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EL RESIDENTE

January

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2024

TASTE THE TROPICS:

Caimito

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Summer Harvest

The Cats' Meow

Understanding Ticos

Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hills!

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

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Editor's Note

Here we are, starting another year. Where did the last one go? The intention of the cover stories of the 2023 issues was to describe some of the more exciting and strange (to expats) fruits and vegetables available here in Costa Rica. Most are downright delicious but their unfamiliarity might deter us from trying them. Thus, the feature was created so that maybe a little information might help readers feel more exploratory. But the year has passed and we found we had only dipped our metaphorical toe into the sea of tasty possibilities. Therefore, with many left uncovered, we are continuing the *Taste the Tropics* series for 2024 and will share information about a few more of those tropical delicacies. So, Happy New Year and pleasant eating!



Check our blog on our Facebook site.

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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

INDIGENOUS GAMES – POSTPONED To accommodate the needs of participants and organizers, the dates for the Indigenous Games have been moved from February to April, 2024. ARCR is continuing to accept donations for support of the event. Those donations previously received will be held and used to support the activities at their later date.

DRIVING WITH A FOREIGN DRIVER'S LICENSES Last issue we reported that Costa Rican Immigration has extended the maximum length of Tourist Visas from 90 to 180 days. For those who plan to operate a vehicle in Costa Rica while on a Tourist Visa utilizing a driver's license from another country, take note: By law, driver's are allowed to use a foreign license for UP TO 90 days. HOWEVER, be aware that the validity for the use of that license is only 90 days; the validity period has not been extended with the time extension for Tourist Visas. Therefore, anyone intending to stay in the country longer than 90 days, or who have had their application for residency accepted by Migración (en trámite), must still depart and re-enter the country to 'renew' the validity of their foreign driver's license over 90 days.

COVID VARIANT According to news reports, a new COVID variant, HV.1, has become dominant in the USA. The symptoms are similar to those

caused by other recent variants, and may include: sore throat, congestion or stuffiness, runny nose, cough, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, and/or fever or chills. Congestion, sore throat, and dry cough seem to be the three most prominent symptoms.

BOOK UPDATE Those who have in the past purchased Michael Miller's informative book The Real San José, will be interested to know that an updated and enlarged version has been published. Titled, San José Costa Rica, A stroll through the heart and soul of Costa Rica's capital city, it is now available in a printed version here in Costa Rica. Whether you bought "The Real San José" or not, you will find the new version very useful and instructive. The Kindle version is available on Amazon, but if you want the printed version, see the ad for the book elsewhere in this issue.

FFL The December First Friday Lunch was a success with nine people attending, sharing conversation and renewing acquaintances. Held at the El Dorado Restaurant in Sabana North, the food (Chinese) was good, parking was plentiful, and the service excellent. The next two FFLs will be held at 1200 PM, January 5 and February 2, 2024, same location. (Directions: From the San José Nissan Dealer, go West on Avenida 5. Pass the ICE building and look for Calle 62A. Turn right, the restaurant is on the right. Public parking is available next door.)



2024 Official Holidays, Observances, and Days Off in Costa Rica

| DATE | DAY | NAME | TYPE |
|--------|-----------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Jan | Monday | New Year's Day | National Holiday |
| 19 Mar | Tuesday | Saint Joseph's Day | Observance |
| 29 Mar | Friday | Good Friday | National Holiday |
| 11 Apr | Thursday | Battle of Rivas Day | Observance |
| 15 Apr | Monday | Battle of Rivas Day | National Holiday |
| 1 May | Monday | Labor Day / May Day | National Holiday |
| 16 Jun | Sunday | Father's Day | Observance |
| 25 Jul | Thursday | Annexation of Guanacaste Day | Observance |
| 29 Jul | Monday | Annexation of Guanacaste Day | National Holiday |
| 2 Aug | Friday | Day of Our Lady of Los Ángeles | Non-Compulsory Payment Holiday |
| 15 Aug | Thursday | Mother's Day | Observance |
| 19 Aug | Monday | Mother's Day | National Holiday |
| 24 Aug | Saturday | National Parks Day | Observance |
| 9 Sep | Monday | Children's Day | Observance |
| 15 Sep | Sunday | Independence Day | National Holiday |
| 2 Nov | Saturday | All Soul's Day | Observance |
| 22 Nov | Friday | Teacher's Day | Observance |
| 1 Dec | Sunday | Abolition of the Army Day | Non-Compulsory Payment Holiday |
| 25 Dec | Wednesday | Christmas Day | National Holiday |
| 31 Dec | Tuesday | New Year's Eve | Observance |

DEFINITIONS OF HOLIDAY TERMS

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

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

NON-COMPULSORY PAYMENT HOLIDAYS: These are official holidays, however the employer is not required to pay their employees double if they are required to work that day.

SOURCE: <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/costa-rica/2024>

TASTE THE TROPICS

by El Residente Staff



Caimito

The tropical fruit shown above has inspired names for many things, from cute black puppies to Nobel Literature Laureate Derek Walcott's "El Reino del Caimito" (known in English as "The Star-Apple Kingdom"). This beautiful work of poetry describes Manley, the main character, awakening to a Jamaica that has been torn apart by the devastating effects of brutal colonialism. Although not a traditional poem, it is filled with metaphors and other characteristics of poetic expression. Walcott's poem uses the tree's petals to represent "the mountain water that fell from the mill wheel, sprinkling like the petals from the star-apple's tree."

The fruit, however, is much more benign. It has several common names, such as cainito, caimito, star apple, golden leaf tree, abiaba, pomme du lait, estrella, milk fruit, and aguay. In Vietnam this fruit is called vitisa, which literally means breast milk, and in Malaysia it is called "swarnapathry" which translates to "the tree with" golden leaves.

The Caimito tree (genus *Chrysophyllum cainito*) belongs to the sapotáceas family. It is an evergreen native to the Isthmus of Panama, where it was domesticated, has spread through the tropics, and is now grown throughout the south of Mexico, Central America, and Southeast Asia. It grows quickly up to 20 meters high, and its trunk



can reach up to 90 cm in diameter. It has a dense, broad crown of brown branches with abundant resin. The full-grown tree has mature leaves, which range from 5 to 15 cm long, are slightly oval-shaped with bright green on the upper surface, and silky and brown with golden orange underneath. Young leaves are more silver. It is an annual flowering tree and is hermaphroditic (self-fertile). Its small blooms have five round-shaped petals, which can be white, greenish-yellow, yellow, or purple, have a sweet odor, and are grouped in the branch joints.

The fruit is round, or sometimes shaped like a pear, and averages about 2-5 cm in diameter. They can be purple-red, dark purple, or pale green. The skin is bright, smooth, thin, strongly adhered to the inside layer, and feels somewhat soft, like a rubber ball.

Both green and purple caimitos have a milky, sweet, soft, gelatinous, whitish-pink pulp that contains seeds in the middle. When cut in half, the fruit's interior appears similar to an asterisk or the points of a star, hence its name in English, the star-apple. The best caimitos are the ones with the fewest seeds.

Caimitos are extremely versatile plants and the fruit is a good source of protein, calcium, fiber, phosphorus, iron, and Vitamins A, B, and C; it is also rich in carbohydrates and antioxidants. The usual way the fruit is consumed is by scooping out the ripe pulp. It is best served chilled; its taste can be a bit sour or sweet, depending on the variety.

CAUTION: the caimitos' skin is rich in latex and is not edible. Do not try to take a bite from one as if it were a regular apple.

The Caimito tree also has many other properties, some of which make it useful for medicinal purposes: The ripe fruit is eaten to calm the swelling in laryngitis and pneumonia; it is used as a treatment for Type II diabetes and as a drink to soothe chest angina. The slightly green fruits are ingested to overcome intestinal disorders, although if consumed in

excess, they can cause constipation. Additionally, an elixir derived from soaking the leaves or tree bark can be taken as an expectorant or cough medicine and to expel sputum through the air passages. At other times a liquid made from its astringent bark (rich in tannin) is drunk as tonic to stop diarrhea, hemorrhages, and even as treatment for gonorrhea and bladder infections. Further, the tree's resin can be applied to abscesses, or when it is dried and pulverized, works as a potent way to eliminate parasites.

One of the wonderful things about being in Costa Rica is that this delicious fruit, which usually ripens from January through March, can be found in most farmers' markets or ferias, usually held one day a week. So, do not be timid, go ahead and try it, you might like it!



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OUT AND ABOUT

by Mitzi Stark



What Shall We Do This Summer?

The holidays are over, and we can now relax and enjoy some of the gorgeous, sunny weather that attracted us to Costa Rica.

Aprovechar is a useful Spanish word that means, more or less, to take advantage of, so let's *aprovechar* the summer season with activities that are not too far, not too expensive, and not too hard on the body or psyche: adventures that don't involve a lot of planning or digital frustration. Here are some suggestions.

UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA

It has a 77-hectare campus in Montes de Oca on San José's east side, and it's a perfect place for a walk with covered paths on one side of the main building and open sidewalks along the other. Because the university is concerned with the environment and wildlife, a hike through the campus is like a hike through a nature park; biology students get

hands-on practice tending to it. For those who want to sit and admire nature's work, numerous stopping points provide the space, and there is a refreshment stand with outdoor tables along the way. A cafeteria in the general studies building has an ample menu and indoor or outdoor seating. Bathrooms are available in most buildings. The campus is for all of us to enjoy. My walk took about two hours, but I dawdled (and at one point, I got lost, but I managed to find my way out.)

Aside from natural views, there are flyers and announcements of events on campus, some for students and others for the public, posted in prominent places. One was for a movie series with new wave films that looked attractive, as did a demonstration for human rights. An 'ugly sweater' contest looked like fun. I also enjoyed reading the graffiti, which was varied and sometimes philosophical.

Here are a few words to help you understand the "UCR." The main campus is called la Ciudad de Rodrigo Facio or



the City of Rodrigo Facio, named for an early promoter of the public university. The word *facultad* means department, and all buildings have signs such as *facultad de medicina* or *facultad de biología*, which gives an idea of how extensive the university is. Another section of the campus is for research, and there is a sports center for training athletes and developing careers in sports.

I enjoyed seeing all the students sitting in any available space, some working on cell phones, others with notebooks and highlighters. Most were wearing jeans and casual clothes, but others were dressed in the latest style. I got the impression that students haven't changed much since I was one.

My recommendation is to go during the week when students are present, and the cafeterias are open. All San Pedro buses stop at the Outlet Mall, and from there, it is a short walk to the campus. There are always students heading that way, so just follow along. (There is no parking on campus so if you drive, you may have to park a ways away.)

The public university system in Costa Rica has sedes (campuses) and recintos (mini-campuses) around



the country, some with activities for the public. For example, in one month, the campus in San Ramon (sede occidente) offered a "tech fest", an art exhibition, and a talk on investment in art. Alajuela's campus offered talks on femicides, ransomware, and the climate. You can find out more by Googling ucr, the name of the sede, and agenda cultural, i.e.; ucr san ramon agenda cultural

ICODER PARKS

The Instituto Costarricense del Deporte y Recreación has seven parks for those who want some exercise, but not too much; perfect for those who like to hike through the woods but are not ready for a five-mile hike on a rocky trail. The idea behind the parks is to promote exercise and recreation for a healthy lifestyle. They are all located in the central plateau; the best known is La Sabana Park on San José's west side. This huge park has space for everything from roller skating to kite flying and has a swimming pool and gymnasium. Plus, there are walkways for walking or running. On weekends, the park is alive with Zumba, basketball, tennis, and all the other sports. Called the lungs of San José with a lake and stands of native trees, it's a place to push yourself with a workout or relax on a bench and watch others do it.

Other ICODER parks in the San José area are Cariari, Del Este, and La Paz. La Expresión is in Paraiso de Cartago, Dominica is in Turrialba, and Fraijanes is in Alajuela on the way to the Poas volcano. All parks are smoke and alcohol-free. Some are free, and some charge a small fee (¢1000.) Some accept dogs if they are on leashes, and owners pick up the caca.

Each of the parks has trails for walking or jogging, courts for basketball and other games, children's activities, and a picnic area. These facilities are perfect for getting away without going too far. For more information, although in Spanish, check out icoder park and the name of the park. i.e. icoder park dominica or icoder park fraijanes.

HISTORY WALK

This is fun for those who like to take a peek at the past. There are self-guided tours, in English, to six of Costa Rica's largest cities: San José, Heredia, Alajuela, Cartago, Puntarenas, and Limón. Each description includes a short history of the founding



and the importance of each city in Costa Rica's overall history. For example, I learned that Heredia was named in 1763 by the President of the Royal Court in Guatemala, Alonso Fernandez de Heredia, who named it after himself.

The brief histories and directions are clear, but not all buildings are open to the public. Also, some historic buildings are not included, such as the old army cuartel, now the museum in Alajuela. But, overall, it's a great exercise in getting to know more about Costa Rica. And it's free!

This information comes from visitcostarica.com/en/costarica/things-to-do/culture/historical-walks, but I found that Googling history walks Costa Rica was much faster. A recommendation: Print out the page so that you are not attracting phone thieves or blocking those walking behind you. Needless to say, but I will say it anyway: use caution. Leave your valuables at home and avoid strangers who are "too chatty."

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UNDERSTANDING TICOS

by Edie Bakker



Part Three: Work Issues

Editor's Note: Costa Rica, like every country and society has its own culture. This is the third article in a series about some of the differences between Costarican culture and those of other countries. To help us better understand some of those differences, Edie Bakker has explored some of the variations and explained them for us. Hopefully, knowing them can make our time here a little more tranquil. By its very nature, this series contains generalizations, and its contents will not apply to every situation.

1. Don't "Tico price!" This is the opposite of "Gringo pricing." To understand it, you must think from the perspective of a Tico. It is tempting for Westerners to pay less for Tico workers than they would a fellow Westerner. For example, I have been tempted to pay less than the going Western rate for house-sitting and babysitting my pets. I have been caught out on this! I see it happening with others, too. The other side of this, however, is that if we are talking about a job that Ticos

also need to pay people for, you want to set the price at a reasonable amount. Then they will be able to hire the same people. There is a delicate balance. I would prefer to err on the side of treating all people as equals, whatever the consequences.

2. Many Ticos aspire to a better life and are committed to working for it. They have this in common with middle-class North Americans. Many want more and better houses, cars, services, things, and especially

better jobs. This is just as true for many common workers as it is for the middle class, although in some cases, the opposite is true (See point 3). The difference may depend on their upbringing and personality.

3. Conversely, some Ticos are very satisfied with their lives and position, even if we might see it as less than ideal. This is more true when their primary goal, having good relationships, is satisfied. This country rates high on the happiness scale, and most of its citizens are not suffering too much. There is democracy, a free medical system for all (albeit somewhat faulty), public education for all children, clean water, and relative peace. The saying "Pura Vida" implies that things are as good as they are, and it is a human trait to accept a way of life as inevitable, unless there is a really serious problem.

4. Ticos do not like supervision. A (well-meaning) Gringo telling them how to do things can cause resentment and result in sub-standard work. Tico workers truly believe their way of doing things is the best way. Instructions on "better ways" of doing something can be seen as a challenge to their way of life and their feeling of machismo. Respectfully suggesting an "idea" as a "possibility" seems to work for me. If my worker can envision it my way, he usually responds positively. If he can't, he probably wouldn't be able to do it my way anyway. It's important for them to succeed in what they do.

5. Ticos do not like to confront. Remember, they value relationships! If they're not talking to you, you may have offended them, or they may have something negative to say that they just can't bring themselves to tell you. Try not to confront them.

6. The reverse side of machismo is that if you always have to win, it is better not to get into a conflict in the first place. This is something that Latino cultures share in common. Anything that potentially has an uncertain outcome should be avoided. To avoid surprise outcomes or failures, they may go to great lengths to make sure that everything will work out before starting something. Either way, a confrontation is a conflict for them, and they will likely ignore it. This is another reason why they won't confront you when you have made a mistake.

7. Trying new things can be risky for Ticos. One method of guaranteeing they will succeed is to reject new ideas and projects where the results are unknown or unfamiliar to them. When a Gringo instructs a Tico to do something in a different way than he is used to, because it is the way the Gringo is used to having it done at home, it creates a conflict for the Tico. Sometimes, that conflict between

the new way and their old way can be big enough to cause them to quit the job.

8. Ticos don't take criticism well. Gringos sometimes have different ideas than their workers about what and how things should be done in their homes. For example, a maid might not "put something away" in the same place twice, or clean the room corners. Both of those are big things with Gringos, but if the maid gets criticized repeatedly for something like that, she may leave.

9. If a Tico walks off a job, they may not be being lazy. You may very well have offended them in one of the ways above. If so, they wouldn't say so. Being demanding is an example of a major expat offense, but many other possibilities exist. Consider whether you owe them an apology.

10. In business circumstances, Tico men are conscientious about the way they dress and favor long pants and nice shirts. Appearance is also important to those workers who clean your vehicle or trim your bushes, even though their work may cause them to get dirty. Uniforms are very popular in Costa Rica, even in small businesses. They enable workers to dress nicely without undue expense. (By contrast, expats often dress in a casual, relaxed manner, wearing shorts and flip-flops because they are retired.)

11. Younger female workers are also very conscious of their appearance (at work and away) and will often spend an excessive amount of their income on clothes to cultivate a particular image. Ticos may be seen in tight, short skirts with cleavage-revealing blouses and very high-heeled shoes, particularly in downtown San José. This does not mean that they are "loose women," it is standard business attire for young ladies in many office or sales positions.

12. Maids and gardeners sometimes take small items from their employers. Taking small things like a bag of rice, fruit from a tree, or a tool here and there is not considered "theft." It may even be seen as a perk for low wages and a benefit of working for a rich Gringo. A common concept is, "If they have enough money to buy the first one, they can afford to buy a second one." Accusing them of stealing is a HUGE offense to them. Accusing them of stealing may cause them extreme stress because, like in the Gringo culture, "stealing" is illegal and socially frowned on. Keep in mind, we're not talking about true robbery here; they don't view such "sharing" of small items as stealing. When something is missing, a better tactic is to just mention that an item is missing and ask them to help you find it, declaring that it is of utmost

importance to you. A strategy to prevent "sharing" is to keep valuables and irreplaceable items hidden.

13. By the same token, Ticos may not routinely or voluntarily bring back what you lend them. A good way to ask for such things to be returned is, "Are you done with..." rather than, "Are you going to bring...back?"

Don't eliminate a good employee just because of these two cultural quirks! After all, aren't "people more important than things?" (Oh yeah, not in our culture.)

14. A final note of caution: Do NOT pay for a complete job upfront. Advancing a portion of the total charge so that the workman can purchase materials or supplies for the job is

fine, but do not pay the final payment until ALL the work is completed. For example, paying the last payment when a Tico says, "I'll come back and finish the painting tomorrow," is not a wise thing to do if you want the painting finished. Receiving the final payment for a job is a "signal" to a Tico that things are fine, done, complete, and that nothing further needs to be done. In the next article, I will look at courtesy and beliefs

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

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

by Allen Dickinson



Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hills!

There is a goldmine in the hills of Escazu! It's easy to find; there is even a big sign that shows where it is ... when it's lit it says "Hot Doughnuts." If you didn't already know, Krispy Kreme has come to Costa Rica!

Whoever did it was smart in choosing their location too; they built a brand new building right on the main east/west road going through Escazu San Rafael

(that's the lower Escazu for newcomers or those from the provinces) about one hundred yards west of the US Ambassador's compound. And it seems to be a hit with the Ticos. The first month or so the store was open, there was not a business hour any day of the week that there wasn't a long line to get in; I have seen as many as 24 cars lined up to get into the parking lot or to the drive-up window.

I, being a good Southern Yankee male (yes, that's right, I was imported into the South from "outside" and, like good moonshine, became a staple of that environment), I felt compelled to stop at the new structure to ensure it was: A) Real, not an illusion and, B) That the products they were offering were up to my taste standards. It took me 20 minutes to get TO the parking lot, but once in I was able to get a parking spot.

I went inside and was pleased to find the standard Krispy Kreme environment I was familiar with was intact – there, behind immaculate glass partitions was a large and complex-looking machine churning out delicious morsels of gastronomic pleasure. Next, I noticed there were a few tables with chairs for those who couldn't wait to get back to their cars with their purchases.

What I was less pleased to see was that there were almost 30 people standing in line waiting to be served. It wasn't the standing and waiting that was aggravating, it was that while I was standing and waiting I had to smell and watch hundreds of fresh, delicious, glazed doughnuts being made by that machine ... and I was not able get my hands a single one!

The employees, and they were well staffed with numerous persons dressed in all white with Krispy Kreme paper hats on, were doing their best to help customers. The problem was that at the check out there was a display case filled with at least 12 different varieties of doughnuts and, upon reaching that point in line, customers had to make a selection. And many had problems deciding ... "Give me six glazed, two frosting covered, two filled, and ... NO, wait, four glazed, two frosted (the ones with the sprinkles), two raspberry filled (Oh, they're Cherry?... OK), two chocolate cake, two apple fritters, and two of those other filled ... That's 14? OK..., make it three glazed, take out one of the..."

Eventually I got my chance and just ordered six regular glazed and a cup of coffee. My plan was for me to sit at one of the tables and eat (savor) four with my coffee (Hey! It's been years, OK?) and save two for my wife – she's Tica and doesn't have a Krispy Kreme addiction so two would surely be enough for her. The problem was getting home with them. (They didn't both make it; it was a 15-minute drive and how long can any person resist a temptation of that magnitude sitting

next to them on the passenger seat? The answer is, in my case, not 15 minutes!)

All the while I was standing in the line I was watching people come in the doors – the line never got shorter. It was then I realized that just outside is the main bus stop for Paco area,. So besides the long stream of cars entering the driveway, both the arriving and departing bus riders were coming in and buying doughnuts by the dozens – if I saw one box of 12 doughnuts carried out the door, I saw 30. Many people were carrying two! A few hard-core folks (like myself) were sitting inside and had their box open on the table in front of them as they worked their way through the contents. A family I shared a table with were three Gringos who were there satisfying their long untreated dependency.

It was at the check-out where the extent of this goldmine came to my realization – my bill for six glazed doughnuts and a cup of coffee was ... 8,000 colones (over \$15.00 USD)! A quick calculation showed that a box of twelve glazed doughnuts was 12,000 colones! That's roughly \$22.50! I don't care if the boxes are recyclable for 100 years, THAT_IS_EXPENSIVE, especially here in Tico land!

Apparently the Ticos have come to the same conclusion. Now, a couple of months after their opening, I don't see the long car lines; usually there is no more than three or four waiting to get in. Not to say they aren't busy, they are, just not at the overwhelming level they were when they first opened.

Recently, to see how things have "progressed," I stopped by again (no, it wasn't the craving for a glazed doughnut or two ... well, maybe a little bit ... OK, a lot!), and there was not much change inside; the biggest difference was the fewer number of people; this time there were only about ten people sitting at the tables drinking coffee, eating doughnuts, and talking. And there was no long line waiting to get served. The doughnut-making machine was idle (but that's normal; back in the USA they don't run continuously either.) Purely for research, I ordered a glazed, an apple fritter, and a cake doughnut. And again, a cup of coffee. The bill was 6,300 colones (\$9.99 USD)! The higher per unit price was because the apple fritter and the cake doughnut were "specialty" items (as is everything in the display case except the glazed doughnuts) and are 1,650 colones each! That is over \$3.00 USD! No wonder the traffic has died down.

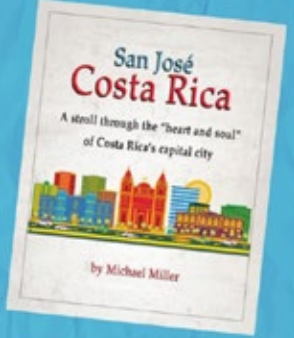
But do not worry, they aren't "deserted" – there is a car or two in the lot every open hour, and others constantly going through the drive-up window. And, when I asked, they assured me the doughnut-making machine is fine; they run it every day.

But one tip – stay away from their "American" coffee. It's terrible!

Allen Dickinson's early childhood was spent living in a home shared with his parents and grandparents. At that time his grandfather had a rural bakery route and five days a week, at the crack of dawn, he would load his panel wagon with fresh baked goods, including doughnuts, to sell to his customers. Each day, when his grandfather came home for lunch, and before he left to finish the remaining short distance of his route, Allen would beg to ride along. It was during those ride-along times that he acquired a lifelong addiction to doughnuts.



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DOWNTOWN SAN JOSÉ

by Michael Miller

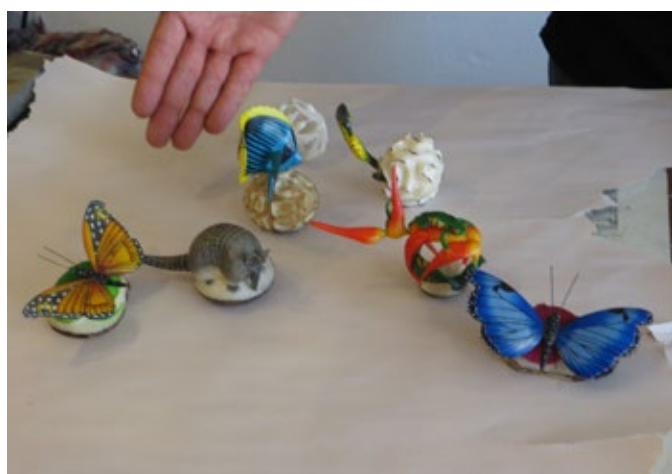


Galeria Namu

Editor's Note: A few years ago El Residente ran a popular series by Michael Miller about some of the often overlooked attractions of downtown San José. Times change, as evidenced by the transition of his books – from The Real San José, first published in 2014, to his recently released, updated book, San José Costa Rica, A stroll through the “heart and soul” of Costa Rica’s capital city. What that evolution represents is not only the result of normal progress, but also the impact that things like the COVID epidemic had on the city, its residents, and its businesses. That means it is time for Michael Miller to revisit some of the places in past articles ... and maybe look at some new ones. He’ll start with Galeria Namu...

Visitors and expats often ask me, “Where can I get something beautiful for my home that truly represents Costa Rica?” These people are definitely NOT interested in the run-of-the-mill tourist items that can be found in souvenir shops all over San

José. Not that there is anything wrong with Costa Rican beach towels, Costa Rican coffee mugs, and Costa Rican baseball caps, most of which are mass-produced in the Far East, they just aren't truly Costa Rican. If you want something that is really from Costa Rica, something



that is uniquely representative of the history, culture, and beauty of the country, you should visit Galería Namu, one of the great treasures of downtown San José.

Galería Namu is an art gallery and shop that specializes in works of art from the indigenous tribes of the region, as well as Afro-Caribbean folk art. It is the only shop in all of Costa Rica that features pieces of art from each of the eight indigenous Costa Rican tribes.

The business was founded in 1998 by Aisling French who was originally from Ireland by way of Canada and the U.S.A. During a previous interview she told me that when she opened the gallery she knew next to nothing

about Costa Rica's indigenous tribes or tribal art. But that soon changed. Aisling, along with her son and co-founder, Conall French, quickly became San José's foremost experts on indigenous art, and Galería Namu was soon recognized as THE place to go to find authentic works of art from Central American tribal artists, as well as serious folk art. Now, after 20 years, Aisling has retired and spends most of her time in her native Ireland.

She left the galería in the very capable hands of her son, Conall, a naturalized citizen of Costa Rica who was born in Quebec. Conall studied anthropology at the prestigious Institute of American Indian Arts



in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and has a background in fine arts and museum studies. But more importantly, he has lived and worked with several of the region's indigenous tribes.

As you enter Galería Namu, you will be overwhelmed by the tremendous variety of art objects available. The first thing that will capture your attention are the brilliantly colored balsa wood masks that are the signature pieces of the Brunca tribe from the highlands of southern Costa Rica. Some of these masks are gentle-looking decorative pieces featuring birds, frogs, and flowers that the Brunca tribesmen find in the tropical forests. However, you will also see very intense, powerful ceremonial masks that might include images of snakes and demons. These ceremonial masks are designed to scare the daylights out of you, and some have actually been used in the tribe's annual Dance of the Little Devils. They are prized by collectors.

Another popular collection is the woven plates, bowls, and baskets from the Emberá and Wounaan Tribes of Panama. These fine pieces are the results of an ancient weaving tradition passed down through the generations of this remote rainforest people. The artists use split palm fronds, some of which are dyed with colors derived from native plants. The gifted weavers incorporate geometric designs and images of local flora and fauna.

Perhaps the most exquisite collection in the Galería are the carved tagua nuts. These nuts, sometimes as big as baseballs, come from a palm tree that grows from Central America to the Amazon basin. When the tagua nut is dried and polished it becomes as hard and white as elephant ivory. (These nuts are sometimes referred to as "vegetable ivory" or "palm ivory.") Once hardened, the nuts are sculpted and inked with natural dyes by the men of the Emberá and Wounaan tribes. In the hands of these talented artists, an astonishing variety of finished pieces that

delicately depict the birds, flowers, butterflies, monkeys, frogs, and other plants and animals of the rainforest, are created.

Perhaps the best reason to visit Galería Namu is that you will learn a great deal about this beautiful country. Even if you only want to browse you will always be welcomed; Conall is always pleased to show off the Galería and has developed an encyclopedic knowledge of the tribes, their art, and the traditions behind each of the pieces. He is quick to point out two facts about the Galería that he considers very important: First, when you buy something from Galería Namu, you can be assured that it is authentic. Each of the pieces in the Galeria are purchased directly from the artists of the indigenous tribes; he will provide buyers with written (and often photographic) documentation of the authenticity of each piece

Second, the Galería practices Fair Trade with the suppliers. That means that they pay the native artists directly for each work of art up front. "We don't take things on consignment. We don't cheat these people," says Conall. "We buy each work at the price fixed by the artists and pay them when we pick up the pieces."

Fair Trade is obviously a good deal for the artists and many will point out that it is the right thing to do. It also provides a big advantage for the Galería; the artists know that they will be treated fairly and that they will not be cheated, so they reserve their best works for Galería Namu.

Truly a treasure in downtown San José, Galería Namu is well worth a visit. You can start learning about it by visiting their website: <http://galerianamu.com>

Michael Miller is the author of San José Costa Rica, A stroll through the heart and soul of Costa Rica's capita city, a unique first-person guidebook that focuses on downtown San José. Copies are available at Amazon (both Kindle and paperback). In addition, paperback copies are also available at Galería Namu. To link to Michael Miller's Amazon Author Page, click here: tinyurl.com/8s8smmsy



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

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FROM THE EMBASSIES



ASK ACS

Q. I will be leaving Costa Rica and returning to the USA in a few months due to family matters, and want to take my pets with me. What rules or regulations will I need to follow to help ensure we have a smooth trip?

A. If, for any reason, you will be traveling to the U.S. with a pet, stay informed on the pet travel and screwworm regulations. First, you will need a certificate of good health from your veterinarian in Costa Rica AND an export authorization issued by the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture (SENASA-Cuarentena Animal) Costa Rica's National Animal Health Service. It is advised that you have your Costa Rican veterinarian take care of all required authorizations with SENASA. To assure prompt service at SENASA, have your veterinarian call their office at Juan Santamaria airport at 2442-6059 for service availability.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not consider Costa Rica a high risk for importing dog rabies into the country, many U.S. states require rabies vaccines, and many airlines require a health certificate and proof of your pet's latest rabies vaccine.

With regards to Screwworm regulations, starting on July 14, 2023, and until further notice, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) is restricting the importation of animal commodities originating from or transiting Costa Rica based on the diagnosis of New World Screwworm in a dog. Dogs traveling from countries or regions where screwworm is known to exist may enter the United States IF they are accompanied by a certificate signed by a full-time, salaried veterinary official of the region of origin stating:

- The dog has been inspected for screwworm within 5 days prior to shipment to the United States; AND
- The dog is either free from screwworm, OR
- The dog was infested with screwworm, held in quarantine, and treated until free from screwworm prior to leaving the region.

For more information:

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) pet travel website: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/pet-travel>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pet travel website: <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/dogs.html>

Servicio Nacional de Salud Animal (SENASA) – Dirección de Cuarentena Animal – 2587-1710 or 2587-1714

APHIS-IS Area Office in San José: 2290-4548

Q. I have heard that adult U.S. Passports can now be renewed by mail. Is that true?

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
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OFF THE HIGH SEAS

by Christine Monteith



Summer Harvest

I feel great joy when I wake to a clear blue sky and the bright sun of a "summer" morning, AKA the "dry season." That's when the local toucans' animated squawking over papaya drowns out the chittering of the tiny iridescent green tanagers building nests outside our bedroom window and before the chicharras ramp up for their March mating chorus. After the lull of October and November's non-stop rain, a cornucopia of fruit hangs from the trees, and vegetables are emerging from the ground on our property. Ten years ago, if someone

had told me that this would be my life, I'd have been highly skeptical.

When I met Ben (my husband) in 2014, he had an arrangement of plastic storage bins on the back deck of a house that he shared in central California. Those blue bins produced delicious cherry tomatoes, strawberries, and tomatillos, from which he made a great salsa verde. Even though he had moved around a lot, he'd always found a way to fulfill his love of growing. I, on the other hand, had no facility or luck in keeping anything rooted in dirt alive. I



couldn't even keep a spider fern from dropping its tiny brown leaves all over the floor. After handing the poor plant off to a friend, I later saw its green fronds bursting with delicate white flowers. Growing things was a mystery to me. I guess it's a good thing that I never had children.

Not long after we started dating, Ben confided that his life's dream was to create a sustainable food forest. I wasn't sure what that entailed, but it sounded like a pleasant goal. Also, he had just bought a couple of acres in Costa Rica, not far from a beach. That caught my attention! I love to relax on palm tree-shaded beaches. It was during my first trip here when he showed me the property that I connected the dots.

Just three years later we were looking across a sloping landscape dotted with a few young fruit trees. It was a blank canvas. It was blank because the backhoe that leveled the building pad also bulldozed over most of an acre in order to remove tree stumps leftover from a commercial lumber plantation.

Ben's first goal was to restore the area, give nutrients to the soil, and plant vegetation that would attract pollinators. After the stump removal, it was a vast swath of loose, copper-colored dirt. Our neighbor, Lilo, planted mani grass, a type of clover and vetiver; a bunch grass to stabilize the soil. With the guidance of our neighbors,

we learned what to plant, like madera negra for nitrogen replacement, and where to plant almendro trees to boost groundwater recharge. Our neighbors were generous with the gift of cuttings; Ben would come home with a truck full of what looked to me like dead branches. He'd pile them in the wheelbarrow and, walking around the property, stick them in the ground. A few months after we moved in we were sitting on the second-floor deck on a new moon evening, enjoying the multitude of stars in the deep velvet night sky, and happened to look down. We were awed by the spectacular sight of a blanket of fireflies twinkling across the mani grass. We had the heavens sparkling above and below.

In the last six years, the canvas has filled in with splashes of bougainvillea fuchsia, hibiscus crimson, and peach and plumeria cream. Guanabana, guava, starfruit, papaya, anona, coconut, banana, plantain, castaña, yuplon, cass, and citrus trees reach high above our heads. It can be a bit of a challenge navigating around the spiky leaves of all the pineapple plants that dot the property, but no complaints as the waffle-patterned fruit are favorites of hummingbirds, butterflies, and pollinating bees. The heliconia grows with gusto in oranges and reds. My favorite is the deep red lobster claw highlighted with gold tips. Our Tico friends chuckle when they see us planting what they consider roadside weeds.

Family and friends (who haven't visited us yet) ask us what we do all day. They imagine that we spend hours surfing, lounging on the beach, or laying in a hammock. In reality, during the 12 hours of daylight it's pretty non-stop around here. There's transplanting or pruning, or sometimes it's fertilizing with an organic mixture of goat guano, rice hulls, molasses, and carbon, something concocted by our neighbor. Ben will spend hours down the property and come back at dusk, sweat-soaked, with a contented smile. I'm still in wonder that a little seed can be germinated, transplanted, and tended into something edible. I may not have much to contribute to the growing, but I'm pretty creative with making the "fruits of our labor" into something delicious to eat. These last few years have been a life experience I could never have imagined a decade ago, let alone believe that I'd so wholly embrace. Now I can't imagine my life being any other way.

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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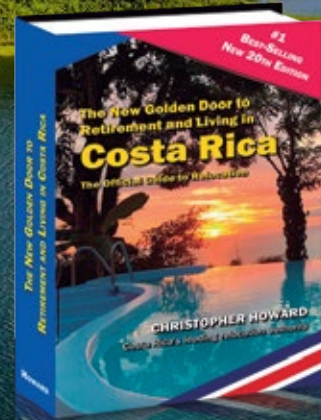
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Here yesterday, today, and tomorrow



SCAM ALERT 1

by El Residente Staff



Buying a Used Car

ARCR has been informed of a potential scam with purchasing a vehicle from a private seller. We pass this on as an advisory to members on why they should be careful when purchasing a used vehicle.

A person saw an ad for a vehicle he wished to purchase. The advertisement specified that the vehicle had XXX mileage (in kilometers) and was being sold by the owner's representative. When the interested person inspected the vehicle, he verified that the advertised mileage was correct by checking the vehicle's odometer. After a satisfactory test drive, a price was negotiated, and the purchase was completed

via the usual process with a Costarican attorney of the representative's choice.

The following day, when the new owner was inspecting the papers that came with the car, he discovered that the mileage shown on the vehicle's most recent annual inspection certificate was more than 80,000 km (50,000 miles) higher than shown on the odometer.

The purchaser confronted the seller's representative but was rebuffed; he said that he was only the owner's representative, had no knowledge of the discrepancy, and denied responsibility. When the attorney who accomplished the transfer was contacted, a similar

response was made; all knowledge of the discrepancy was denied. Further, when the owner contacted the OIJ and inquired about a possible criminal action, he was informed that the problem was a "civil matter" and not within their criminal 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 mileage of the vehicle is to be recorded. Then, if during any subsequent inspection, the odometer shows mileage that is less than that recorded during the previous inspection, 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 original mileage is no longer shown on the vehicle's odometer.

A word of advice: When purchasing a used vehicle, always inspect the most recent inspection form and look for any notes about vehicle mileage. Also, compare the mileage shown on the form with the odometer (the mileage is shown near the top of the right side of the page.) However, be aware that the inspection form only shows

the mileage from the previous year's inspection – any differences that may have been uncovered in prior years will not be disclosed.

A special note is appropriate here. Later model vehicles have electronic instrument clusters that often contain the speedometer, odometer, and possibly other engine instruments, in one assembly. When any of these instruments fail, the only repair is a replacement of the complete cluster assembly. This is often accomplished by utilizing an 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 previous year's inspection. To address that possibility, 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. When inspecting a vehicle or possible purchase, and if the mileage on the odometer does not reasonably match that shown on the inspection form, ask the seller if they have the certificate indicating the odometer has been changed. If they can not supply the certificate, the decision to purchase the vehicle should be reconsidered.

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ON THE GRID

by Ivo Henfling

15+ Smart Steps to Renting a Home in Costa Rica

I always do a fly-over of the topic of renting in Costa Rica in my presentation at the ARCR Seminars, but because I know quite a few El Residente readers are renting, as will many future ARCR members, I decided to write this more in-depth article.

Now you probably say "15+ Smart Steps"! That's a lot to take in before renting a home! Why so many? You'd think that renting a home in Costa Rica is easy, and yes, it is, IF you pay attention and IF you speak Spanish. But if you're not so confident because the culture is different and your translation skills are somewhat lacking, you might find the process more complicated than you anticipate. Therefore, this might be useful information.

First, before doing anything else, you should learn enough about the country to be sure you know where

you want to live - High/low? Hot/cool? Ocean front/inland?", Small/large community? Jungle/urbane? Etc. So the very first step, and the most logical one, is to rent someplace and "try it out." Once you've found the locale/city/town/area that's to your liking, put some thought into what features, amenities, services, and environment you're looking for.

Sure, looking at homes online is easy and fun, but if you have never been "there," you won't know what you are seeing. I receive hundreds of emails from future renters saying, "When I get to Costa Rica, I want to rent a home." Usually, it takes five or six emails back and forth before I find out what their requirements and budget are. Most of the time, it's like pulling teeth. So, I decided to write this guide for renting a home the easy way. Let's start with something NOT to do:

1. DON'T START TOO EARLY

Don't start looking to rent a home long before you even get here. For sure, the home you find now and really love won't be available when you're actually ready to rent. But there will be others, don't worry.

2. WHAT'S YOUR BUDGET? AND WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET?

First, figure out your budget. Consider that besides the basic rent, the costs of utilities must be considered. Knowing what your total monthly expenses will be can have a major impact on where you might live. Sometimes the rent includes utilities and even cable TV and internet. (A renter can't have power, phone (landline), and water in their name unless they are a resident or citizen; therefore, these accounts will be in the landlord's name.) Sometimes a gardener is included, and even the pool maintenance, so the landlord knows the property is maintained well. In some condominiums, the water is included in the HOA fees. Ask your landlord which of those the renter is responsible for and when they need to be paid, so you won't be cut off. If they're not included in the rent, you can pay them at any bank or many large grocery stores with cash.

An internet connection and cable TV are personal and almost always in the name of the tenant. There are several providers and packages with various speeds and numbers of channels available. Ask your landlord which provider they recommend.

3. LONG OR SHORT TERM?

Before renting a home, decide if you need a short-term (by the month) or long-term (1-year minimum) lease. The law about leasing indicates that the standard term of a lease is three years (you may see leases that are for a minimum of one year) with the option to renew if both parties agree. Most agencies don't get involved with short-term rentals since Airbnb has come along, so if you only want to commit to obligating yourself to a month or two at a time, you will most likely be on your own.

4. DOLLARS OR COLONES?

You need to determine up-front if you will pay the rent in Costa Rican Colones or U.S. dollars; it might be important, depending on how you receive your income. If you pay in colones, the law allows the landlord to raise the

rent 15% a year if the inflation is equal or more. Unless you plan to 'go native', count on paying your rent in U.S. dollars because then the law prohibits rent increases during a three-year lease period. Also, keep in mind that if your income is in dollars and your rent is paid in colones, the fluctuating exchange rate can mean your rent is a different dollar amount each month.

5. HOUSE, APARTMENT, OR CONDO?

Before considering renting a home, decide what you want: do you want to live in a single-family house in the general economy, an apartment or condo, or a home in a gated community? If you are renting in a gated community just for a few months or vacation, then ask, before renting, for a copy of the bylaws so you know the rules of behavior. Condo living is not for everyone.

6. FURNISHED OR UNFURNISHED?

Will you need to rent furnished or unfurnished? Learn more about renting furnished or unfurnished, what's included and what's not, at [Furnished or unfurnished](#). Remember, most unfurnished rentals do not include appliances. That's because good quality basic appliances are very expensive here. (Most local tenants have their own appliances anyway.)

7. SHOULD YOU SHIP YOUR FURNITURE AND APPLIANCES?

Before even looking at places to live, you need to decide if you will be shipping your furniture and/or appliances or just bringing personal belongings. Talk to an experienced mover like Charles Zeller (see his ads for "Ship to Costa Rica" in this magazine) and stick to his recommendations. Usually, it takes about three months before your container arrives (and gets through customs). Also, before you decide to bring your furniture and/or appliances, educate yourself on import taxes. An option is to buy what you need here. Whatever your decision may be, it has a major impact on what kind of housing you will want to rent and for how long.

8. HOW WILL YOU PAY YOUR RENT AND OTHER MONTHLY EXPENSES?

Paying rent, as well as buying food and other necessities, requires access to finances. It is very important to know that it is difficult to open a bank account in Costa Rica if you're

not a resident. It can take a year to be granted residency, and until you become a resident you will **ONLY** have access to a simplified bank account that allows deposits of up to USD \$1,000/per person/per month. Talk to your real estate agent and ask if he or she knows about any other solutions. Be aware that any Costa Rican bank will require you to supply information about the origin of the funds being deposited.

Landlords will **NOT** accept credit or debit cards for lease payments. Utility companies won't either. Writing a check probably won't work as Costa Rican banks won't cash a check from another country. A foreign check deposited into a Costa Rican bank account often takes 2-3 weeks to clear and for the funds to become available.

Renting requires future planning, and you want to have the ability to make the monthly payments before committing to renting a home. Two short-term solutions are: A) Bring enough cash for your first two month's rent, a security deposit, and two months of utility payments, plus other miscellaneous expenses. But be aware, that carrying more than USD \$10,000 in cash is subject to it being confiscated! or, B) Plan on making cash withdrawals from local ATMs. If that is your decision, find out if your bank charges you for cash withdrawals from Costa Rican ATMs. (Also, be aware that many ATMs allow withdrawals of no more than USD \$300/day; some allow more, and others allow less.) Also, find out what your bank's daily max is and what the cheapest way to make a cash withdrawal is.

A longer-term solution for obtaining the cash you will need is to have your bank at home make wire transfers to your bank account in Costa Rica. Or bring a checkbook and write yourself a check now and then and deposit that into your local account. This can take as long as three weeks to clear, but it saves wire costs.

9. HOME SECURITY

Don't let window bars, high walls, gates, and fences scare you away. Unfortunately, home security is necessary in Costa Rica as there is petty theft (for lack of welfare) in some areas. If the location you are looking at has no window bars, walls, gates, razor wire, or large fences, don't rent it; without them, security will probably be a problem.

10. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

If you are not planning on buying a car, then it can be important to rent a home where there is a good bus service

close by. Public transportation in Costa Rica is cheap and good. Learn as much as you can about bus schedules because San José functions as a hub. All communities have plentiful taxi services, and in the Central Valley and some other communities, there has been a sharp expansion of Uber-type ride-sharing services.

11. MEDICAL CARE.

If you need specialized medical care, before you decide to rent a home, look at the home's proximity to hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies. Being isolated from city noise can be nice, but quick and easy access to medical facilities can be more important.

It is a good idea to consider all the resources and facilities of the neighborhood. Access to grocery shopping, the farmer's market, and anything else that is a requirement for you to live comfortably and happily can be very important. It's a good idea to check the area around the home you want to rent at night. Walk the neighborhood and see if you feel safe and comfortable.

12. THE LEGAL RENTAL PROCESS

Before you sign any lease agreement, have an attorney check it over. Use a real estate lawyer, if possible. If you don't want to pay a lawyer, don't, but don't complain when you have problems with the landlord or landlady. Realtors usually have a standard agreement that has been checked over and over.

As part of the rental process, insist on an inventory list and check all items. If something is missing or is broken, ask for a replacement. Make a note on the inventory and have the landlord sign it before you sign the lease agreement.

The same goes for damages. Check for any damage before signing the lease. Check paint, drains, lights, and everything that possibly doesn't function correctly.

Most lease agreements oblige a security deposit of one month's rent. Everything that is not in perfect condition or missing will be deducted from the security deposit when you leave. Some landlords will not return the deposit, even if you've left the place in perfect condition. Protect yourself by not paying the last month after you've given (or been given) notice.

Sub-letting without the approval of the landlord is illegal in Costa Rica. This is stipulated in the General Law of Urban and Suburban Leases, No. 7527. Make sure you rent from the legal owner.

13. PETS

Do you have a pet? Tell your agent or the landlord before renting a home. Ask for the rules about having pets when it's a condominium and check for pet restrictions or if there is a pet security deposit.

14. OPERATING A BUSINESS

When renting a home, do not start a business there if you rented it as a residential property. There are restrictions for running a business from home, especially in condominiums. Exceptions can be made if the landlord/landlady agrees, and it's stipulated in the lease agreement. (If you run an online business, you should not have to worry.)

15. RELATIONSHIPS

Try to maintain good, clear communication and relationship with your landlord or landlady. And try to be tolerant of their 'idiosyncrasies'; remember, you're a guest in this country and the culture and its rules may be different than you are used to.

SOME FINAL TIPS

When choosing an agent or agency, do your due diligence and look for one that has good recommendations. In this country, anyone, with or without a license, experience, or special qualifications, can rent or sell houses. Try to decide on one single agent and do not go all over the place trying different ones; a good agent/agency will give you much better post-rental services than you can imagine. (And you'll need it, believe me!)

In choosing your agent or agency, try to pick one with a website. That gives you the ability to start looking at your options before you arrive. Try to work with experts.

There are several good VRBO (Vacation Rentals By Owner) websites and Facebook groups. This can be a good option if you read this article well and follow the recommendations.

If you opt to use a realty agent or agency, give them as much information as you can before you begin exploring renting a home. Tell them about what you'll be looking for and give them as much detailed information about you, your family, and your needs as you can. (At GoDutch Realty only our Atenas agent does rentals.)

Now you know everything that's needed before renting a home in Costa Rica ... and how to stay out of trouble. Good luck, and happy renting!

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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LEGAL UPDATE

by Rómulo Pacheco

How to Become a Citizen of Costa Rica

Many persons are not aware that few years ago the government of Costa Rica changed the rules to make it easier for expats to become citizens. The process is now fairly simple and is similar to obtaining residency (something that needs to be done first.) What are the advantages of becoming a citizen of Costa Rica? Citizens:

- Can obtain a Costarican passport.
- Can vote in Costarican elections
- No longer have to periodically renew their residency
- Can use the “Citizen” line at immigration

Interested? Here are the requirements for becoming a citizen of Costa Rica:

1. Cost is about \$1500 (per person)
2. Processing takes about 11 months
3. Applicant needs to have valid Costarican residency
4. Must have spent a minimum of seven years (2555 days) in the county (does not need to be consecutive)*
5. There is NO minimum income requirement
6. Must submit a NEW FBI (or equivalent) report
7. Must submit a birth certificate (copy should be in Migracion from the residency application)

8. Have TWO Tico character witnesses
9. Satisfactorily complete two written tests: 1) Grammar (Spanish) and, 2) Social Studies” (history of CR) (both tests are in Spanish) and must be able to sing the National Anthem.**

*If residency is by marriage, 2 years (730 days)

**Applicants over 65 years of age are not required to take the tests.

The citizenship application process can be accomplished by an applicant on their own, but they should be fluent in Spanish (to be able to deal with the bureaucracy.) The best and easiest way to become a citizen is to work through an attorney. ARCR’s attorneys are highly experienced in obtaining citizenship for our clients. A note of CAUTION: Be sure the attorney you choose is experienced – not every attorney can or will complete the process in a reasonable amount of time, or at a reasonable cost.

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Attorney at Law, Notary Public

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SCAM ALERT 2

by El Residente Staff



A Big Scam is Coming to Your Phone in 2024

“Smishing,” a term that combines “SMS” and “phishing,” is an attempt to get your personal and banking information through unsolicited text messages on your phone. The most common way is to pretend to be a bank, a government agency, a company you might have done business with, or a package delivery service. The message may say something to get your attention, like a warning about suspicious activity on your account. (“This is _____ and there is a hold on your account due to a security breach. Click here to verify your information,”)

In package smishing scams, the message may seem innocent: “USPS: Since your package address does not have an address number and we are unable to arrange delivery for you. Please update your information online.”

Once you click, you may be asked for your credit card information to pay an additional delivery fee.

When in doubt, call the source instead of relying on a text message. If you think that there’s a problem with shipping your package or with your bank account, contact the company at their original website or phone number – DO NOT use the contact information in the text.

A “smishing” message can seem like any other text message, but there are a few telltale signs that can warn you.

1. How many people also received your text? If the message was sent to multiple people it is an immediate red flag and should be deleted and the number should be blocked immediately.

2. If the message asks for your information. Asking you for personal information is another red flag; nothing is as important as your personal and financial information.

3. Be suspicious of any request for immediate action. Scammers do not want you to take time to think. Stop and evaluate what you have been told to do before taking any action.

If you have fallen for a “smishing” scam, don’t panic; there are steps you can take to mitigate losses.

1. Get your phone checked for malware, and ignore any follow-up texts from the same source.

2. If you are a victim of a scam, report it to the financial institution or the organization right away. You can also contact the state attorney general’s office to report the issue,”

3. If you receive a “smishing” message, don’t leave it in your messages folder.

4. Block or filter all unsolicited messages.

This was condensed from an article posted on Yahoo!Lifestyle. It can be read in full at: <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/thats-immediate-red-flag-being-044602921.html>

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DESIGN WISE

by Shelagh Duncan



Sweet Dreams? Selecting the Right Mattress

Did you know that humans are the only species that purposely delay sleep? (Could it be that we are sleeping on an uncomfortable mattress?) Some fascinating things about sleep:

- Humans need to sleep about 30% of their lives – cats need more than 50%, but giraffes and elephants need less than 10%.
- More than 60% of North Americans do not experience a good night's sleep.
- 12% of people now dream entirely in black and white. Prior to the introduction of color TV, it was closer to 85%.
- Most of us are sleeping on a mattress long after it has lost its ability to provide our body with the comfort and support it needs for rest and regeneration.

Okay, I admit there are no statistics to back up the last one, but I think you will agree that sleeping well is of prime importance in allowing us to enjoy life and feel well, and a comfortable mattress and a clear mind are key factors. And, did you know that, while asleep, each person, on average, moves sixty to seventy times a night – with a dozen or more full turns? Considering a third of your life is spent on your mattress, it is certainly important to have one that is comfortable and will help you get the sleep and rest your body needs.

I am not a sleep therapist, but I do know a thing or two about mattresses; first and foremost, if you are sleeping on one that is seven to ten years old, it probably needs replacing. How do you know if it is time for replacement? Some indications are: Do you wake up with stiffness,



numbness, or aches and pains? Do you sleep better somewhere other than on your own bed, such as a hotel or a friend's guest room? Those are indications that it's time for a change.

Shopping for a new mattress is not quite as much fun as shopping for a new TV; plus, we don't always have the selection of familiar brands here that we would back home, but choosing a suitable mattress is not exactly rocket science. Mattresses are designed, not just made, and they have features incorporated into their designs for different body and sleeping types that you should be aware of before you go looking.

To select the correct mattress, first think about how you like to sleep: on your side, back, or stomach. Firmer mattresses are recommended for all stomach and some back sleepers. Softer mattresses are better for side sleepers, and medium mattresses are recommended for most back sleepers. When you know that, you are halfway there. A padded top layer will give added comfort, and the coiled spring core provides the support you need. Other than that, think about whether you prefer an innerspring or a foam mattress, and then consider the price.

All but the cheapest range of mattresses will probably be fine for most people. I suggest getting the best mattress you can afford.

Generally, when choosing a new mattress, there are five factors to consider:

1. COMFORT:

There are two main types of mattresses, innerspring or foam (memory foam, latex, or regular foam), and within

these types there are a variety of features for individual preferences. If you prefer innerspring, consider if a regular or plush pillow top is best for you; also, the type and number of coils. Comfort is highly subjective and can be complicated by two people sharing the same mattress. One restless sleeper may well disturb the other, so go for a mattress with individually pocketed coils; there will be much less transfer of movement across the mattress. King-size beds offer the best of both worlds – instead of one king mattress, each sleeper can opt to use a twin (individual) mattress for their specific requirements and comfort preferences, for example, when one partner is much heavier than the other.

2. SUPPORT:

In which position do you usually sleep? Do you have back issues? Heavier bodies will need more support.

3. PRICE:

Set a realistic budget. Is this an investment piece or a "just for now" purchase?

4. DURABILITY:

Is the brand reliable, with good product information and a guarantee?

5. SIZE:

Back home we were used to standardized bed sizes; every King, Queen, or Twin mattress will fit the equivalent size bed – not so in Costa Rica! Check carefully before you buy. For example, the king mattress here is about 79" x 79"; in the US, it is 76" x 80". Just ensure the new mattress will fit your bed – and vice versa!

Some other information that you may want to include in your mattress purchase deliberations:

- Memory Foam was developed by NASA (like many other great things) and adapted for commercial use. It softens and conforms to the sleeper in response to body heat and weight. It can relieve pressure on painful joints but, as with all synthetic foam mattresses, will usually feel warmer than an innerspring one. (Latex foam, not synthetic latex, is one of the best and lets the body breathe naturally while offering decent support. And, it is not as hot as other foam because it is natural.)

- With innerspring models, a higher coil count usually means longer life and more support – which is not the same as firmness.
- Consider the humidity factor where you live; do not buy a mattress that has been sitting around in the store for ages. Order a new one.
- When you buy a new mattress, get new pillows and mattress protector.

Tips on care for your new mattress:

- Vacuum your mattress regularly to protect it from mold and bugs.
- Mattresses last longer if they are turned and rotated regularly – every three months. (Every two weeks for the first six months is recommended) .
- Use a washable mattress protector to prolong the life of your mattress, and wash it often.
- Avoid sitting on the edge of a mattress.

Pillows and sheets are the other components of an ideal sleeping environment. Lumpy or musty-smelling pillows should go. Allergies will have you snuffling or snoring

all night, and who can sleep well with an uncomfortable pillow? Choose a good, hypoallergenic pillow.

With sheets, buy the best you can afford. Many people don't know this, but bamboo sheets are one of the best options to keep you feeling dry, comfortable, and cool at night! And, as a bonus, they also have natural properties that will not allow mold and bacteria to grow! Genuine bamboo sheets are not inexpensive, but I guarantee you will never regret buying them.

Sweet dreams!

Shelagh Duncan has been working in the interior design field for over 30 years and can be found at ROYAL PALM INTERIORS in Uvita. She can be reached at 506-2743-8323 or online at

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WILD SIDE

by Ryan Piercy



The Cats' Meow

Man has always held wild cats in both awe and fear. References and images of these carnivores can be found since the earliest times, and in the Americas, the Jaguar is the most revered. Worshiped as a god by the ancient civilizations from Mexico through Central America to Paraguay and northern Argentina, it is the only living member of the genus *Panthera onca* native to the Americas; it is the third largest feline in the world and the largest carnivore in the Americas. These magnificent creatures can measure up to two meters (seven feet) in length and weigh up to 300 pounds at maturity. They are noted more for their strength and power than for speed. As a keystone species, they play an important role in stabilizing ecosystems and in regulating prey populations.

In days gone by, panthers were especially abundant in Costa Rica and they used to roam throughout the entire country. Its preferred habitat was tropical and subtropical moist broad-leaf forests, wetlands, and wooded regions, but now are usually only found in the largest of the reserves. A few specimens of the famous Black Panther exist, but most are the usual rich yellow with black spots and rosettes. Jaguars have been known to live up to 22 years in captivity.

With short, heavy legs and very large paws, they are formidable hunters. Typically a night creature, they are as at home in trees or in water as they are on the ground, and their diet includes a wide range of animals in all these areas, including turtles, tortoises, and even crocodiles.



The Jaguar has been listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List since 2002. They are endangered by habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, poaching for the trade of their body parts, and killings in human/wildlife conflict situations. In Costa Rica, they are still hunted as ranchers claim they kill cattle, though studies show this is infrequent. Ranchers have also reported that the panther's method of hunting is different from the puma; when attacking domestic animals, the panther usually kills only the one they will eat, while their slightly smaller cousins may kill several but feast on only one.

For mating, these generally solitary beasts form pairs for a short period of time, seemingly in any season. After the birth of one to four cubs (after approximately 100 days of gestation), the cubs generally stay with the mother until the age of two.

Due to their nature, it is difficult and unlikely that you will spot a jaguar on your treks through Costa Rica. However, keep your eyes open for signs of their footprints near a stream bed or mangrove islet, and if you're very lucky you might just catch a glimpse of this beautiful and inspiring jungle hunter.



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TRANSPORTATION TOURS ACCOMMODATIONS ALL COSTA RICA

CLUB CORNER

► Alcoholics Anonymous

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

► Al-Anon

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

► 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 José. 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

Formed 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:

1 January, Monday, 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. January 25th and 26th. Location; Park Inn Hotel. Contact the office for reservations. Seating is limited.

One-Liners

I choked on a carrot this morning and all I could think of was, "I'll bet a doughnut wouldn't have done this to me."

It only takes one slow-walking person in the grocery store to destroy the illusion that I'm a nice person.

The colder the x-ray table, the more of your body that is required to be on it.



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