knees — In a Puddle

**T**hose who are long time readers of this column may recall that I do not have good luck with the plumbing in my house—there was “Crisis in the Baños, Parts One and Two” (where I was advised by multiple hardware store employees that the **ONLY** way to solve a plumbing problem was to tear out the wall with a hammer, even though I was asking for a simpler solution), and several other columns which attest to my home’s plumbing shortcomings. Well, here I go again!

Of course this could only happen on a Sunday afternoon, when almost all the hardware stores in Costa Rica are closed. And, to make matters more challenging, this also took place during the heaviest rainstorm of the season so far. That’s when the faucet in la pila (that double concrete and tile wash basin thing found in all Costa Rican houses) decided to give up the ghost, refuse to shut off, and commence spewing water in all directions—only maybe half of which was staying in la pila. A quick investigation revealed that the “high-quality,” Chinese-made faucet somebody had installed (probably because it was cheap) had suffered an internal failure—the threads in the plastic stem had stripped, so turning the handle no longer did anything to reduce the full pressure flow by more than about ten percent—and then only as long as I held my hand on it.

And predictably, unlike some of the other plumbing fixtures in the house, la pila does not have an in-line shut-off valve, which would be the only way to stop the spraying water until I could find a better, longer-lasting solution. As in...maybe the next day when the hardware stores would be open. And so it was necessary to close the master whole-house, shut-off valve inside the meter box, located, of course, outside in the pouring rain. But then the whole house would be without water. Not good, and not up for discussion!

I have become somewhat expert in these situations as, besides the “Crisis” events mentioned above, there was the time the kitchen sink faucet vomited its guts three-feet in

the air on a tower of water, and then the time the PVC pipe that supplies water to the clothes-washer decided to simply snap off at the hose connection. And of course there was the time the shower head supply pipe snapped off inside the solid concrete wall. So I have “experience.” Outside to the water meter box and the shut-off valve I went—in the rain.

There are four water meter boxes in the ground in front of my house, and I am intimately familiar with the one that serves my home. Today it was the one—and naturally the only one, which was submerged about an inch beneath a three-foot-wide puddle of muddy rain water. I know the box well, so I knew that if I felt around and found the cover, finding the key slot to open the lid wouldn’t be a problem. Then it would be a quick trick with the handle of a pair of pliers to trip the latch.

Opening the lid is not easy when it’s dry, let alone with rain drops the size of 100 colón pieces pelting down on me, while kneeling on my hands and knees, on gravel, in water. I think I’d do well at Braille because it took me only about five minutes of searching blindly around in the puddle before I found the lid and located the key hole. I then spent another few minutes manipulating the latch just right to get the lid off.

After successfully removing the lid, there was only one remaining problem—when the box had been installed it wasn’t exactly centered over the meter and the shut-off valve. That important valve is located somewhere in the back of the box, underneath an overhang, and requires the use of a combination of two tools to rotate it. Due to the box being filled with muddy rain water, I couldn’t see the valve; only feel for it (more Braille). But once again, experience paid off; after several minutes of searching around inside the open box I was able to properly align the tools and rotate the valve. Pronto, there was no more water in the house! This was fine for the problem with la pila, but not so good for the dinner preparation process, which was fully underway when all this started.

With the high-pressure water flow stopped, the next step was to replace the failed valve in la pila. I hastily ran to my Tico neighbor’s house in hopes he might have



a spare valve but, alas, after a long search through his supply of miscellaneous parts and pieces, we didn't find one. We then considered various other possibilities for temporarily stopping the flow; plugging the old valve by packing wet rope into it, or attaching a garden hose to the valve and then folding it and clamping it off, but none of these quick fixes worked. And, each effort required turning the water supply on to test the idea, then, when it didn't work, off again—in the rain, which now seemed to be coming down harder.

It was after the third failed temporary repair attempt that my neighbor's wife mentioned a Chino store across town that sold some hardware supplies, and suggested maybe I should check there. After some extensive Tico-style directions (50 meters past the old tree, etc.) off I went, soaking wet, but hopeful.

And they had one! \$6.50 isn't too much to pay for a common, brass garden faucet is it? And, I didn't need a hammer! Oh, and the rain stopped immediately after I replaced the faucet and turned the water to the house back on for the final time. Dinner was only slightly delayed by the necessary clean-up of the water on the floor.

\*\*\*\*\*

I was anxiously pondering the arrival of the next water crisis when a pipe inside the solid concrete bathroom wall began leaking. It's too long a story to include here, but this time I most assuredly would need a hammer!

\*\*\*\*\*

One more thing on the subject of my house. I had not been living in my home in Costa Rica very long when I decided I should have a mailbox—for utility bills and such. So, I bought one! Not a country-road kind of mailbox, just a small, apartment-sized one, and proudly installed it so it could be easily seen and accessed by simply reaching through the garage gate. In ten years I have found about five-hundred flyers for pizza in that mailbox. The utility bills, however, have either been stuck in the gate or thrown on the floor of the garage. For several years I received mail notices from the US Government about Social Security payments, and they too were found on the garage floor. (The thing is, the notices were not for me, but some other expat. I guess the postman assumed that since I was a gringo, it was "close enough.") Eventually the SS letters stopped coming and the mailbox fell off the wall. I haven't put it back up.

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## (28) PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

by Tony Johnson

### Don't Stop Believin'— Dreams do Come True

**W**hat could be more astonishing, more exciting, more incredible than getting a call, out of the blue, offering you the job you long dreamed of, but never believed you could ever actually have?

That happened to Arnel Pineda, former Manila street kid and bar-band singer, when an enormously successful US rock band called and asked him to audition. After losing its very popular lead singer, the band needed a replacement. Unknown to Arnel, he had been rehearsing for this moment for years as the lead singer of a tribute band where he had developed an ability to sing that was eerily like the departed superstar. But he was still “terrified” that he wouldn’t be good enough and didn’t believe the job could really be his. In fact, he thought the band’s call was a friend’s practical joke; no super-rich and super-famous musicians would ever offer a tribute band singer from the slums of Manila such an opportunity. The band was completely serious however, having been dazzled by Arnel’s YouTube performances.

Flown to the US at the band’s expense, Arnel passed the studio audition and then was tested, performing at a small concert. Each time Arnel stunned the band with his vocal range, singing ability, and mastery of the band’s hits. So, on to the next step, a small concert tour—IF you can call singing before 18,000 fans small.

Every great accomplishment must overcome some setbacks and it was no different for Arnel’s rising status. Many fans would not accept a skinny, 5’4” Filipino as a front-man for a macho rock band. It was like having a teenager quarterback the Boston Patriots; he just “didn’t fit” for some fans. But, gradually, his singing won over the skeptics, as it had the band itself, and they all went on to its most successful tour in its fifty year career, led by Arnel’s singing.

### This Story Has a Happy Ending

Arnel was not just the fill-in singer, a temporary employee until the band found the real replacement, he was made a full member of the band and, enjoying a full share of the



profits, earned a reported \$15 million one year. The fans adored him and sought his autograph. He had his own fan club. And he was finally able to give his family in the Philippines a good life. He desperately needed a break, and now the band also needed him, since his presence revitalized the band’s sagging fortunes—musically and financially.



His dream realized was a dream come true for the band as well. His rags to riches story and awesome singing brought the band many new fans.

Don't expect some "but he threw it all away and now is a junkie sleeping in a Manila gutter," ending to this inspiring story. Arnel remains successful and admired. And his story has much to teach us about the nature of human life and happiness.

Arnel never allowed himself to even imagine taking over as the lead singer—he always regarded the band as his heroes, living a life he couldn't even imagine while struggling to survive in the slums of Manila. Though he wouldn't allow himself that dream because it seemed so impossible, he did fully realize a better life, a much, much better life. "It's so good, it's hard to believe it's real," he said.

Arnel never actually says he's unhappy or at a lower level of happiness than he seeks, but it's strongly implied in statements such as: "It's a 24/7 job. You have to be perfect all the time." "I want to live more healthy and not use sleeping pills." "The bottom line, what makes you happy? At the end of the day, it's your family, intact, happy." And he says he made a compromise, "Performing is my consolation (for being away from his family) because it makes so many people happy."

We can safely conclude that making people happy makes Arnel happy too.

## Unavoidable "Laws" of Life

Arnel truly reached the pinnacle of his musical world. So was he blissed-out all day, every day? No way! That can't happen to anyone; life just doesn't work that way. No matter how high one soars, basic facts of life remain permanently fixed in place.

While Arnel fully realized his dream, life reminded him that it operates according to certain unavoidable, inescapable "laws," with certain predictable regularities:

- Life is a struggle for everyone, regardless of how high one climbs on their profession's or society's totem pole.
- Life is never perfect, regardless of how immense one's wealth and fame.
- Life is never free of problems. Money helps but it can't solve all difficulties. (Think of Steve Jobs' death.)
- Life, no matter how good, never reaches a point for anyone where it is entirely positive, free of all negatives. Life is never all "ups" and no "downs."

## Arnel's STRUGGLES

An exceptional singer, Arnel still had to learn how to best use and protect his voice from strain. In other words, this superstar had to prepare and exercise his voice before concerts, reduce vocal strain, and do his best to avoid common ailments—coughs, colds, and sore throats. Because his performances were like those of high level athletes, he had to stay fit and improve his strength and health. Especially during the long, grueling tours taking advantage of the band's newly restored popularity.

Life was FAR FROM PERFECT for Arnel: Between concerts the band lived in a luxury bus, but a bus nonetheless, or they stayed in hotel rooms. There was little semblance of a "normal" home life with family. What could be more thrilling and fulfilling for a singer than performing your beloved band's anthems? But, singing them exactly as they sound on the CD, because "that's what the fans expect," can drain some of the rush from performances. Little innovation or creativity was tolerated.

Arnel's life had its own PROBLEMS. Touring the world, he was emotionally and geographically far from his beloved family. Compared to his early life in the Philippines, his rock-star life provided enormous benefits AND high costs, high NEGATIVES; fans could surround him everywhere, mobbing him for autographs and "selfies," giving him little freedom to just be Arnel.

In addition to those reasons already mentioned, he seemed to never feel secure in his new role. Never feeling that he had truly "arrived," always feeling he had to prove himself at each concert. So he always felt a kind of loneliness. Even when thousands of fans were expressing their love for him, he was far from his loved ones and their understanding, reassurance and comfort.

## Conditions Matter

We live in an "ocean" of conditions. We're surrounded everywhere and at all times with a countless variety of conditions. We cannot ever be free of all conditions, so of course they matter.

Some assert that we can be happy regardless of conditions; to be happy under any and all conditions. That may be possible for Zen masters, but for the rest of us we need the right conditions to give us a start on happiness.

Try being happy in a God-forsaken refugee camp in hellacious South Sudan with little food, water, or safety. It's much better than being the target of murderous,



savage marauders, but most people would have a hard time reaching happy. It would take a lot more than the advice of “don’t worry, be happy.”

Our species evolved to thrive in a limited range of conditions. Yes, our ability to adapt by attitudes and technology has enabled a few of us to reach the peak of Everest or the depths of the ocean—but only briefly. And when they do they’re certainly not thriving.

While a main point of these articles is that conditions themselves are important, they alone are usually not sufficient for happiness; certain attitudes and emotional adaptability are also necessary. Conditions do have a significant impact on our happiness, Zen masters excepted.

In addition to the “life laws” already mentioned, we must also explore how someone with near ideal conditions, like Arnel, might not be able to sustain a high level of happiness.

Some realities about the conditions of our lives:

**CONDITIONS CHANGE:** Nothing in our lives is permanent and unchanging. Mountains seem “eternal” because we don’t live long enough to witness that they change, too. A previous lead singer of this band lost his voice permanently while on stage. He expected that with proper care, he too, could maintain his voice in good condition. As mentioned above, with Arnel the band reached a high point—a great change. But fans could lose interest in the singer and concerts would have to be cancelled. Fending off such a possibility put a lot of pressure on Arnel. Such changes could impact our happiness.

**OUR FEELINGS** about our conditions can change: The band is selling out everywhere, and the demand seems to be high into the foreseeable future. So maybe our conditions aren’t exactly changing, but our feelings about “singing that same damn song one more damn time”



might be. Our changing feelings about our circumstances can also impact our happiness.

**TOXIC ATTITUDES** about our life situation can change our conditions from being a good part of our life to an unbearable burden. Again, Arnel felt he had to prove himself constantly. He never really felt he was good enough in spite of the fans, the band's support, and the band's success. That's more wear and tear on an already pressured situation—wear and tear that might lead to burnout—a deep form of unhappiness.

## In Short

If we're looking for happiness to last for the long run, we must not only put ourselves into conditions that have a high likelihood of producing happiness for us, but we must also be prepared for changes in those conditions, and realistically include the impact of life's laws on us.

Recall, the three general views on the source of happiness:

- It depends entirely on the right conditions.
- It depends entirely on our accessing our innate core of happiness.

- And, it's the result of the interaction between conditions and our mindset about those conditions, and our reaction to those conditions.

For example, we must be able to find happiness in the inescapable struggle, imperfection, problems, and negative aspect of all life. (More on this next time.) In other words, we must actually find ways to enjoy the journey of life, not just the arrival at our goals.

Thank you for taking this journey of ideas with me and Arnel.

Oh, the name of the band? JOURNEY!

(For more on Arnel Pineda, see "Don't Stop Believin': Everyman's Journey." It's currently available on Netflix and short films of Arnel leading Journey are on YouTube.)

Comments, questions, criticisms? Drop me a line at: [paradise.we.have.a.problem@gmail.com](mailto:paradise.we.have.a.problem@gmail.com)



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## 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



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

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## ► **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.costaricaaaa.com](http://www.costaricaaaa.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.costaricaaaa.com/category/al-anon/>.

## ► **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. 1<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.canadianclubcr.com) or email Pat at: [canadianclubcr@yahoo.com](mailto:canadianclubcr@yahoo.com) to sign up.

## ► **Cooking Class Club**

Meets the first Wednesday each month from 10am to noon. Learn how to create memorable dishes from a culinary expert. Each class will be followed by a four-course lunch and beverage at a special price. For location, directions, and more information, contact Barry Blazer at 6008-9944. (Reservations recommended.)

## ► **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](mailto:cbwn00@gmail.com) and see our FB page - [www.facebook.com/CostaBallenaWomensNetwork](http://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: [bbrashears0@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com). Join Democrats Abroad at: [www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org). Register to vote absentee at: [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org)

## ► **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.littletheatregroup.org](http://www.littletheatregroup.org)

### ► Marine Corps League

Meets at 11 a.m. the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto:mcleaguecr@gmail.com)

### ► Newcomers Club

Newcomer's 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](mailto:costaricaporo@yahoo.com) or visit our website at: [www.newcomersclubofcostarica.com](http://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](mailto:d_sandlin@email.com) or visit our website at: [www.pcclub.net](http://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](mailto:pzwomansclub@gmail.com). Please visit our website at: [www.pzwomansclub.org](http://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](mailto:pwn.costarica@gmail.com). PWN website is [www.pwnrcr.com](http://www.pwnrcr.com)

### ► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information write Walter Bibb at: [wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:info@arcr.net), Subject line; El Residente."



## Holidays and Observances of Costa Rica

Tuesday July 25th  
Annexation of Guanacaste  
*National Holiday*  
ARCR office closed

Wednesday August 2nd  
Our Lady of Los Ángeles  
*Observance*

Tuesday August 15th  
Mother's Day  
*National Holiday*

Saturday September 9th  
Children's Day  
*Observance*

Friday September 15th  
Independence Day  
*National Holiday*

## Funniest One Liners

I thought I wanted a career,  
turns out I just wanted  
paychecks.

Never, under any  
circumstances, take a  
sleeping pill and a laxative  
on the same night.

Whenever I fill out an  
application, in the part  
that says "If an emergency,  
notify:" I put "DOCTOR".

What's my mother  
going to do?

I didn't fight my way to the  
top of the food chain to be a  
vegetarian.

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