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EL RESIDENTE

November

December

2023

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Editor's Note

It's that time of year again. I am referring to the Holiday Season, a time of joy and sharing with those less fortunate. What I am getting at here is that in this issue there are three different opportunities for you to make a difference: the **Indigenous Games**, the Marine Corps League **Toys for Tots** campaign, and ARCR's annual **Tree of Hope** charity. Both of the latter focus on improving deserving children's Christmas, while the first is about helping a sometimes overlooked group provide for their children's future. My space here is limited, so let me just say these are all worthy causes; please give generously to one or more of them. Donations to all groups can be facilitated through the ARCR office. Call 4052-4052 to get the details.



Check our blog on our Facebook site.

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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

SONOFFFL The First Friday Lunch returns! Friday, December 1, 2023, will be the first post-COVID meeting, and it will take place at the Restaurant El Dorado in Sabana North. NO membership, reservation, or RSVP is required; just show up at about 12:00 noon and meet with friends, old and new. **DIRECTIONS:** From the Nissan Dealer, go West on Avenida 5. Look for the ICE building on the right side, go three more streets, and turn right (North) on Calle 62A. The restaurant is on the right. Parking is available across the street. The cuisine is Chinese, and prices range from ₡8,000 and up. Come and enjoy the fellowship!

INDIGENOUS GAMES As you read this the Indigenous Games are but a short time away (February 1, 2, and 3.) ARCR is a sponsor and is accepting donations for them; if you would like to contribute to this worthy cause, please do so. There are multiple ways that funds can be donated – call the office if you are unsure of the best way for you. If you have already donated, we sincerely thank you.

NEW EUROPEAN TRAVEL DOCUMENT Several articles about a new document which US citizens will need to Travel in Europe, and that will be initiated in early 2024, have been published. The document, similar to the European Travel Information and Authorization System documents, will be required for travel to Spain, France, Italy, European Free Trade Association countries such as Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland, and to Bulgaria, Cyprus, and European microstates like Andorra and Monaco. The purpose of the system is to tighten border security by digitally screening and tracking travelers entering and leaving the countries. Registration for the document will be simple, accomplished electronically online, with the approval delivered by email. The cost is expected to be about USD \$8 per traveler. Completion of the process will be required before departure and, once approved,

will be valid for three years or until the traveler's passport expires. For the latest information, check the US State Department's website at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/schengen.html>. Though not posted at the time of this writing, the official URL for ETIAS is: <https://www.etiaseu.com/us-citizens>

COVID-19 SURGE Recent data from the CDC suggests that a summer surge of Covid-19 could be underway. Federal health officials have announced a new COVID-19 booster should be released in the USA around late September or early October, which will target the now-dominant XBB strains of the virus. With a new vaccine forthcoming, experts say it is unlikely we will see a return to masking for everyone. As of this writing, the new booster is not available in Costa Rica.

COVID ORGAN DAMAGE STUDY Researchers and physicians have known that COVID-19 can affect various organs, such as the brain, lungs, heart, and kidneys, but did not know how long the damage lasts. A new study using data from 259 unvaccinated UK patients who had been hospitalized with COVID-19 in either 2020 or 2021 found that six months after being infected, some 60% of the patients showed abnormalities in multiple organs, especially the brain and lungs. The study found that the patients were approximately three times as likely as uninfected people to have abnormalities in at least two major organs, including the lungs, brain, kidneys, and liver. The recipient's hearts, however, looked no different from those of uninfected people, a surprising result given that previous research suggested SARS-CoV-2 can cause damage to that organ. No information was given correlating the results to age, but it is assumed that the elderly are still considered a high-risk group. The preceding was condensed from a September 22,

2023, article on the SCIENCE website. To read the full article, go to: <https://www.science.org/content/article/months-after-hospitalization-covid-19-mris-reveal-multiorgan-damage>

COSTA RICA TOURIST VISA LENGTH EXTENDED By Presidential Decree, Costa Rica's guidelines for entry Visas for non-residents have been amended, doubling the previous maximum Tourist Visa length from 90- to 180 days, according to the Ministry of Economy.

All visitors from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, entering through any migration checkpoint, will now receive the 180-day Visa. Persons who have previously entered and received a 90-day Visa are eligible for an extension.

According to the Ministry, the change, which has already taken effect, is an outgrowth of Costa

Rica's objective of "improving the business climate, generating competitiveness, and promoting economic activity.

A TIP FROM THE MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Before you click on a link in any email, hover over it with your mouse cursor. If the URL that appears does not match the URL text in the email, do not click on the link. Do not open emails from unknown sources, especially if an email domain looks questionable. Suspicious emails can introduce a virus to your system, which can compromise your password.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME Remember, DST ends in the USA at 2:00 AM, Sunday, November 5.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS The ARCR Staff and Board of Directors wish everyone a safe holiday season. To see what days the office will be closed, check the Important Dates listing inside the back cover.

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TASTE THE TROPICS

by El Residente Staff



Manzana de Agua

Known in English as the Water Apple, the Manzana de Agua is a bell-shaped, juicy fruit with a glossy pink-to-red appearance. Scientifically known as *Syzygium aqueum*, it is a species of brush cherry and a member of the botanical family Myrtaceae. Sometimes called the watery rose apple or simply rose apple, it is small in size, with white flesh and a strong, sweet smell.

Popular for its thirst-quenching properties, the succulent fruit may be called Chambakka, Pani Seb, Jambu, Panneer Naval, and other names in different parts of the world. In many countries, it is valued for treating various ailments such as heart conditions and liver disorders. The unique medicinal properties of

this fruit are well-documented in traditional Indian practices of medicine.

The tree grows naturally in Central and South America and is cultivated for its wood and edible fruit. It grows to three to ten meters in height, from zero up to 1,600 meters in altitude, in wet, warm, and humid climates where the soil has rich moisture content. The tree has a coarse, tough brown bark and widespread branches, and the leaves of this tree are long and narrow with a prominent shine. Thought to be originally from Asia, the trees grow in Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka and have been cultivated in the temperate environments of Hawaii, Florida, and California in the United States.



In Costa Rica, the plant blossoms twice a year, primarily in the summer months, and the ripe fruits are ready for picking around four months later. The apples have a crunchy texture and can be quite sweet, though astringent in taste when ripe. The unripe, green water apple has a characteristically sour or bitter taste and is often used to make pickles and chutneys.

Eaten raw, the water apple contains dietary fibers that aid digestion, is rich in Vitamin C and A, and contains a lot of B vitamins. Further, they have a large amount of trace minerals as well as antioxidants.

Often found being sold in bags of six or more by roadside vendors, give them a try. They are not to everyone's taste, but they deserve a chance to try to please your palate.

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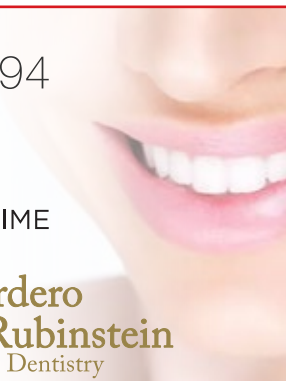
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OUT AND ABOUT

by Mitzi Stark



Holiday Time!

It's that time of year; the rainy season is ending, "summer" is coming, and the biggest holidays of the year are just around the corner. I am not ignoring American Thanksgiving Day (November 23) here, but the major holidays all occur in December, and that means lots of holiday Fairs and Festivals. So, let's look at what's going on.

Take note: Costa Rica celebrates the end of the year in a big way, as many government offices, schools, and private companies take the week between Christmas and New Year's off as vacation. The beaches will be jammed as both local and international tourists come to enjoy the warm, sunny weather. If you will be here during that time, stock

up on food and supplies in advance, as many of the stores will be closed.

Starting in late November, the **San Joaquin de Flores** holiday display of lights brings on the holiday spirit as the neighbors in Cruz del Norte decorate their houses, windowsills, yards, and streets with colorful panoramas ranging from Bible scenes to reindeer and Disney characters. It's a quiet walk covering four square blocks, starting at the church, and people come from all over the country to enjoy the scene. It's free and reverent, nobody shouts or runs, and a warm evening invites one to sit on a bench in the central park and watch as kids play, dogs romp, and people gather. There are restaurants



and coffee shops in the area, and the church, if it is open, should be the first stop. The lights go on around 5:30 as dark is setting in. Weekends mean crowds. The display is on every night until Christmas.

On December 8, 9, and 10, the **Feria Hecho Aquí**, or Made Here Fair, will be held in the old Aduana Building, Calle 23, Av. 7-9, in San Jose. Here is all of Costa Rica under one roof with more than 80 exhibitors from small companies, cooperatives, and women's groups offering jewelry, woven rugs, baskets from Talamanca, leather purses and wallets, food and chocolates, and much, much more. You are sure to find something for gifts and for yourself too. The fair also includes some cultural spots, mascaradas, music, and some surprises. And it's free. Opening at 10 a.m., it runs to late in the day. The Aduana Building in itself is interesting; it goes back to the 1890s when it was the customs shed for the country and is part of the national patrimony.

To get there, consider **taking the train**. If you come from Cartago, Alajuela, or Heredia you can take the morning train and ride it to the Atlantic station, just a short walk to the Aduana Building. Google *incofer horarios de tren* for train schedules. Older adults ride free.

The biggest holiday event in Costa Rica is the **Festival de la Luz**, or Festival of Lights. A Christmas tradition for 28 years it was cancelled for two years during the pandemic. It's back, and for 2023 the date is Saturday, December 16. It is a welcome treat for the country.

This event is a huge Christmas parade that sparkles with giant floats, bands with up to 120 musicians that march and maneuver to Christmas songs, gymnastic groups, mascaradas, and other surprises as it winds down Paseo Colon and Avenida Segunda. The fantastic 180-member municipal band from the western town of Zarcero will be a highlight of the parade. This band will represent Costa Rica in the Rose Bowl parade on January 1, 2024, in California.

Large crowds will form early, but all major channels will cover the parade from about 6 p.m. on, so if you don't want to be a part of the crush, you can watch it all, along with commentary and interviews, on TV. I have enjoyed seeing it every year from the comfort of my recliner. It's quite a show.

A week of carnival events will take place at the **fairgrounds in Zapote**, a community on the south side of San Jose, and will run from December 25 to January 4. There will

be all the carnival rides, entertainment, concerts, food, a good carnival should have. It features the famous (or infamous) "Tico Bullfights," in which the bull is not killed but is surrounded and teased by "improvised cowboys", or improvisidos, (mostly younger males) who challenge the bull to charge at them. The bull usually gets the best of the deal. This traditional event has lots of fans but has come under criticism from animal protection groups. There are many other "bullfights" around the country, and TV stations broadcast lots of them in the evenings, so you can judge for yourself without facing the crowds. Entrance to the Zapote fairgrounds is free.

With the holidays coming, there will be fairs and festivals all around. **Niño Con Cariño** has a great fair with great buys at their center on Calle Rosales, Desamparados, Alajuela. Go early for good shopping. It's not an easy place to find – use Waze or check a map before setting out. All proceeds go to the school, which is home to 30 girls from high-risk areas. The fair is an opportunity to see the school, the grounds, and the 30 pink bicycles, all to help make a better future for these kids. And, of course, there are plenty of bargains. Date and time to be announced. Check Asociación Niño con Cariño on Facebook for dates and times.

Día de los Inocentes, or Day of the Innocents, is a custom that is disappearing as Costa Rica becomes more "globalized." Hopefully, we can catch some of it before it disappears completely. It is December 28th, which is recognized as the day that King Herrod ordered that all baby boys be killed (Gospel of Mathew 2:16). The Day of the Innocents is a Spanish custom, sort of like April Fool's Day, a day of pulling pranks on unsuspecting persons.

Here it is accompanied by someone singing *Pase por inocente comiendo pan caliente* or "There goes an innocent eating hot bread." Pranks came in all dimensions, including false reports on the news or a message to call Señor Leon at the zoo. One year a friend called to tell me about the death of a prominent political figure and I, of course, called others with the hot news only to remember the date much later. *Pase por inocente*.

Be aware of tricks on that date! You may see a 500 colon coin on the sidewalk, and when you try to pick it up you find it's glued to the cement. Another common trick is to tell someone that their girlfriend or boyfriend is waiting for them at some corner downtown, and the victim rushes off to meet them. Some pranks are more elaborate, such as driving around with a mannequin's arm sticking out of the trunk or someone asking you to hold their ice cream cone for a minute and disappearing. One year a truck went up my rural road with a speaker announcing a recycling campaign to pick up bottles, paper, and cans, and all of us gathered up our trash and set it out front and waited for the truck to come back. It never did. It was December 28th. At the end of the day we trotted it all back in the house.

It would be impossible to compile a complete list of all the fairs and festivals dedicated to Christmas, but by checking "*ferias navideñas*" and the name of your city (i.e., navidad alajuela 2023) online, you will find a lot of things going on from tree lighting ceremonies, exhibits of *pasitos* or manger scenes, to food fairs and more.

Each year I go to an Advent program on the first Sunday of Advent, which is sponsored by the German community and church, at the Humboldt school in Rohrmoser. It



is a German-style Christmas event with displays of ornaments and decorations, a huge book sale, cakes, cookies, mulled wine, and German Christmas music. It reminds me of my childhood holidays in Milwaukee. If you are interested in attending, call the Humboldt school 2232-1455 for the time (probably 3 p.m., but check.)

The **Rosary to the Christ Child** is a Costa Rican tradition you might want to attend. It is designed to keep the Christmas spirit going for a few more weeks. It is a custom unique to Costa Rica and is celebrated in place of celebrating the feast of the Three Kings, as in most Spanish countries.

Some local governments have Rezos for the public. An altar is set up near the portal or manger scene, and all the neighbors are invited in to pray the rosary together. It is a social occasion with prayers led by a rezador, or someone with a gift for leading prayers and songs. Refreshments are always a part of the rosary. There was a time when every home held a rosary sometime in the days following Christmas. Don't feel shy about attending one; it is not just for Catholics. I go to one every year because it's a nice, friendly custom, and sharing cookies and coffee (or juice) with others is fun.

And, of course, to wrap things up, there is the New Year's celebration. This is the night that, seemingly, all the fireworks in the world come out and, as the new year arrives, the Central Valley is alive with thousands and thousands of rockets exploding in the sky. The celebration goes on for hours, from before midnight until long after, and if you can find a spot somewhere in the mountains above the city to observe, it is a spectacle to behold.

Some sources to check for events are: si.cultura.cr, gamcultural.com (general area metropolitan), and mcj.cr/agenda (the Ministry of Culture and Youth website)

Happy holidays to all.

Mitzi Stark has lived in Costa Rica for several years. She enjoys going to the multitude of fairs and cultural events that are available to the public, particularly those in the Central Valley, and hopes to see you at one soon.



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UNDERSTANDING TICOS

by Edie Bakker



Part Two: Relationships and Money

Editor's Note: Costa Rica, like every country and society has its own culture. This is the second article in a series about some of the cultural differences between Costa Rican society and those of other countries. To help us better understand some of the differences we may encounter, Edie Bakker has created a list of some of the variations and explained them for us. Knowing them can make our time here more tranquil. By its very nature, this series may contain generalizations, and its contents will not apply to every situation.

MONEY

1. Watch out for "Gringo pricing!" It is true that many Ticos will charge expats a higher price for items and services than they do each other. Can you blame them? They believe we can afford it! Sometimes its best to let a Tico do your business for you, such as negotiating the fee for an apartment, purchasing a vehicle, or having home repairs done.

2. While many things have a fixed price, bargaining is a thing in Costa Rica, as it is in many countries around the

world. North Americans are among the few who do not do this. Feel free to ask for a cheaper price than what is asked of you. They may be starting high, expecting to be dickered down. On the other hand, Americans always feel they deserve the best price and can forget that the person selling a personal item may have worked very hard for it and deserve their higher price.

3. As Gringos we have a focus on money over time. We have expressions like "Time is money!" and "I don't care how you do it, just get it done!" Ticos view time as the opposite; time is free and, therefore, it has little

consequence in the grand scheme of things. The Tico approach is that time should be used to its maximum advantage for things of importance rather than for making money. Without the 'urgency' of time pressure, this can mean they may take a longer time doing a job than a Gringo may anticipate. When building a house or having home repairs done, a good rule of thumb is to anticipate the work to take at least 35% more time than the contractor initially budgeted.

4. North Americans are all "rich" compared with most of the Ticos you will meet, even those of us who are poor by American and Canadian standards. Remember that! Share when you can. There is an unspoken caste system in this country, and Gringos are perceived as being in the top bracket. This perception can be taken negatively. Try to overcome this by being extra nice and respectful, and don't expect to be treated better than others.

RELATIONSHIPS

5. Most Ticos put relationships over money. North Americans put money over relationships. Putting relationships first is a wonderful custom and should be adopted as much as possible! This is actually true in most countries and, historically, has been taught by all cultures and religious orders. North Americans are the exception.

Be aware, though, all of this can get skewed when a Tico is relating to a "richer" person; then money can become the object of the relationship.

6. Sundays are reserved for family gatherings, and they do gather with their families often. Church services are often not held on Sundays and may take place on Saturdays or other weekdays. The day chosen depends on the group.

7. Ticos are very family oriented. Do not expect to be invited to family gatherings or even neighborhood parties. Even though you might marry into a Tico family, you will probably always be "non-family." (An exception to that is birthday parties, where gifts are expected from all attendees.)

8. Machismo among males is an integral part of Latin culture, and this includes Tico culture. The dictionary describes being macho as "having an exaggerated sense of manliness, an assumptive attitude of virility, courage, strength, and entitlement to dominate." (This is actually more of a problem for modern Costarican women than it is for we expats, who often lament the way their fathers, brothers, and husbands look down on them and find it a constant source of frustration.)

9. Tico men don't like conflicts. They may regard even a mild confrontation as a threat to their masculinity. They need to see themselves as having to win and don't want things to escalate. (This has special ramifications regarding work, which will be discussed in the next article.)

10. Tico men don't like being held responsible, even when something is obviously their fault. Confronted, they will deny responsibility and say things like, "I didn't drop the spoon; IT fell out of my hand," transferring responsibility to the spoon. Or they will try to transfer the responsibility to another person with excuses like, "We didn't have an accident because I ran a stop sign. YOU got in my way."

11. Costarican women often have more formal education than their male peers and are usually very much the head of their households. Like most Latin women, they are in charge of their own sexuality and view it as a source of personal power. They will not hesitate to use their appearance to their benefit. Often, office workers and women in sales positions take advantage of this and dress to give themselves "an edge."

12. Ticos like to be the center of attention, to be looked at, even desired. Some will be mildly offended if they are NOT looked at. Ticos see no harm in flirting with a man who admires them, and that flirting frequently means nothing more than "Thank you for noticing me."

13. Ticos, like all Latin females and most Latin Mediterranean women, have a propensity for drama especially when it comes to health. More accurately, DRAMA! For example: "My knee hurts! It's probably cancer! I'm gonna die!" This may seem like an exaggeration, but if it is, it is not very much of one. Seriously! This can be a problem when trying to communicate the seriousness of your complaints to a Tico doctor who is used to such a level of dramatic description that he may feel that your symptoms are not as bad as you are communicating.

This tendency to exaggerate (compared to expats) can also apply to other events and stories as well. It can be quite entertaining if not taken too seriously.

In the next article I will look work issues.

Edie Bakker has a degree in anthropology. She has lived all over the world and written for National Geographic. Author of a book about American culture, she is sensitive to how misunderstandings often cause cultures to collide.



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HEALTHCARE ISSUES

by Linda Leake, ARCR Board Member



Local Medical Discount Programs

Expats may find it important that two local healthcare provider systems, Hospital Clinica Biblica and Hospital Metropolitano, offer cost-saving plans for their clients. Both programs, for a small monthly fee, extend discounts on many healthcare services, including doctor visits, lab services, some medical procedures, pharmacies, and much more. If you would like to know more about possible discounts for private medical care in Costa Rica, here is a brief description of the plan and where to get more information:

- Hospital Clinica Biblica's program, Mi Vida, can be used at both their San Jose and Santa Ana locations. For more information, email or call 2522-1000 and ask to speak to a representative of the MiVida plan. A Spanish language website can be reviewed at: <https://www.clinicabiblica.com/mivida/index.php/es/>
- Associated with Hospital Clinica Bilica, San Rafael Arcangel Medical Center Hospital in Liberia, used by

many expats and tourists in Guanacaste, is developing a discount program similar to MiVida. Check with them for the status of their program. (506) 2690-5500 or 2666-1717, or email to: contacto@hcsanrafael.com. Their website is: <https://www.hcsanrafael.com/>

- Medi-Smart is the name of the plan offered by Grupo Montecristo, which provides medical discount services at all Hospital Metropolitano locations, as well as 20 other health service providers throughout Costa Rica. Information about Medismart and the over 60 businesses associated with Grupo Montechristo can be found at: <https://medismart.net/en/medismart-plan/> You can call their representative at 2528-5400 |or 2211-4444 or email them at: info@medismart.net

Both plans offer significant discounts and can save medical patients substantial amounts.

LEGAL UPDATE

by Rómulo Pacheco

The Limitations of Border Runs (and why they should NOT be a common practice.)

While border runs may provide temporary solutions for individuals seeking to extend their stay in Costa Rica, it is important to consider the limitations and potential drawbacks associated with this practice. This essay explores why border runs should not be a common practice and the potential negative consequences they can have on individuals and the country.

Border runs may be seen as a way to circumvent the immigration system, depending on the individual's specific circumstances and intentions. Repeated border crossings can raise legal and ethical concerns, which Immigration authorities can, and sometimes do, view as an abuse of the system, leading to potential consequences such as visa denials, penalties, or even being barred from re-entry into Costa Rica.

Individuals miss out on the opportunity to fully integrate into Costa Rican society by engaging in border runs. Obtaining long-term residency or work visas allows individuals to establish deeper connections, contribute to the local community, and fully embrace the culture and lifestyle of the country. On the other hand, border runs perpetuate a transient status, hindering the development of a strong sense of belonging and commitment.

While border runs can contribute to tourism-related spending in the short term, relying on this practice as a common occurrence can have negative economic implications. If a significant portion of the foreign population engages in frequent border runs, ensuring stable economic growth and long-term planning becomes challenging. Sustainable economic development requires individuals who are committed to investing in the local economy and contributing to its growth.

A high volume of individuals engaging in border runs can place a strain on the country's infrastructure and resources. Increased border traffic at the land borders and airports can lead to longer wait times, overcrowding, and additional pressure on immigration officers and facilities. This strain affects not only the efficiency of immigration processes but also the overall experience for all travelers.

Frequent border crossings without adequate screening and monitoring can pose national security risks. Without proper immigration controls, it becomes challenging for authorities to ensure the safety of citizens and residents. Border runs may inadvertently allow individuals with malicious intent or questionable backgrounds to enter and stay in the country undetected.

While border runs may offer a temporary solution for individuals seeking to extend their stay in Costa Rica, they come with limitations and potential negative consequences. The uncertainty, legal concerns, lack of integration, economic implications, strain on infrastructure, and national security concerns associated with border runs argue against them becoming a common practice. Instead, individuals should explore long-term immigration options that allow for stability, integration, and a more meaningful engagement with the country and its people.

For more information, please call or send an email to:

Rómulo Pacheco, Attorney at Law, Notary Public

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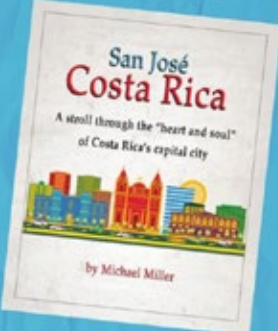


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A DAY IN THE LIFE

by Allen Dickinson



A Holiday Celebration

Eggnog! The drink of the gawds. Well, to some, anyway. I really like it and, when I was living in the USA, I could hardly wait until December when it was stocked in the coolers.

Eggnog in Costa Rica is slightly different than the US version; here, it is called Rompope, and although it is a little thinner, it is just as good as the North American version. There are a couple of small differences, however: In Costa Rica Rompope has a small amount of alcohol already included; it is not only sold by the quart (liter) but also in small drink box size packs and, it is sold year round.

Last year at Christmas time, I bought some Rompope and a small bottle of rum and took them by a Tico friend's home to share as a holiday libation. Upon my arrival and presentation of my yuletide cheer, I was greeted with the phrase, "Ah, the cream of death! Welcome!" after which we (he, his wife, his mother-in-law, two employees, and I) proceeded to dispose of three liters of Rompope ... and all the rum. In a responsible fashion, of course.

There are many ways to celebrate the Christmas holidays in Costa Rica, and this was a good one. I'll do it again this year!

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Ivo's Blog by Godutch Realty

How Can Future Expats Go Native In Costa Rica?
May 25, 2022

6 Super Tips That Unlock the Secret To Selling Your Home Online
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The Best Types of Home Water Filters That Don't Require Plumbing
May 15, 2022

6 Passive Ideas to Stay Busy after Retirement in Costa Rica
May 13, 2022

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Bookshelf

LOCAL AUTHORS

Costa Rica is blessed with a large number of expats who are excellent writers, many of whom have published books. ARCR supports those authors, and El Residente has compiled a listing of some of their works for members to purchase. Check out the brief descriptions below (titles in red are new additions) and decide which ones to add to your library or share with a friend or loved one. The list is grouped by type, with titles arranged alphabetically by author's surname.

FICTION:

SAVE THE BONSAI Chris J. Clark (2019) A Japanese born without gender lives in angry isolation and modifies plants to kill. Joined by a hacker with a spoof website, "Save the Bonsai," they morph into a protest movement against the forces of governments. Supported by fanatics, they are pursued by the CIA and a private security organization hired by a Billionaires Bonsai Club. Mayhem ensues, humanity destroys itself, and intelligent plants rule the Earth. Available at Amazon.

UKRAINE REFUGEES – ECHOES OF WAR

Aaron Aalborg (2022) What can go wrong if you bring them into your homes? Based on real events, the horrific war drives millions onto the streets. Many feel safer abroad. Divorces, murder, fraud, theft, spying, and worse, result. Events in Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Berlin, London, New York, Alpine France, and elsewhere are described in graphic detail. Available on Amazon

CENSUS: WHAT LURKS BENEATH Marshall Cobb Available at Amazon.

Book 1: When the tortures of the daily routine of big city life become too much, a man moves to a farm in Texas. His respite is short-lived when he witnesses a

series of odd, evil events; something is challenging him as the top predator on his farm. Or, worse, he is losing his mind.

Book 2: PACING (2019) To save her life, a woman joins the Colony to serve as a surrogate mother for alien offspring. The alternative – being consumed alive. She is caught between wanting escape and protecting The Colony from discovery by human authorities while helping it prepare to repel an attack by a second group of aliens that plan to invade and claim Earth as their prize.

THE PROMISE OF THE ORB (The Ascendancy Series **Book 1**) Marshall Cobb (2018) A boy's troubles began when the water supply dries up and he finds a small glowing Orb in the dried-up river bed. It claims that the world was once awash in peace and prosperity under its rule, and needs help to regain its power. Wanting to help, the boy discovers that there are many different versions of the truth. Available at Amazon.

Book 2: THE DISCIPLES OF THE ORB (2020) (*Sequel to The Promise of the Orb*) At thirteen, Peter Davidson has more power than anyone on the planet – except for the alien, Orb, who is reshaping humanity to its vision of perfection. Do Peter and his friends continue to serve Orb, who gave Peter his powers, allow Orb to decimate humans while removing their

free will, or should they use them to overthrow their master? Available at Amazon.

Book 3: THE ATONEMENT OF THE ORB (2022)

The journey that began with the discovery of The Orb in a small river bed comes to its conclusion. Will free will triumph, or is the known universe fated to live under authoritarian rule? Neither outcome is perfect, as Peter and his friends have already learned the hard way. Available on Amazon.

ZIST Albert Correia (2022) A compilation of vignettes about the trip an Amazon basin dwelling dot com billionaire and his closest neighbor take to Earth's nearest (but invisible to most earthlings) planet. And then the adventures began. Available on Amazon.

ASHLEY'S RESCUE: A MIRACLE BREAKDOWN

Jennifer Freedman (2023) The world is full of lost dogs looking for their forever homes. Imagine being lost and then found ... and then lost again! That's what happens to Ashley. The question is, will she be found again and finally get her loving forever home? Sounds like it's going to take a miracle! This beautifully illustrated rhyming picture book is available on Amazon.

TOBY'S TALE Jennifer Freedman (2021) Toby is a Schnauzer puppy who embarks on a great adventure as he seeks his fur-ever home. He faces tough choices and discovers that the big world is full of challenges, excitement, sadness, and, yes, love and kindness. Many colorful characters — both two-legged and four-legged — join Toby as he takes each step of his journey. Available on Amazon and at Semi-Colon Books and The Book & Toy Company (both in Santa Ana).

TEXTING OLIVIA Galya Gerstman (2021) A funny, fast-paced tale of a mother/daughter relationship told through their texts. Fay has done everything opposite to her own upbringing in raising Olivia, but her assumptions about being a good mother are put to the test when she and her husband take a trip to San Francisco to help Olivia move out of her dorm. Available at pleasureboatstudio.com, Amazon, and Ingramspark.

FOREVER HONEY Lenny Karpman (2021) His love story ends abruptly in tragedy and he struggles and grieves in darkness, pain, and shadowy images from memory. The hole in his heart feels like it will never disappear, but years of finding and connecting the pieces create hopes, dreams, and ultimate reality. When the last piece falls into place,

the puzzle completes itself in the comfort of a soft white light. Available at Amazon.

TRIBUNE MAN Michael Miller (2021) An adventure set in Oakland, California, in 1991, it follows a marketing executive who is suddenly fired and finds himself delivering newspapers in some of the riskiest parts of Oakland after midnight. The characters face the deadly Oakland Hills Fire, a real-life event that was the worst urban wildfire in US history. Available at Amazon.

AMANDA911 Mark Schreiber (2021) Sixteen-year-old Iowa schoolgirl Amanda Dizon may be the nation's most unremarkable teenager, until she falls down a well and is instantly transformed from irrelevant to influencer. This sly, rollicking story follows Amanda's escapades and sends up the craven, fame-obsessed virtual culture of today's adolescents. Available at Amazon.

MASTER OF MAGIC VL Stuart (2021) As a child, Elden had a magic power so dangerous few adults could control it. The Brotherhood found him and molded him into a warrior, but he escapes to remake himself and finds Master Verian, who transforms him. True to the Light, Elden returns to the Brotherhood, finding acceptance and stability — until a shadow from the past threatens to take more than his life. Available at Amazon.

NON-FICTION:

LOVE CULTURE: A MEMOIR OF COSTA RICA

C. White Foss (2020) A 50-something teacher goes to Costa Rica for a working vacation and unexpectedly finds her place in the world. While working the daily grind in San Jose, she begins to search for something more. After she meets Luis on the beach during a weekend visit, she asks, is meeting him that next step? Follow her journey to an unexpected destination. Available on Amazon.

IS IT JOOK YET? COMFORT FOOD FROM FARAWAY PLACES

Lenny Karpman (2021) Comfort food is any food that makes us feel better. Many favorites we thought were local came to us from other cultures and countries. Learn the origins of eats like hamburgers, hot dogs, fried chicken, and apple pie. Discover the culinary comforts of other people in distant places and enjoy them when you travel, or taste them vicariously. Available at Amazon.

POLICE STATE USA Jamie Ligator (2019) In 2007 the author was arrested by Costa Rican police after being wrongfully charged by the US Justice Department. In this book he describes his experiences while fighting extradition in Costa Rican and US jails. He exposes the injustices perpetrated by US prosecutors through recounting other cases that became famous in the US, contending that malicious prosecutors never get punished when they act illegally. Available at Amazon.

JOURNEY THROUGH THE INFINITE MIND The Science And Spirituality Of Dementia Katya De Luisa (2021) This book presents the neuroscience of dementia combined with practical tips on care, along with exercises designed to help a caregiver "step in their shoes." It explores the human experience of dementia as well as the spiritual journey the soul travels as dementia progresses. Included is information on holistic approaches to the disease. Available in Spanish and English at Amazon.

THE INTREPID IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY Ana Luisa Monge Naranjo, Bruce James Callow (2021) If you have ever wondered what life is like for women dedicated to science and technology, this book will give some answers. It follows the lives of 18 young Ticas through different times and countries as they excelled in science and technology, making significant contributions to the well-being of people and communities. Published by Editorial Tecnológico de Costa Rica. Available in SPANISH ONLY at: mgarita@itcr.ac.cr

LAS ESFERAS, MYSTERY SPHERES OF COSTA RICA Robert A. Normand (2020) Offers an indigenous and spiritual explanation as to the origin of the more than 300 perfectly round stone spheres that have been uncovered in Costa Rica in the last few decades. Some of these spheres are so perfectly round as to defy any technology known by humans until recently. Available at Amazon.

DIARY OF A CRYPTOCURRENCY ABDUCTION Ryan Piercy and Allen Dickinson (2022) The complete, true story of Ryan Piercy's 2015 kidnapping and the month-long ordeal of being chained to a tree in a Costa Rican jungle. The book also covers the years following his release and the trials he and his family members endured. Contains transcripts of his abductors' ransom emails, official police records, and photos of the site of his confinement. Available on Amazon.

CRAZY JUNGLE LOVE Carol Blair Vaughn (Spanish language version 2021) Based on a true story. A multi-millionaire hedge fund manager comes to Costa Rica with his ingénue wife and the dream of creating their own nature reserve. Things go to hell in a hurry and John Bender ends up dead of a gunshot wound to his head. His wife is left penniless and serves jail time for John's murder. Did she do it? Read the book and decide for yourself. Available at Amazon.

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN W. D. Woods (2019) True stories from an Indiana detective of how he investigated some of the most horrific crimes against women imaginable. Brutally describing the details of each one, these true stories may be the bloodiest, most bone-chilling and disgusting you have ever read. Not for the faint of heart, the book will take you on a ride so repulsive and sickening that you can't stop reading. Available at Amazon.

PROHIBITION MADE THE MAFIA T. Warren Wyndham (2019) A recollection of 40 years in the liquor and wine industry forms the background for true stories ranging from the Roaring Twenties and Prohibition to the growth of the illegal importation and sale of liquor, wine and beer by the Mafia. The author shares his personal experiences and includes tales of brushing shoulders with known gangsters and their legal and illegal business experiences. Available at Amazon.

TRAVEL, RELOCATION, CULTURE:

TO THE STARS: COSTA RICA IN NASA Bruce Callow and Ana Luisa Monge Naranjo (2019) An introduction to 12 Costa Ricans who were hired by, or have worked at, NASA. The book, in interview format, tells how these exceptional Ticos achieved their NASA dreams as engineers, technicians, oceanographers, and a world-famous astronaut. Published by the Costa Rican Institute of Technology's Press, a digital version can be purchased at: ebooks.tec.ac.cr/product/hacia-las-estrellas-costa-rica-en-la-nasa-to-stars-in

CHRONICLE OF A LIFELONG TRAVELER Decades of Journeys Helen Dunn Frame (2023) Want to know what attending the Dallas Fort Worth Airport

opening and meeting a future president was like? Or perhaps you would find attending a wedding reception for a British Musician and a Greek bride interesting. Over the years, the author has written about her travels, and this book is compiled from information written at the time. Available in bookstores, libraries, and Amazon.

EXPATTALES Helen Dunn Frame (2020) Published before the pandemic, the book shares individual and family experiences about living in Costa Rica. Some chapters are written by the subjects, others from interviews and questionnaires. A book that gives the reader a lot of candid information about the culture and mindset of Costa Ricans. Available at Amazon and www.helendunnframe.com/

RETIRING IN COSTA RICA OR, DOCTORS, DOGS AND PURA VIDA – 4th edition Helen Dunn Frame (2020) The adventures of the author in Costa Rica. Information about how to make decisions about retiring, investing, or living here part-time. Contains questions to ask, resources for answers, and suggested books to read. Covers some of the things that can make the difference between a mediocre experience and a wonderful adventure. Available at Amazon.

THE 20th EDITION OF THE NEW GOLDEN DOOR TO RETIREMENT AND LIVING IN COSTA RICA - The Official Guide to Relocation Christopher Howard (2022) An 800-page updated edition to the perennially best-selling guidebook. Covers everything you need to know to make the move. Available at Amazon or at: costaricabooks.com

THE COSTA RICA CHRONICLES FROM 1980 ON: The Good, Bad, and Ugly People and Places of the Day Christopher Howard (2021) A glimpse of the colorful and unforgettable characters and places of the old Costa Rica, Filled with interesting anecdotes. A must-read for anyone interested in life in the "old days" of the '80s, '90s, and early 2000s. Available at: costaricabooks.com and at Amazon.

GUIDE TO COSTA RICAN SPANISH Christopher Howard A one-of-a-kind guide to survival Spanish that newcomers need in daily situations. It is also the only source of Costa Rican slang in English. Available from costaricabooks.com and Amazon

COSTA RICA FROM SPACE Bert Kohlmann, Justin Wilkinson, Kamlesh Lullaand Originally published in 2002 and re-released in 2022, this book is an unprecedented photo essay of Costa Rica from outer space. It aids readers in visualizing the changes taking place to

the natural and human environments of the country. The prologue is by former astronaut Dr. Franklin Chang. A limited quantity of the book has been made available to the public. To acquire a free copy, email Bruce Callow at: bcallowconsulting@gmail.com

THE REAL SAN JOSÉ Michael Miller (2018) Often maligned, Costa Rica's fascinating capital city has much to offer. Written to introduce new arrivals (and old hands) to San José, this book will help people become familiar with the layout of downtown and find its hidden gems. Descriptions of museums, the Mercado Central, the cathedral, and a tremendous variety of other diversions and attractions are included. Available (only in Kindle) at Amazon.

SAN JOSÉ COSTA RICA Michael Miller (2023) A stroll through the "heart and soul" of Costa Rica's capital city, this first-person guide gives a look at downtown San José and its museums, restaurants, theaters, and other important sites. A companion to *The Real San José*, this introduction to the country's history will show why Costa Rica is such an extraordinary country. Print edition available at: The Gran Hotel Costa Rica, Galeria Namu, and TheRealSanJose@gmail.com or at Amazon. Ebook on Amazon only.

WORTH SEARCHING FOR:

There are literally hundreds of books, fiction and non-fiction, about Costa Rica and which are available at Amazon and other online sites in new and used condition. Space prevents including all of them in this list, but here are a few worth searching for.

THE TICOS: CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN COSTA RICA Biesanz, Biesanz, and Biesanz Written with over fifty years of firsthand observation, this social and cultural history describes how Costa Rica's economy, government, education, and healthcare systems, family structures, religion, and other institutions have evolved, and how this evolution has affected modern Tico's lives, beliefs, and values. A comprehensive introduction to the country. Available at Biesanz Woodworks in Escazú. Telephone: 2289-4337 and also at Amazon.

MARRIED TO A LEGEND, "DON PEPE" Henrietta Boggs A rare firsthand account of Costa Rica's history. Henrietta Boggs' memoir of meeting, living with, and leaving the President of Costa Rica, Don Pepe, takes place in the formative years of his brief but

profound revolution when the country's constitution was rewritten and the army was abolished. It also recounts the frustrations of a gringa living in Costa Rica in the 1940s. Available at Amazon.

OFFICIAL GUIDE TO COSTA RICAN SPANISH – 3rd edition Christopher Howard This 248-page pocket-size book is the only source for Costa Rican idioms and slang translated into English. It contains survival Spanish for daily situations, pronunciation exercises, Spanish-English and English-Spanish dictionaries, and time-tested tips and shortcuts for learning Spanish. Available at Amazon.

CHRISTOPHER HOWARD'S GUIDE TO REAL ESTATE IN COSTA RICA Christopher Howard The guide contains 550 carefully researched pages, including information for renters. Order from: www.costaricabooks.com

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Website: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica

Email: costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Canadian Embassy

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French Embassy

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Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet

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Kilometers × .62 = Miles

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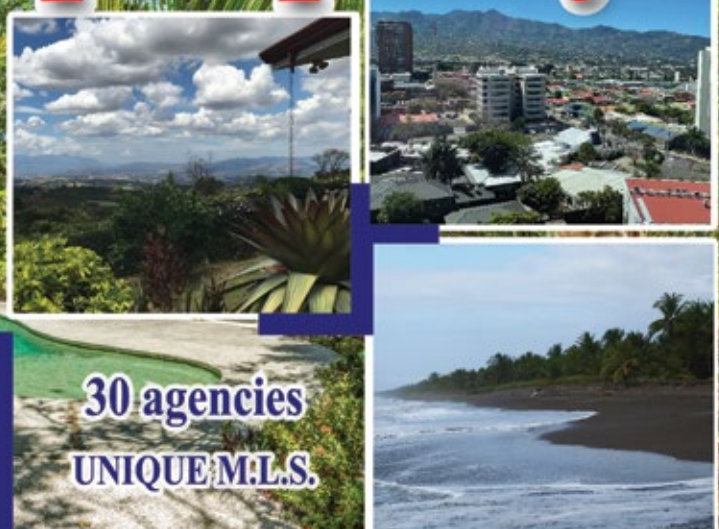
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FROM THE EMBASSIES



ASK ACS

Federal Benefits Unit change of procedures:

Federal benefit beneficiaries residing in Costa Rica should note the upcoming change in the Federal Benefit Unit (FBU) and Social Security Administration (SSA) processing. Effective November 1, 2023, the Federal Benefits Unit at the U.S. Embassy, San Jose, will no longer issue benefit verifications for individuals receiving federal benefits from the Social Security Administration, Department of Veteran's Administration, or Office of Personnel Management. You may request an official benefit verification from each agency directly:

Social Security Administration: www.ssa.gov/myaccount. On the my Social Security page, select the "Create an Account" button and then select "Sign in with ID.me." Select the "Create an ID.me account" link and follow the instructions. On ID.me's "Verify Your Identity" screen, select the "I don't live in the United States" link at the bottom of the page and follow the instructions to complete the registration process. Once you create your credential, you will be returned to the my Social Security webpage for next steps. If you already have an ID.me credential, select "Sign In" from the my Social Security page and then sign in to ID.me. You will be redirected to your my Social Security account.

NOTE: If you had a "My Social Security" account prior to moving overseas, you will need to create an ID.me credential to use it from an international address.

Once you have created your personal my Social Security account, you will be able to view, print, or save a benefit verification letter (Social Security is unable to mail to a foreign address).

Department of Veteran's Administration: Go to <https://www.va.gov/records/download-va-letters/> to download VA Benefit Letters. Follow the instructions to sign in with your existing Login.gov, ID.me, DS

Logon, or My HealtheVet account. If you don't have any of these accounts, you can create a free Login.gov or ID.me account there.

Office of Personnel Management: To request a new copy of "Your Federal Retirement Benefits", or to receive a verification of your annuity, contact OPM's Retirement Office at 1-888-767-6738 or retire@opm.gov. The phone lines are open from 7:30 am to 7:45 pm (Eastern Standard Time).

Beach Safety

Swimming areas at some popular beaches around Costa Rica can have dangerous rip currents. Some beaches lack lifeguards or warnings of unsafe conditions. Prior to visiting beaches, check the Costa Rica Tourism Institute (ICT) website to request current information on local swimming and surf conditions. Please be aware that the Costa Rica Tourism Institute confirms that there are trained, full-time lifeguards at the following beaches:

Pacific Coast:

- Manuel Antonio Beach
- Caldera Beach
- Esterillos Oeste Beach
- Bahia Ballena Beach
- Ventanas Beach
- Tamarindo Beach

Caribbean Coast:

- Cocles Beach
- Manzanillo Beach
- Negra Beach (Limon)





BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH CRICKET

Some weeks ago, we at the British Embassy in San Jose had the enormous pleasure of meeting the English journalist and cricketer, Jenny Thompson, as she was beginning her week long visit to Costa Rica as part of Her World Cricket Tour.

Jenny has set herself the goal of travelling across the globe for three years, starting in 2023, to play cricket with as many people as possible and learn about how this sport enriches and empowers women and girls. She's also interested in understanding what more needs to be done to bring about needed change in the sport and the wider society.

In Costa Rica the Cricket Federation accompanied her to communities and schools in La Sabana, Hatillo, Cartago, Vara Blanca, Matina, and Limón to meet enthusiastic players, many of whom have gravitated to the sport because of an interest in getting involved in an activity that was different from the usual offer.

The British Embassy has supported a number of projects that leverage sport to improve the lives of women and girls, and can therefore attest to the transformative power of games like cricket in people's lives. "Participating in sports can help break-down gender stereotypes, improve girls' and women's self-esteem, and contribute to the development of leadership and strategic thinking skills. Women in sports break down the misperception they are weak or incapable." (UNESCO)

And we all know about the mental and physical benefits of a sport – it builds confidence and self-esteem and



improves physical and mental health. Add to that the feeling of connection and sisterhood that sport can bring – a safe space in which girls and women can talk openly about and grapple with issues like sexuality, gender equality, relationships, and gender violence – and one can really appreciate how sport can provide a much-needed lifeline for players.

If you want to learn more about Jenny's journey, you can follow her on Instagram as @herworldcrickettour To find out about what the Cricket Federation is doing in Costa Rica, look them up on Facebook as @cricketcostarica and on Twitter/X as @CricketCR1

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ON THE GRID

by Ivo Henfling




All That Glitters Is Not Gold!

Some people who have moved here have found wisdom in that saying as it applies to living in Costa Rica. In fact, as hard as it is for many of us to believe, some people move here and are greatly disappointed in their life here.

I think it's terrible to live in a place you dislike and are uncomfortable in, no matter where it is. But it does happen, and more often than you might think. People get here and are disillusioned and disappointed – life in "paradise" isn't the perfection they envisioned. They are distraught that they had sacrificed much

to be here, and now they are stuck in a place they don't like. It's even worse that they are surrounded by beauty and nice people and still hate it; that can turn them into angry people.

And I see many angry people on Facebook. Their disappointment has turned to anger, and they spread that anger to others by giving innocent people who are only thinking of moving here and just looking for information, the most horrible answers to their questions. When I meet people like that, I wish they would just catch a flight back to where they came from.



How can such a thing happen? How can anyone hate living in Costa Rica? Well, to begin with, some people do not understand that there is no place on earth that is perfect! They come here without doing even a minimum of due diligence, expecting perfection. And when they are confronted with the realities of living in a developing country, they are disappointed.

How can that be avoided? I have listed a few reasons people become disillusioned about living in Costa Rica. Let's look at them:

EXPECTATIONS

First and foremost, some people come to Costa Rica with unrealistic expectations. They saw a website and came here to spend a two-week vacation in an all-inclusive resort hotel where most of the help spoke English. Everything was neat and clean, and all their needs were taken care of. The food was great, and the 'natives' were friendly. They took guided tours where they tramped on manicured jungle paths behind English-speaking guides and saw some of the country's beautiful, exotic wildlife. They returned to their hotel in an air-conditioned bus, had a cold drink or two, swam in the pristine ocean to cool off, and decided they had to live here. That, my friends, is NOT realistic. Maybe, if you have unlimited finances, then that fantasized lifestyle can be closely duplicated, but it doesn't represent the realities of life here even then.

LOVE

Some come on a vacation and fall in love with a young, attractive Tica or Tico. They return home only long enough to divorce the spouse to whom they have been married for 30 years, sell their car and house, and pack their bags. After returning here and moving in with their Tico girlfriend or boyfriend, they discover that they only loved you for the money they thought you'd have. Everything went to hell after learning that the ex took half of everything, and there is now barely enough to live on.

LIVING CHEAPLY

The guidebooks don't lie, but they do sometimes gloss over the fact that Costa Rica is not as cheap as it used to be; some things cost double the USA price here. Was a low cost of living one reason for moving here? Do you love your French wines, your imported cheeses, fancy clothing, and convenient travel abroad? Is there no

way that you can live without Planter's Honey Roasted Peanuts and New York pizza home delivery? You used to shop daily on Amazon. and now you hate going to the crowded Saturday farmer's market to save money! I have met quite a few who have moved to cheaper countries, like Ecuador, and now have a strong desire to move back to Costa Rica.

IT'S DIFFERENT THAN YOU THOUGHT

Of course it is! Those who don't do their due diligence well enough, or at all, find life in the tropics is quite a bit different from what that guy selling property they met during that two-week vacation said it would be. Costa Rica isn't the warm, inexpensive version of the USA he said it is, even if you can afford to live in a closed, gated community. After moving here is not the time to find that you will deeply miss the:

- Philharmonic orchestra concerts,
- William Shakespeare plays,
- Tailgate parties,
- Monday Night Football, NBA, and MLB games,
- Current episodes of all your favorite TV programs,
- Getting family-size pizza,
- Medical care from a family doctor,
- Quality burgers and hotdogs, and that you cannot get decent mac & cheese, biscuit and gravy, or a good doughnut.

If you've bought a house and any of those things are priorities, I hope you bought it at a great price so you can sell it quickly and move back.

COLD AND WET

You were always cold and wet back home, and you moved here to be warm and dry? But then you found out that in the semi-tropics it rains a lot during the rainy season. And when it rains, it pours. And sometimes your house floods. Suddenly, you find you prefer more snow and less rain. Maybe there is not enough research to find out about the weather conditions in Costa Rica, and possibly not for the particular area where that great house was purchased when the sun was shining. I suggest taking the time and effort to find a drier area to live in Costa Rica before buying. Or, even smarter, rent for a year first and make sure the area suits your desires year-round. Then buy!

THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

Was it assumed that everyone in Costa Rica speaks English? I'm sorry, but this is a Spanish-speaking country. Yes, in some areas, depending on their education and their job, some people might speak some English. But as a guest, not a tourist, the effort to speak their language should be taken. As long as that's done, they'll love you for it. But it needs to be worked at, not the other way around!

BAD INVESTMENT

Some people come here and invest in a business... and it doesn't function as well as they were led to believe it would. Or, they had this incredible idea to start a new business in Costa Rica. But because they were not familiar with the laws or the Latin ways of doing business, the idea went sour and is not making any money. Pride prevents them from going back home until they recover some of the money they lost in the venture, but what should they do? Often, it's better to just take the loss and move on. By moving on, new opportunities are created. (I've been there, done that, twice in my more than 40 years of living in Costa Rica.)

A FEW OTHER THINGS

Before taking the "plunge" and moving, it is extremely important to conduct thorough due diligence. Knowing and understanding what it is like to live in a third-world country (modern Costa Rica is more than that, but many of the ills of that level of development still exist here). Setting expectations realistically will go a long way in avoiding the disillusionment (and anger) that can occur when it is discovered that you are unprepared for reality.

You haven't moved to Costa Rica yet? Then I strongly urge you to do your due diligence first. Here are a few more things to think about. Will:

- Getting healthcare from someone who doesn't know your history be a problem?
- Being a long way from your children and grandchildren be a difficulty?
- Missing long-time friends and not knowing anyone here, be a downer?
- Not being able to buy your favorite food brands bother you?

- Finding that some things are more expensive here than back home be a deal breaker?
- Not easily finding clothing in the sizes and styles you are used to be a bad thing?

If you can leap those hurdles, spending more than a few days here before deciding to move or not is important. If you do decide to make the leap, leave yourself an "out" should things not go as well as expected. Then, when things come together and you are ready to buy a house, contact us.

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



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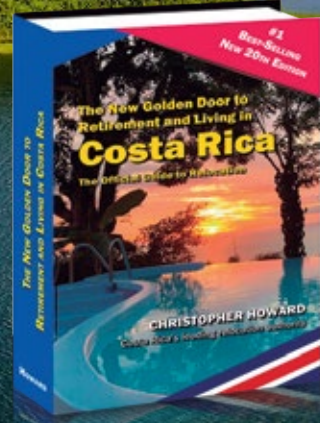
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SCAM ALERTS

by El Residente Staff



The (Scam) Beat Goes on

As pointed out by an article by Helen Dunn Frame in our last issue, scams are everywhere. New ones pop up almost daily, and though less common here than in North America, they do exist in Costa Rica. The following presents three encountered here.

- Recently, a well-known ARCR member had their Facebook business account hacked. Messages were sent out to all whose addresses could be determined asking for "financial assistance in a time of personal crisis." Luckily, the scam was discovered early and no harm was done.

It pays to be suspicious when you encounter something that just doesn't seem right. To avoid becoming a victim, Johnny Jet, a scam prevention expert on MSNBC, offers the following basic advice: "An important thing to remember is that whenever you get a phone call,

text message, or email, you can never be sure who is really contacting you, even if the email address, phone number or Caller ID indicates that the communication is legitimate. This is why you should never provide personal information or click on a link in an email or text message unless you have absolutely confirmed that the communication is legitimate." Do that by contacting the supposed sender by separate means (phone call, a known valid email address, etc.) and verify that they are truly the sender of the communication.

- Not yet widely used here, telephone marketing calls can be a portal for later scams. Beware of any call that begins with the four words, "Can You Hear Me?" Phone scammers can use the response to those words to access a person's online accounts. A simple "yes" answer is all they need. Thereafter, your voice

is recorded and used to access your online accounts, impersonate you, and ultimately, steal your money or make purchases. Calls that begin with "Can you hear me?" have been instruments of impersonation, identity theft, and plunder. If you encounter this question in a phone call, experts advise that you do not answer; it is a scam call and your response can be recorded and used to perpetrate fraud.

- Another potential scam can appear when purchasing a vehicle from a private seller. It has been around a while and works like this:

A person sees an ad for a vehicle they wish to purchase. The advertisement specifies that the vehicle had XX mileage (in kilometers) and was being sold by the owner's representative. When the person inspects the vehicle they verify that the advertised mileage matches the vehicle's odometer. A price is negotiated and the purchase is completed via the usual procedures with a Costarican attorney of the representative's choice.

When the new owner later inspects the papers that come with the car, it is discovered that the mileage shown on the vehicle's most recent annual inspection certificate is higher than shown on the odometer.

When the purchaser confronts the seller's representative they are rebuffed, being told that they were only the owner's representative, had no knowledge of the discrepancy, and are not responsible. When the attorney who accomplished the transfer is contacted a similar response is given; all knowledge of the difference and any responsibility was denied. Further, when the OIJ is contacted and asked about a possible criminal action, the buyer is informed the problem is a "civil matter" and not within their jurisdiction.

In 2016, Costa Rica changed the rules that address "rolled back" odometers, a past problem with some cars imported from the USA. The updated inspection instruction states that during an annual inspection the vehicle's mileage is recorded. Then, if during any subsequent inspection the odometer shows mileage that is less than that recorded the previous year, a "LEVE" (LEVE indicates a mild, non-safety default) is noted on the inspection form. A LEVE does not prohibit the issuance of a new inspection sticker; it simply notes the vehicle's original odometer mileage is no longer shown on the odometer.

A smart buyer will, when purchasing a used vehicle, always check the most recent inspection form (the mileage is shown near the top on the right side) and look for any note about vehicle mileage. A comparison of the mileage

shown on the form with the odometer should result in the mileage being equal to or higher than that shown on the inspection form. However, the inspection form only shows the mileage from the most recent inspection – any differences that may have been uncovered in prior years will not be shown.

A special note is appropriate here: Later model vehicles have electronic instrument clusters that often contain the speedometer, odometer, and other engine instruments. When any of these instruments fail, the usual repair is a replacement of the complete cluster. This is often accomplished by utilizing a replacement instrument cluster from a wrecked car. Therefore, it is possible that the mileage shown on the odometer can legitimately be lower than that recorded during the vehicle's previous year's inspection. The law requires that when an odometer is replaced, the mechanic making the change must issue a certificate stating the instrument cluster has been changed. That form should be retained with the other vehicle papers.

To Do List:

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OFF THE HIGH SEAS

by Christine Monteith



Habla Español?

We, my husband Ben and I, are rounding the bend of living in Costa Rica for six years. When we came here, we had a few goals that we hoped to achieve. Ben's primary focus was creating a sustainable food forest on the couple of acres surrounding our new home. Now, with many hours of seeding, planting, chopping, and the invaluable aid and advice from friends and neighbors, his dream is flourishing. Me, I wanted to learn Spanish.

Originally, one of my objectives was to become fluent in Spanish. I've lived and worked in several English-speaking countries, and in each of those locations I plunged into local life. Costa Rica would be no different. But, unexpectedly, as I wrote in a previous article, it has developed that my primary purpose has become the harvesting of Ben's cornucopia and transforming it into delicious dishes. That's gone smoothly and I'm doing well

in achieving that goal. With learning Spanish, well, that's been a little bit slower than I anticipated.

Ben was comfortable in conversational Spanish when we arrived; through his surfing travels, he had spent time in Mexico and had friends of Mexican heritage. I, on the other hand, had to delve back many decades to my smattering of high school Spanish just to get started. But I had full confidence in my ability to master the language because in my teens and twenties, I was fluent in French, and after all, French and Spanish are similar romantic languages, right?

As an English-Canadian, I had learned French, thinking that it would lead to future career opportunities in bilingual Canada. I attended a bilingual university in Toronto where seminars, lectures, and papers were conducted in French. With summer internships in Quebec and my Quebecois friends, I became adept with the language. Several of

my classmates took their smarts and skills and went on to serve in the federal and provincial governments, as well as universities. Though that appeared to be my path also, a little voice told me that civil service life was not for me and I went a different direction.

Following university my careers and travels took me to Toronto, Sydney, Perth, Calgary, New York, San Francisco, and Monterey. Naturally, with little or no need for my French language skills in most of those places, my competence slipped somewhat.

Upon arriving in my new home here, I thought becoming fluent in Spanish would be simple; I could build on my ability in French, and it would all gel. Added to that, I am a bit of a "Chatty Cathy" and have an ability to connect with people through conversation. However, I soon discovered that when meeting my new Tico neighbors I was mute and felt helpless.

So, determinedly, I dove into the app Duolingo, faithfully practicing 15 minutes or more a day. I scanned the online articles of La Nacion and El Financiero, and I learned to decipher the country idiom of our neighbors and apply it to the "proper" Spanish in the app. And all that effort worked... slowly. My ability developed to the level that listening to the radio or watching TV, I could pick out a few words from the fast talk. (I've met young Ticos who tell me they learned English from music and TV. I marvel at their ability.)

Strangely, my biggest stumbling block turned out to be my ability in French. I would chat with my neighbors and unconsciously say something in French. They would look at me quizzically, and I didn't understand why the conversation had stopped, until Ben would say, "You said it in French." I found that to achieve my Spanish goal, I had to package up all my French and place it behind a mental wall.

Now, after six years of dedicated practice and a lot of social interaction, chatting in Spanish flows easily. We recently returned after a month in North America. Our good friend, Amado, picked us up at the last stop on the Tracopa Bus route, a tiny pueblo called Bella Luz de la Vaca (the Beautiful Light of the Cow – I'd love to hear the origin story of that name!) The paved road ends at Bella Luz, and for the next 35 minutes we bumped along pot-holed, gravel roads. This is always a great time to catch up on all the local happenings. Amado's English is good, since he worked for many years for another Gringo, but what I found remarkable was that after the first few minutes the conversation comfortably flowed from English into

Spanish. We three chatted, laughed, and caught up on the news, and I didn't have to search for words or question the meaning of what I heard. I truly felt that I was home.

Ben and I have shared many adventures and overcome a few hurdles in our years here. Feeling comfortable and confident in the language of my chosen home is a huge relief and gives me a feeling of achievement. Navigating the maze of a new language has been difficult; it was full of confusing twists and turns of verb tense, and there was the frustration of searching my memory for an everyday word, but along the way I found gifts of understanding that opened the culture to me. Through the language I have experienced traditional celebrations that, in turn, expanded my knowledge of the unique society and its history. And, through the ability to chat with Ticos in their language, I have come to understand their values, struggles, and hopes. I now truly feel a part of the Pura Vida way of life.

Christine has had the good fortune to live, work, and travel around the world, and now is happily ensconced in tropical tranquility near the Golfo Dulce with one husband, two dogs, and four hens.



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WILD SIDE

by Ryan Piercy



Constrictor Snakes

It has been a while since we looked at snakes, but a recent visit to one of the many exhibits in the country reminded me of Costa Rica's largest serpents, the Constrictors. Unlike venomous snakes, constrictors kill their prey by slowly squeezing tighter with each exhalation until the victim's blood flow is slowed significantly, causing cardiovascular failure. As gruesome as that sounds, it is simply nature's way, and it works well for them as they are a successful species.

Probably the most famous of Central American snakes is the Boa Constrictor (same as the scientific name.) It is the largest species in Costa Rica, ranging from 1 to 4.5 meters in length (that's up to 13 feet long!) Generally, it is the female of the species that is both longer and larger in girth

than the males. Both sexes capture their quarry the same way; they first bite to clamp onto them, then constrict around them until the prey is dead, before consuming their meal. Though not considered mortal to humans, their bite is painful, so it is best to not threaten them.

The Boa, normally a nocturnal hunter, is also capable of swimming. Their diet normally consists of small to medium-sized birds, reptiles, and mammals. Near populated areas, they may also take small pets, such as cats, or hunt near chicken coops. In any case, their victim is swallowed whole and digested slowly over time. Their colors vary widely in the species, from white, black, browns, and reds, but all will show dark saddle patches along their backs.



There are four subspecies of Boas that can be seen around the country: the Boa imperator, Boa nebulosa, Boa orophias, and Boa sigma, all of which are members of the Boidae family. They may be called by a local name rather than their species, so you might encounter them as

"Rainbow Boa," the "Caribbean Annulated Tree Boa", the "Colombian Boa," and in the Southern Pacific Zone, the "Garden Tree Boa." These various subspecies are usually lumped together under the general heading of Central American Boa.

Though not of the same family as the Boas, the Mexican Burrowing Python (*Loxocemus bicolor*) is another constrictor found in Costa Rica and Latin America. It is the only member of the Loxocemidae family. These are smaller but still formidable, growing to over 1.5 meters in length (4.5 feet). These are dark to medium brown and shimmer in a purplish color in the sun's rays. In Costa Rica, this python can be found in various habitats in the Northern Zone, ranging from sea level up to about 600 meters. They will burrow in leaves and soft soil and may stay underground for a few days at a time. When hunting, their diet normally consists of small mammals and reptiles, and their eggs.

While not particularly dangerous to humans, caution should always play a part when observing wild snakes of any kind. While people often have a natural fear of the species, it is good to remember that they are important and necessary for controlling populations of certain rodents and other species before killing them.

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► Al-Anon

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

► American Legion Post 10

Meets the first Thursday of the month at 11 a.m. at Casa de España (across from the Palma Real Hotel & Casino) in Sabana Norte, San Jose. For more information call Matt Loper, 8968-6935, or Craig Carlson, 6042-9921

► American Legion Post 12-Golfito

Currently inactive. For information contact Mel Goldberg at 8870-6756

► Amigos of Costa Rica

A US-based non-profit organization established in 1999. Amigos of Costa Rica has the mission of connecting global resources to Costa Rican Organizations. Amigos currently works with over 120 Costa Rican nonprofits and is happy to connect with donors who wish to explore how they can contribute to Costa Rica. U.S. Government tax-payers donations are deductible. For more information go to: www.amigosofcostarica.org or email to: admin@amigosofcostarica.org

► The Atenas Book Club

FFormed in 2004, meets the first Wednesday monthly at 10:30 am, at alternating locations and with discussion leaders among the members. The group reads a variety of books and authors,

reading both fiction and non-fiction. All books must be available on Kindle or some electronic reader. Currently there is a waiting list to join. For more information contact Mary Martin Mason at: marymason1946@gmail.com.

► Birding Club Costa Rica

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

► Canadian Club

Canadian Club welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons and at our special annual events. No passport required. There are no fees or dues to pay, just sign up with your email address and we will keep you informed of Canadian events. For information and to sign up, email Renée-Claude at: canadianclubcr@gmail.com.

► Central Valley Golf Association

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

► Costa Rica Writers Group

Writers, authors, and anyone who would like to write can benefit from this group. Members read and evaluate or critique each other's work, or present what they write. Any aspect of writing can be discussed. We have access to resources for editing, publishing, and the whole writing process. We meet by ZOOM on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month at 11:30

a.m. For more information contact Edie Bakker at: edierainforest@yahoo.com

► Democrats Abroad Costa Rica

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

► Marine Corps League

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

► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

(For Women) The Club, in existence since 1980, promotes friendship and support among members, mostly expats in Costa Rica, through conducting a variety of social and recreational activities. Meetings are held from September to May, interest groups meet year-round. lunches are on the 4th Wednesday of the month. For more information go to our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/newcomers.org/> or email to: newcomersclub.costarica@gmail.com

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

Formed in November 2009 to promote friendship between English speaking women in Pérez Zeledón and, through friendship, to make a positive contribution to our local community. The Club meets for lunch on the second Tuesday of each month in different restaurants around the canton. We also host a Ramblers group, a Games group and currently have a team working in the Municipal gardens. For more information, please send an email

to: pzwomansclub@gmail.com or visit our web site at: www.pziwc.org.

► Professional Women's Network

PWN provides its members with opportunities to network with other professional women with the goal of aiding personal and professional development of entrepreneurs, students, and professionals. PWN sponsors service and outreach programs to "give back" to the community. Meeting schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Sarah Joy at 8868-6990 or email us at info@pwnrcr.com The PWN website is: <http://www.pwnrcr.com>

► San Vito Bird Club

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

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

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



BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Important dates in Costa Rica:

2 November All Souls' Day, Observance

22 November
Teacher's Day,
Observance

1 December Abolition of the Army Day, Non-Compulsory Payment Holiday

25 December
Christmas Day,
National holiday

31 December
New Year's Eve,
Observance

1 January New Year's Day, National holiday

DEFINITIONS:

NON-COMPULSORY PAYMENT

HOLIDAY: Official holiday, however the employer is not required to pay their employees double if they are required to work that day.

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

OBSERVANCE:

If the date falls on a weekday, it is a paid day off for Costa Rican workers

ARCR SEMINAR for expats. **November 23 and 24.** Location; Park Inn Hotel. Contact the office for reservations. Seating is limited.

ARCR OFFICE closed from Friday, December 22, 2023, until Monday, January 8, 2024



Our Cremation or Repatriation Plan is specially designed for citizens of the United States and Canada who reside in Costa Rica.



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