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EL RESIDENTE

November

December

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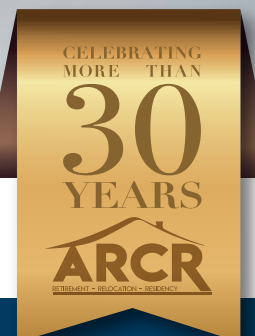
Bush Medicine



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Summer Is Coming, and the Holidays Too
May the Fast Pass Be With You

Nine things I hate about bad landlords
Christine vs. The Green Sheen





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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.

Since 1984 we have been offering reliable **services, information and advocacy** to Costa Rica's foreign residents. We have the experience and ability to help you with your residency application, immigration, business and financial management, real estate purchases and rentals, property management, insurance, pet importation and much more.

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Editor's Note

Season's Greetings! It may not seem like it, but the holiday season is almost here. Some stores already have their Christmas displays out! What does that mean at ARCR? Two things: first it means the Tree of Hope charity drive is underway. See the ad in this issue and please, contribute generously. Second, it mean this issue has the annual BOOKSHELF article in it. It's bigger and better this year with two new categories and loads of new authors, so check it out and pick up some reading enjoyment. Happy Holidays from the *El Residente* staff!



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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

THE ARCR MISSION STATEMENT

The Association of Residents of Costa Rica aims to assist people with up-to-date information on how to navigate the intricacies of transitioning to and living a "Pura Vida" life in Costa Rica, through a team of professionals offering services in various areas of expertise.

CAJA FEE INCREASE As of February 2026, due to exchange rate adjustments, the CCSS (CAJA) monthly fee will be increased by USD \$5 + VAT for a total of \$5.65. There has been no increase in the monthly rates over the past three years. For those members who utilize ARCR's payment service to pay their CAJA fees through a credit or debit card, the charge will be increased by that amount beginning in February.

TELEPHONE SCAM If your phone rings once and then stops, be careful, it may be the "One Ring" cell phone scam. Particularly if it's from a number you don't recognize.

Scammers are using auto-dialers to call cell phones. The phone rings once, enough for a missed call alert, and hope you'll call back. According to the FTC, if you do, the chances are you'll hear something like, "Hello. You've reached the operator, please hold." As you hold, you are being charged exorbitant per-minute charges ... on top of an international rate.

The calls are from phone numbers with three-digit area codes that appear to be from the U.S., such as 268, 284, 473, 664, 649, 767, 809, 829, 849, and 876. However, they are actually international phone numbers.

There's no danger in getting the call; the scam happens when you call back.

SECOND PHONE SCAM ARCR has been warned that scammers have recently been using a phone number that is the same as a Banco National telephone number, BUT WITH AN 800 AREA CODE preceding it. Look carefully at your incoming call display when a "BN" call is received. (Banco National does not call its customers!)

SINPE SCAM According to the online newspaper AM Costa Rica, on Thursday, September 18, the Costarican Cybercrime Prosecutor's Office issued a

warning about a new type of fraud targeting users of the National Electronic Payments System (Sinpe) mobile app.

The scam exploits a feature of Sinpe, which allows users to move funds directly from their bank accounts to third parties. This can happen when a customer changes or cancels their phone number but fails to notify their bank to disconnect that number from their accounts. When the phone number is reissued to a new subscriber, it may still be linked to a bank account, allowing the new subscriber to transfer the funds.

Authorities recommend that customers keep track of all the cell phone numbers connected to their bank accounts, ask their bank to un-link any cell phone numbers that are no longer in use, and check their account statements frequently for suspicious transactions.

Unauthorized transfers should be reported immediately to the bank and, if confirmed, a fraud complaint should be filed with the Costarican Judicial Investigation Organization (OIJ).

MAIL SERVICE TO USA AND CANADA DISCONTINUED According to a September 2, 2025, article in La Nacion, due to the duties that the Trump administration has imposed on imports from Costa Rica, los Correos has temporarily stopped accepting mail and packages addressed to anywhere in the United States or Canada. This includes letter mail. It has been reported that Aeropost is following suit with packages. The status of other mail forwarding services is unknown at this time. Check with your mail forwarding service provider.

Among all the scams and bad news, the ARCR Board of Directors wishes everyone a safe and happy holiday!

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CARIBBEAN CONNECTION

by Connie Foss



Bush Medicine

With the chaotic and uncertain state of things in the United States and Europe, Costa Rica is experiencing an increase in expats who are coming to live here, many of them sight unseen. I am often asked by these newcomers what it's like to live in Limon. Common questions are: Is it dangerous? And, is it expensive?

What concerns me most is that newcomers fail to ask about healthcare and tropical diseases. Over the years, I have witnessed several acquaintances who have either died from complications of an infection or disease, or who were forced to leave Costa Rica for emergency medical care in the USA because they had let an illness go too long untreated. Local remedies are plentiful, but



expats are usually dubious of using anything that doesn't come in a tube or pill bottle – or, of taking advice from anyone who isn't an MD.

HISTORY IN HERBS

So far, my articles have featured the language and history of the unique culture of Limon province. But there is one topic I have not yet mentioned: How did the people stay healthy without doctors, pharmacies, or hospitals? The answer is "Bush Medicine." The term literally means medicine from the leaves, fruits, and roots of local plants, better known as herbal medicine. However, the term "bush medicine" is commonly used by the local people in the Caribbean area, and for this reason, it is culturally significant.

The term "Bush Medicine" originated in Africa and was brought to Limon province by the first Jamaicans and Antilles islanders who settled here. I mention this

because "Bush Medicine" remains an important aspect of Caribbean culture, as ubiquitous as the unique language spoken here.

Here's a recent example. On October 18th, I boarded a bus headed for the Carnival parade in downtown Limon. I took a seat next to a man who wore the uniform of a tour guide in one of the national parks here. His name was Dario, and on the way to Limon, as we passed a village called Guayabo, Dario asked me if I knew of it, explaining that he often gave tours there. "It's a great place to show people the many animals and birds; there are hundreds of local bird species right here," which was why he had a case with a telescope with him. He continued, "Not just animals. Many trees and plants, too," he added.

At the mention of trees and plants, I asked him if he knew about bush medicine and how he had learned it.



His response proves my point. He smiled and looked at me: "Of course I know about bush medicine. I'm black."

I didn't say it, he did: Bush Medicine is a cultural identity marker for AfroCaribbeans.

Because many readers have never heard that term or of "Bush Tea", (tea, made from the leaves of herbs), I will share the story about my own ignorance and how I put two and two together and came to understand that bush tea is herbal tea and bush medicine is herbal medicine.

Some time ago, I was invited to attend a special brunch with some friends in Limon. When offered a choice of coffee or bush tea, I chose bush tea, mostly out of curiosity. What kind of bush was this tea made from? Rose bush, mulberry bush, hibiscus bush? Or perhaps it was that brand of bush tea in the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency stories by Alexander McCall Smith. When my tea arrived, I was disappointed to discover that "bush tea" just meant herbal tea. The particular bush tea I was served was the commercial variety, Lipton mint tea in a teabag.

BACK TO THE HISTORY LESSON

The book I often refer to for information about Limon, El Negro en Costa Rica, includes bush medicine as an important aspect of culture that was imported from the African diaspora to Costa Rica. It has been preserved throughout the generations of residents in Limon province, who brought their traditions of the healing arts from Africa, first as slaves in the Antilles and then as fishermen, farmers, and railroad workers in Costa Rica. Author Quince Duncan mentions three areas of this bush medicine: midwifery, remedies and cures, and snake bites. Having a baby, breaking a bone, getting an infection, and getting bitten by a snake were life and death events in the jungle wilderness; practicing and preserving this knowledge of bush medicine was a matter of survival.

Another book I have mentioned before is the folk history of Talamanca. Paula Palmer, a Peace Corps volunteer in Cahuita in the 1970s, recorded the stories of the local families in her excellent book, What Happen: A Folk History of Costa Rica's Talamanca's Coast (1979).

This book is a collection of stories told to Palmer by residents of Cahuita and the other villages of Talamanca. Their stories cover every aspect of their lives, including a chapter on using bush medicine for midwifery, remedies and cures, and snake bites.

Everything in Palmer's chapter on bush medicine – and then some – was repeated by Dario. Something else he told me opens the door to a future article about the Caribbean: Indigenous culture. The Jamaicans and the Indigenous people had to help one another because they were neighbors. The Jamaicans taught the Bribri and Cabécar people to use the AfroCaribbean remedies created from plants they imported from Jamaica, and the Indigenous people showed the Jamaicans how to use the plants native to Talamanca.

Dario's statement was true; this region is steeped in the knowledge and practice of bush medicine. Anytime I mention an ailment to a neighbor, I receive more advice than I wanted about which bush tea I need to drink for whatever is wrong with me. When I had Dengue Fever (my article in the previous issue of *El Residente*), I was advised to eat guayaba, papaya, and guanabana fruit and to drink tea from the leaves of these trees.

Here is a list of other remedies gathered from neighbors and, recently, from my friendly tour guide:

First priority: Eat garlic, turmeric, and ginger daily for general health and immunity

Drink daily: pipa and lime juice (Do you remember the popular song, "Put the lime in the coconut and drink it all up"?)

Remedy for anemia and dengue: guanabana (sour sop) – leaf and fruit; guayaba (guava) leaf and fruit; papaya leaf and fruit

Colds and Flu: Lemongrass Tea

Stomach problems: mint tea; Gastritis: the sap from a banana plant

Poultice for congestion: mango leaf compress

Anemia: Cucameca tea (the bark from a root)

Blood/kidney purifier/metabolism: sorosi, cilantro coyote, wild basil tea

Immune system: an infusion of thyme, oregano, and moringa leaves in olive oil; 1 tsp. per day

Diabetes: casco de venado (leaves) tea

High blood pressure: carambola fruit (star fruit) juice



Skin irritation: tea from the bark of the Indio Desnudo and Maduro Negro trees

Cancer: noni fruit (extract); young noni leaves may be eaten in salads

Last, but not least. My tour guide "bush doctor" told me that *Mikania Guaco*, a local plant used to treat snake bites, is currently being tested by scientists for its value as an antidote for snake bites.

(Apparently, there is no cure for snake bites other than anti-venom, but *Mikania Guaco* tea acts to slow down the movement of the venom through the victim's bloodstream until an antidote is located.)

BUSH MEDICINE TODAY

In this region, bush medicine is recommended over pharmaceutical drugs. Even the pharmacists here offer herbal remedies to customers who come in with an ailment, unless the customer specifically requests something else. There is a natural remedy for any and every ailment.

But prevention is always the best cure, especially if you don't have money to go to a doctor, even if there

is one available. Keeping the immune system strong is the most important thing, and a daily dose of bush tea can do no harm. The only catch: the fruits and leaves literally grow on trees, and you need to know what they are and where to find them.

A FINAL WORD

My "bush doctor" bus-mate is a professional tour guide in Limon. Many local residents make their living from taking tourists on tours to show them the animals, birds, plants, and trees that are native to this region. If you visit the Caribbean for the beaches, make sure you also experience a tour of the medicinal plants and fruits from the forests. The name of the tour company Dario works for is Alma Verde (8361 1924). Ask for Fernando.

A DISCLAIMER

This information about medicinal plants is just the tip of the iceberg. I am sure that readers have more to add, or perhaps some of this information disagrees with other sources. Please feel free to comment: cwfoss@gmail.com



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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 and pink-to-red appearance. Scientifically known as *Syzygium aqueum*, it is a species of brush cherry and a member of the botanical family *Myrtaceae*. Also 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 is known by various names, including Chambakka, Pani Seb, Jambu, and Panneer Naval, in different parts of the world. In many of those 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 medical practices.

The tree, which grows naturally in Central and South America, is cultivated for its wood and edible fruit. It grows to a height of three to ten meters, from sea level to 1600 meters in altitude, in wet, warm, and humid climates with rich, moist soil. The tree has a coarse, tough brown bark, widespread branches, and the leaves of this tree are long and narrow with a prominent shine. Thought to be originally from Asia, they grow in Malaysia, Indonesia, the 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, although astringent in taste when ripe. The unripe, green water apple possesses a characteristically sour or bitter taste and is often used for making pickles and chutneys.

Eaten raw, the water apple contains dietary fibers that aid digestion, is rich in vitamins C and A, and contains a large amount of the B vitamins. Furthermore, they contain a significant amount of trace minerals, including iron and calcium, 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.

Juguetes Para Niños En Navidad Toys for Tots



Donate a new unwrapped toy for a needy child this Christmas. Look for these boxes around San José and drop off a toy. Gracias.



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GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

by El Residente Staff



The First International Meeting of Ancestral Knowledge

Costa Rica has eight indigenous groups in twenty-four territories, and in the vast majority of them, cultural expressions exist in the areas of sports, games, and competitions. To capitalize on that interest, in 2018, the Cabécar Talamanca Cultural Sports Association was founded by Gamaliel Molina Díaz, AKA 'Gama', in cooperation with sisters and brothers from the Talamanca territory. Created with the support of the local government (in Costa Rica, territories have their own political government), the Association held the First National Indigenous Games festival with the objectives of supporting cultural preservation, strengthening of ancestral practices, fostering language development,

as well as providing healthy outlets for the groups' youth. The overall goal was to provide institutional strengthening, promote local entrepreneurship skills for development of the Indigenous people, increase social pride, and to advance the overall preservation of Indigenous knowledge.

The first Games occurred in 2018 with participants from more than thirteen territories attending, as well as some from Panama and Nicaragua. In 2019, the Games were held again; however, they were canceled in 2020, 2021, and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A downsized Games was held in 2023 and in 2024, with



the support of colleagues from Kabata Konana, an organization of local women, the highly popular Games were fully reestablished.

In the meantime, in Colombia, South America, the indigenous peoples were following a similar path; on August 24th and 25th, 2025, the Third Indigenous Games of Colombia were held in the coastal city of Cereté on the Colombian Caribbean, the cradle of the Zenú Indigenous people. It was attended by persons from at least eight communities and councils from the area, with about 80 athletes competing in such contests as bow and arrow shooting, log racing, tug of war, long-distance archery, mixed football, endurance racing, and several other events.





Also taking place in Cereté was the First International Meeting of Ancestral Knowledge. The gathering was attended by representatives from Colombia, Panama, and Honduras. Additionally, as the founder and a key person in the successful planning, organization, and conduct of all the Costa Rica Indigenous Games, Gama was specially asked to attend and represent Costa Rica.

During the meetings, each representative was allowed time to present information on the generalities of their culture and the indigenous games in their country. The aim was to promote the growth and evolution of the games through the sharing of ideas and joint analysis of similar difficulties which have been encountered. On his return, Gama reported that it was an environment of learning, brotherhood, and much more, saying, "This was a very successful trip and I was very proud to be a part of the gathering."

ARCR was honored to join with individuals, businesses, and groups to sponsor Gama and fund his transportation, lodging, food, and other expenses for the trip to Colombia. ARCR looks forward to the next opportunity to provide support to our friends and neighbors, the Indigenous communities of Costa Rica.

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OUT AND ABOUT

by Mitzi Stark



Summer Is Coming, and the Holidays Too

The good news is that "summer" is coming. No more toting around an umbrella and poncho or trying to get everything done in the morning. Soon we'll have all day to get out and about and stay dry. And with the holidays approaching, there will be lots to do. Although it's too soon for detailed holiday information, here are some annual events to set off the season.

FERIA HECHO AQUÍ

(Made Here Fair) is a huge gathering of products made in Costa Rica. Many are from small companies, and all are top quality. With over 100 displays, you will surely find gifts for friends and family, and maybe something for

yourself as well. There will be companies selling a plethora of products, from jewelry and leather crafts to mouse pads with cat designs, hot spicy pickled vegetables, ice cream, chocolate in many varieties, and all kinds of breads. There will be woven baskets in all sizes from Talamanca, mobiles in colorful designs made from recycled plastic bottles, hand-woven rugs and cushions, plus lots, lots more. The fair will run from Friday, December 5th, to Sunday, December 9th, in the Antigua Aduana building. Admission is free.

Because the Ministry of Culture and Youth sponsors this fair, there will also be fun entertainment programs. Last year, there were costumed characters roaming the halls, marionettes that greeted visitors, music and folk dancers,

and, of course, as always, there will be food available for lunch or a snack.

The building itself is worth a visit. It is the old customs shed located on Calle 23-25 and Avenidas 3-7 in San Jose, close to the train station. When it was built in 1891, everything came in by train. All the items for stores, such as furniture, dishes, saddles, hats, tinned food, and machetes, were stored in this building until the duties were paid, after which the buyers could pick them up. The building is 4,000 square meters and is made with "thousands of bricks." Today, as part of the Ministry of Culture and Youth, it hosts fairs and events of all kinds. See gamcultural.com for a list of activities.

FESTIVAL DE LA LUZ

(Festival of Lights) is the huge traditional Christmas parade with colorful floats and the best bands of Costa Rica, held in San Jose. There will also be folk dancers, gymnasts, and assorted marching groups. It takes place in downtown San Jose, and this year it will be held on Saturday, December 13th, starting at 6:30 PM. Sponsored by the city, this giant parade will go on for three hours and will draw huge crowds. For those not interested in joining the throngs, the good news is that it will be

broadcast on all of the major local TV stations. They will carry it live, along with choral music, interviews, and commentary on the history and makeup of the floats and bands. I never miss this parade. I watch it every year from the comfort of a recliner in my living room.

SAN JOAQUIN LIGHT DISPLAY

is an annual event organized by a group of neighbors in the Cruz del Norte area, next to the central church in San Joaquin de Flores. This charming community lies halfway between Heredia and Alajuela and is accessible by bus, car, or train. The light show is held every night in December, starting at 5:30 PM. Front yards, doorways, and window displays, some on traditional old-style houses, are lit up for the holidays. Everyone is welcome to take a stroll around the four-square block area. Come early and stop in at the church and chapel,





if they are open, or walk the beautiful grounds around the church while it is still light. People come from all over the metropolitan area to see the displays, which include nativity scenes, cozy fireside Christmas trees, woodland designs with plush animals, and grand light displays. Food stands offer different types of snacks, and the Central Park across from the church is a perfect place to sit with a snack and watch as kids and dogs romp in the plaza.

HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

Most communities sponsor holiday activities: parades, fairs, foods, and fun. San Ramon already has plans for *Festival Familiar Navideña* (Family Christmas Fair), which starts off with *Melcochas de Maria* (Mary's Candies) on the eve of Dec. 7th, with the tossing out of sugar candies. This is a celebration of the *Purisma*, or the conception of the Virgin Mary. The original idea came from gatherings around the homes of anyone named Maria, who would then toss out melcochas, caramel-like candies wrapped in thin paper. More recently, the municipality has held a reception in the park on the eve of the 7th to toss out the popular candy, making sure that no one is left out.



Christmas parades and *pasacalles* (walks), choral concerts, bands, walking tours of *posadas* (Christmas creche), and fairs are all part of the holiday festivals. December is summer, so let's get out and enjoy what the holidays have to offer. To find what's happening in your area, Google or search your town name plus Navidad 2025, for example, San Ramon Navidad 2025. If you live in Atenas or Grecia, add Costa Rica, or you will be directed to Christmas in Greece.

RIDE THE TRAIN

Trains, including the little trains that run on miniature tracks around the Christmas tree, are fascinating, as are the bullet trains of the Orient. But this is about the local trains that connect Cartago, San Jose, Heredia, and Alajuela. Although they only run during peak hours on weekdays, they offer a way to avoid traffic in the congested Central Valley. And it's fun and free for older adults. All routes end at the historic Atlantic Station in San Jose, where you can easily get a taxi, bus, or Uber. INCOFER, the national railroad agency, lists hours and routes at www.incofer horario. My friend and I will take the 4:00 PM train from Alajuela to San Jose to see all the Christmas lights and window displays, stop for coffee



and a snack somewhere along the way, and catch a bus back to Alajuela: a not-too-late and not-too-expensive evening out.

CHRISTMAS CANDY

We all remember the special candy that was part of the holidays when we were kids; candy canes, flat ribbon candies, and the multi colored lollipops that lasted all day so that you had to set them aside to eat dinner. Hard candies are traditional in Costa Rica too, and making sweets at home over a wood burning stove has a fascinating history.

In the colonial days, "sweets" were made using local ingredients, such as sugar, milk, crushed fruit, flavors, and natural colors. Today, we buy our candy from the supermarkets, much of it imported. But for those who cherish traditions, or simply enjoy the old-style hard candy in swirling colors, the butternut candy with its soft, liquidy centers, or the little lemon pillows, they can still be found in *pulperias* (neighborhood stores) or specialty shops. Since this is the 21st century, those old-style treats have met new-style shopping on the internet as *dulces navideños*. Check out *confites navideños* (Christmas candies.) A



business named Dulces Chavela in San Joaquín de Flores (near Heredia) is a candy factory and distributor where you can find your favorites.

Christmas in Costa Rica has changed along with globalization, and Christmas trees, red Santa hats, and antlers on cars are now part of Costarrican Christmas decorations. But the most important part, the posada, with the Holy Family, a cow and a donkey, are found in most Tico homes, along with enough tamales to last 'til New Year's. Ron Pope, a rum-spiced eggnog, and placing the figure of Jesus in his crib at midnight are other long-standing traditions. Posadas may be elaborate enough to fill the whole living room or a simple scene with only the principal figures. The three kings will be added on January 6th, and the posada may stay up until Candlemas Day in early February.

Years ago, I asked some of my older neighbors about Christmas in their childhood, when life was much simpler. "We had dolls made from bottles," one woman told me. "But we loved those dolls," she added with a laugh. A man told me of the toy oxen and cart he received as a present one year. It was a sardine can with two corn cob oxen. He played with it for days, but mistakenly left it outside one night, and a pig ate it. There is one old tradition that is still alive; not too long ago, I was offered a shot of warm guarro, an alcoholic drink made from sugar cane.

Don't forget, November 25th is the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**. Details are not yet available, but in years past the Women's Institute here, (INAMU), along with other women's groups, has held a parade in the center of San José to call attention to domestic violence and femicide. Many cities will also have programs or activities to advise women on their rights or what to do to promote peace in the home. If you are interested in taking part, look up [Dia Internacional Contra Violencia a la Mujer 2025](#) for times and places.

FFL

Every month (except January), there is a "Lunch at the Round Table." On the first Friday of the month, a group of expats meets for lunch at the El Dorado restaurant on Calle 42 (across from the national stadium) in the La Sabana district. The gathering is formally called the First Friday Lunch, sponsored by ARCR, and all are welcome. We're at the big round table in the back, and we'll be there on Nov. 7th and Dec. 5th.



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A DAY IN THE LIFE

by Allen Dickinson

How to Get There



When I moved to Costa Rica, I didn't realize how different things could be, and how those differences would cause me difficulties. Yeah, Ticos speak a different language, I thought, but how difficult could that be? Well, in itself it was, a little, but I handled that. What I didn't realize was how the different culture would manifest itself in a different way of thinking and doing things.

I was schooled from a young age to keep things in order; to use logic to establish a system and process to accomplish things in the quickest and easiest way possible. I was told that would lead to making my life easier. One example was using standard ways of giving/getting directions (like using the terms north/south/east/west, left/right, and street names and numbers, etc.)

When I grew up, everyone around me used that system; if I wanted to go somewhere, I would get directions that included the distance and direction to go, the signs I needed to find along the way, and other markers, like a house number. For instance, if I wanted to go visit my friend Joe, I would get instructions that might be something like: "Follow State Highway 123 East three miles. Look for a traffic light at the intersection of Beech Street. Turn right (South) on Beech Street. Go sixteen blocks and look for house number 2357 on the right."

I quickly learned that is not the Tico way; giving/getting clear directions of the kind I was used to is not a universal trait! To start, I had to accept that there is often no such a thing as a name for a street or road. And even if there is one, for certain there's not going to be a sign! And house or building numbers? You're kidding, right?

So, why not? Some say it's a cultural difference that arises from a past where most Ticos never traveled very far from the neighborhood where they were born and grew up. Generations of their family have always lived within a small radius of their home; why do they need addresses? So, when it comes to "directions," what the culture uses is what is most useful to them; what they and their neighbors use. And in the case of Costa Rica, its landmarks and known "things."

Their system isn't designed for outsiders like me. Tico directions are often framed in terms like: "In San Raphael, go 300 meters past the house with the rusty bicycle out front, turn left where the big oak tree used to be, look for the house with a goat tied in the yard, and it's two houses before that." (And, if I don't know where San Raphael is, good luck with finding it because there are at least a dozen San Raphaels in Costa Rica!)

Bottom line, I have learned not to be surprised if: A) the "directions" I receive bear no resemblance to anything I am familiar with, and B) I am not able to find the place the directions were for.

I was really flummoxed when adapting to my new country and trying to explain to those back home how to find me. They had some difficulty accepting the "address" for where I lived: translated from the Spanish it was, "Santa Ana, Cruz Roja, 100 meters West, 20 meters South, right 10 meters, then west 100 meters to the third yellow house." (There is no mention of the Y in the road and that one needs to bear to the right. Nor is it noted that there were other yellow houses on that stretch of the road or that one has recently been painted orange. That tidbit wasn't mentioned either, because everyone knows it used to be yellow.)

Anyway, that was the address I used for all my official communications. And it worked fine in Costa Rica. But those back in the USA were a bit unbelieving. I had one instance where a U.S. company refused to send some money to my Costa Rican bank because the bank address had no street number! No amount of explanation was sufficient.

Ticos usually have no problem with those kinds of directions, though in fairness, I have to admit that they can sometimes be confused too.

A few years ago, I came home to find a letter from the U.S. Social Security Administration lying on the floor of my garage. It had been thrown in through the gate by the mailman (really, he was just a guy who worked for the Correo and had a motorcycle). It was addressed to a Gringo that wasn't me, but apparently the delivery guy assumed I was him, since "we all look alike." Or, possibly he thought I knew the other guy 'cause we are both Gringos. Whatever the reasoning, my garage was close enough!

I didn't bother to read the name on the envelope and see it wasn't addressed to me, (I assumed it was since it was in my garage) but when I opened it I discovered it was a letter informing someone else and that they had been awarded Social Security payments, how much they'd be, when they would be made, etc. etc.. That's when I realized it was "delivered in error."

I examined the envelope and found it had a typical Costarican address on it, which seemed like it might be close by. So, I went looking to find the addressee. But, after spending the better part of an hour driving around asking people if they knew the name, showing them the address on the letter, and asking for directions, I decided that he was invisible; that nobody knew him or where the address was. It was then that I began to understand how the letter had ended up in my garage.

Since it seemed like a fairly significant letter, I assumed the guy would want it, so I tried other ways to find him: I frequented all the known local Gringo bars/hangouts several times at different hours of the day and night, asking if anyone knew him. Nobody did. I called the local Democrats Abroad (there is no corresponding Republican group here), the American Legion Post, a church with lots of Gringo members, a local expat organization, and anywhere else I could think of where he might be known. Nobody had ever heard of him. Of course, the Post Office was no help; they were the ones who threw the letter in my garage. Eventually, I gave up.

About a year later, I again found another envelope from the SSA, also addressed to the same guy, at the same address, on my garage floor. This time I didn't try to find him. (I always wondered if he got his money.)

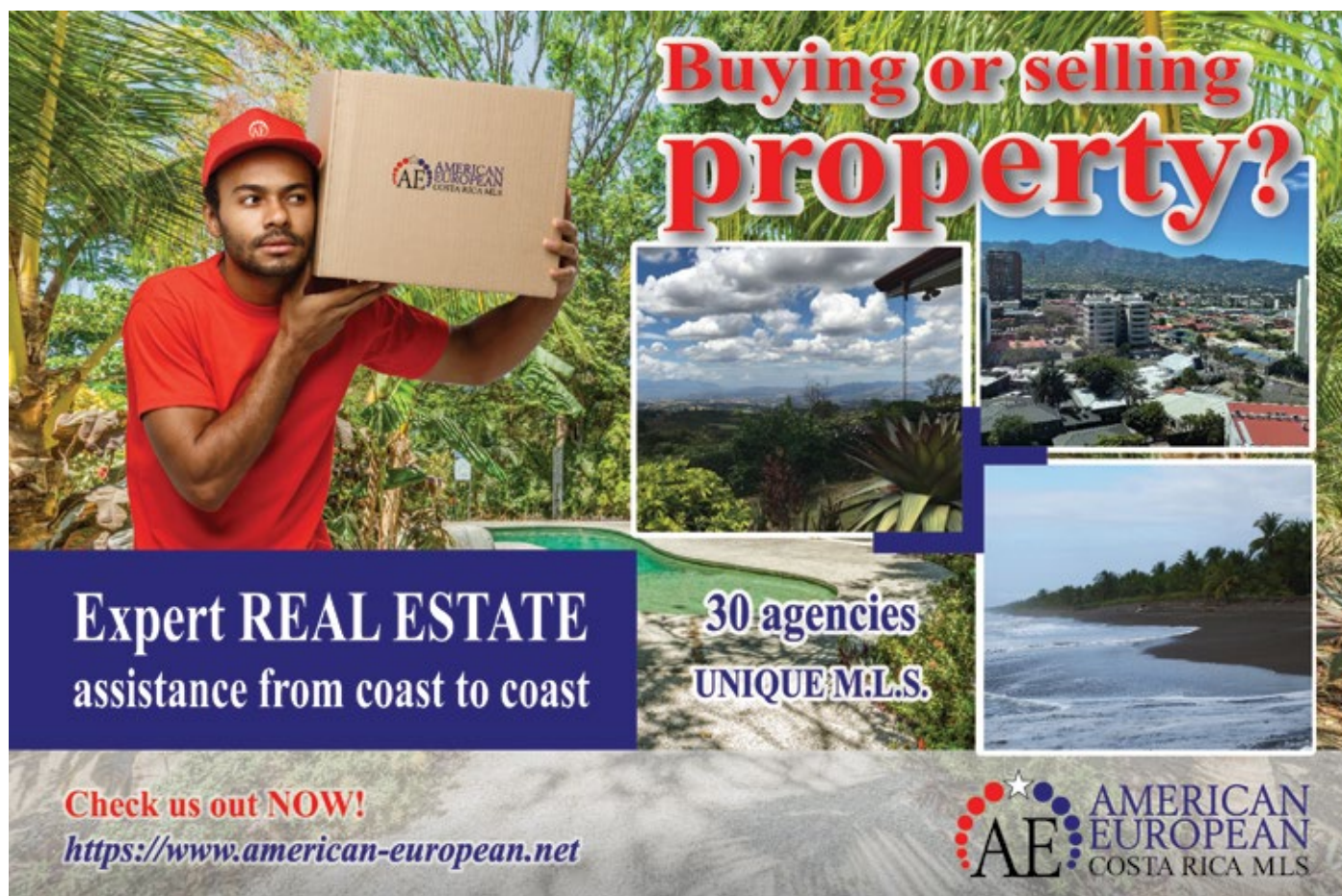
Finding one's way here can be frustrating to those of us used to addresses with street signs, building numbers, etc. Asking for help from a local will get you some

directions, but couched in terms often foreign to North American thinking (and in the end may have nothing to do with the actual location being sought anyway. But that's another tale.)

On the plus side, however, the use of WAZE has become popular and is good... if the business you want is listed in the WAZE system, and if you don't mind going the long way around to avoid traffic to get there. But it doesn't work so well for private addresses. There's always Google Maps, but I can never figure out where I am, let alone

how to get to the location I want to go. GPS addresses are becoming more common (particularly among pizza delivery guys), but I don't expect any of those to match the utility of the system I was raised with. At least not for a few more years. So, I'll muddle along.

And nowadays, if someone up north wants my address and is disbelieving by it not having a street name or number, I know they are going to be really confused when I tell them that my telephone number has eight digits!



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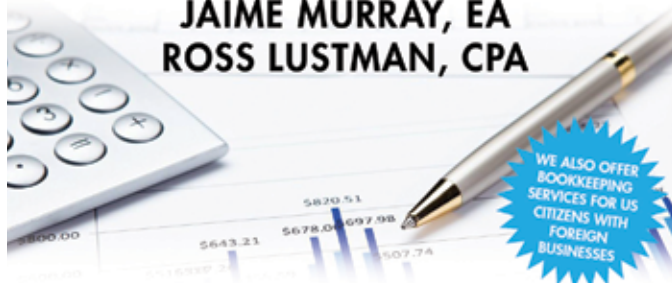
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Fraud prevention Department: (506) 2519-2117

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

United Kingdom Embassy

Phone: (506) 2258 2025

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

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., 12:30 – 4:00 p.m.

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

Email: costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Canadian Embassy

Phone: (506) 2242 4400

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

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

Email: sos@international.gc.ca

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

French Embassy

Phone: (506) 2234 4167

Address: A022, San José, Curridabat

Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Email: a.m.bafrcr@gmail.com

Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

Address: Calle 32, San José

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Email: emb.sanjose@maec.es

Emergency assistance: (506) 6050 9853

Venezuelan Embassy

Phone: (506) 2220 3704, 2220 3708

Address: San Pedro, Los Yoses, 50 metros antes de finalizar la avenida 10.

Email: embv.crsjo@mppre.gob.ve and embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com

Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

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Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet

Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares

Hectares × 2.47 = Acres

Kilometers × .62 = Miles

Centigrade × 1.8 + 32 = Fahrenheit

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(These are APPROXIMATE factors, NOT EXACT.)

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2025 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:

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, Czech Republic, Berlin, London, New York, Alpine France, and elsewhere are described in graphic detail. Available on Amazon

BRUISED BLOSSOMS: Stories Of Triumph, Stories

Of Trauma **Edie Bakker** (2023) Short stories about all sorts of unrelated people and one dog who were damaged in one way or another. It involves foster homes, guns, domestic violence, sex addiction, PTSD, mental illness, and a natural disaster. The stories tell about how, in some way, each grew from their experiences, even if only a little. Available on Amazon.com.

TANGLED IN RAZOR WIRE

Scott Brace (2024) TJ is a retired judge who embezzled millions from his last case and escapes to Costa Rica. Jake is a retired Special Forces operative. To recover money scammed from TJ, they kidnap a prominent politician and steal \$8 million in Bitcoin he was laundering for a drug cartel. Con men, crooks and the cartel all join the hunt for TJ, Jake and the money. Available on Amazon.

TANGLED GRINGOS **Scott Brace** (2025) TJ and Jake are back and in more trouble than ever. The FBI wants TJ, the Costa Rican OIJ is after Jake, and the drug cartel is chasing everybody. From Costa Rica to Panama to Nicaragua, a trail of bodies follows the two men as they bicker with each other and try to escape the jam they created. Corruption, greed, and violence power the story to its explosive conclusion. Available on Amazon.

BOOK 3: THE ATONEMENT OF THE ORB

(2022) **Marshall Cobb** (2022) (Sequel to Book 1: The Disciples of the Orb and Book 2: The Promise of the Orb) 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.

PURA VIDA: MAGICAL JOURNEY IN COSTA RICA Angelic Gonzalez (2025) In this delightful children's book, young readers join Liam as he sets out on a magical adventure across Costa Rica. Along the way he meets a gentle sloth, a playful monkey, and a cool little frog, each one sharing a lesson that helps him discover the meaning of pura vida, a phrase which celebrates kindness, gratitude, and finding happiness in the simplest moments. Available on Amazon.

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 creates 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.

BETWEEN HERE & PARADISE Kelee Love (2025) When a DNA test shatters everything she's always believed about herself, Laney does something radical; she leaves the life she's built and heads to Costa Rica in search of something different. It isn't about meeting someone new, it's about facing everything she's tried to forget. In the thick, humid air of the tropics, Laney unravels the woman she's been... and slowly becomes the one she was always meant to be. Available on Amazon or as an ebook at: <https://betweenhereandparadise.com>

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.

CRIME Robert Rahula (2025) A dying confession from an old man in a nursing home leads ex-detective Dan Landes and Panamanian Police Chief José Fernando into a twisted story of crime, including million-dollar real estate fraud, illegal Ibogaine retreats, prostitution, scams, international cover-ups, political pressure, tycoons shielded by high-priced lawyers and, of course, murder. Available in paperback, ebook, and audio book on Amazon, Audible, and iTunes.

THE DOPA PROJECT Robert Rahula (2025) What if there was a pill that stopped all the addictions: Gambling, porn, food, religion, shopping ... any kind of addiction. Dr. Disraeli Gaye has developed such a pill and it's on its way to FDA approval. Everyone wants in, from drug addicts to doctors to Wall Street. The only problem is someone is trying to kill the doctor. Available on Amazon, Kindle and Audible.

USED BITCOIN Robert Rahula (2025) A 15-year-old Panamanian boy has created the perfect meme coin. Not a scam, not a hoax, but a crypto token that people want and are buying by the millions. Everyone wants to know who the boy is... and steal his money. While cryptocurrency may be new, greed and murder are as old as time, and those looking for him don't care who they hurt to get it. Available on Audible, iTunes, and Amazon.

INAUTHENTICITY - A Dan Landes Mystery Robert Rahula (2024) What happens when AI hits the porn industry? Dan Landes is about to find out when a top porn producer is found dead of a heart attack in Panama. Who benefits? It turns out that everyone, including the FBI, has an axe to grind. Dan travels from Panama to Madrid to unmask who is really behind the world of AI porn. Available on Amazon, Audible, and iTunes.

WEIGHTLESS - A Dan Landes Mystery Robert Rahula (2024) An ambitious doctor opens a fancy weight-loss resort for the ultra-wealthy in Panama, hoping to kick start an Ozempic empire. The profits are big and Wall Street is hungry for a piece of the pie. But when the clinic's semaglutide cocktail turns out to be a recipe for murder, ex-detective Dan Landes investigates and uncovers a web of corporate greed. Available on Amazon, Audible, and iTunes.

THE ERIKSCHITZ PRINCIPLE Robert Rahula (2024) The smallest of quirks can set into motion huge events... or forestall them. This is a story of the synchronicity of events between a love-stricken victim of a romance scam, an overweight policeman, a warehouse full of illegal immigrants, one unlucky security guard, an expat American living in Panama, and the disabled lottery ticket seller who touches all of their lives. Available on Amazon, Audible, and iTunes.

BEHIND THE PEARLY GATES Robert Rahula (2021) What really happened in the Garden of Eden? Who was behind the serpent and the apple? Stories of what really happens in Heaven; why God created time, His friendship with Satan, and the rumors of a drinking problem. Also revealed is the meaning of life, whether sin exists, and the political power of the angels' unions. Stories the cherubim don't want revealed! Available on Amazon, Audible, and iTunes.

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 finds herself instantaneously 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.

BETWEEN OCEANS (BOOK 2) Roan St. John (2021) (Sequel to *Between Volcanos of the Expats on the Isthmus* series) Maya Warwick's idyllic life in Provence is disrupted when the CIA coerces her to return to Malpaís to gather intel on expats or face the consequences of her involvement in her husband's death. To her surprise, she discovers expat life is fraught with murder, theft, fraud, and assault. But her most startling revelation is the CIA's real agenda. Welcome to Malpaís, where nothing is what it seems. Available on Amazon.

EXIT PARADISE (BOOK 3) Roan St. John (2024) The third satirical novel in the "Expats on the Isthmus" series is set once again in the flyspeck of a country called Malpaís, promoted as the last undiscovered Central American paradise. Maya Warwick, and her pal Jax Wakefield, take us on a hilarious, sometimes tragic romp through expat life in a country that has only been on the map for twenty years. Available on Amazon.

PARADISE REDUX: Death On The Isthmus (BOOK 4) Roan St. John (2025) In the last book of the *Expats on the Isthmus* series, Maya Warwick thinks she has a grip on Paradise, until Roberto Carvajal re-enters her life. She soon discovers their internet romance

has global undercurrents of fraud, betrayal, and extortion. A searing, satirical, and humorous thriller about crime and corruption among the perfect images of the "last undiscovered Paradise." Available on 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:

FINDING RAINBOWS Edie Bakker (2025) This is a story of transformation from sadness to joy. This memoir, written for kids and adults, explores the joyful moments that occurred in my fascinating and exotic life. It culminates in things which are ongoing, suggesting ways to enjoy life now. Ordinary events and grand endeavors that made a lasting impression on me throughout my life, including some in Costa Rica, are highlighted. Available on Amazon.

A PHENOMENAL LIFE Edie Bakker (2023) Jesus Christ came to change the world over 2,000 years ago. This step-by-step study shows you how he can change you and make your life a phenomenal life! All the basics are covered, from how he can enter your life to how, together with him, you can change the world around you too! Available on Amazon.com Disponible en Español: **Una Vida Fenomenal**

GROWING UP IN STONE AGE NEW GUINEA: Losing Innocence In A Colonial World Edie Bakker (2022) The people in this story were cannibals and my parents were missionaries. Colonialism was the system in this spectacular rain forest region. Eventually, I would grow up and come to deeply value and respect the local people and, with National Geographic, help them save the rain forest. These vivid, raw childhood memories will pierce your soul with amazement. Available on Amazon.com.

UNDERSTANDING TICOS Edie Bakker (2024) A cultural handbook comprised of articles, first published in *El Residente* magazine, which were written to address issues that occur between Ticos and expats from America, Canada, and Europe. Edie's observations were thoroughly researched by other Westerners, (Gringos), Costa Ricans, and people

from mixed marriages involving both cultures. This handbook covers the issues that seem to matter most. Available on Amazon.

THE TRUTH OF CHASING RAINBOWS: Escaping Suburbia for the Dream Life in Costa Rica

Anne Beaudoin (2025) Raw and emotionally stirring, this book follows an ordinary woman's journey toward a new sense of freedom. Woven through the book are the joys and tribulations of co-owning a trout farm and a rustic bed and breakfast – with zero experience – in a rural community in the mountains of Costa Rica. Available on Amazon, Chapters/Indigo, and Barnes & Noble.

BENEATH THE PHILIPPINE SUN: A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Riley Jackson (2025) In mid-June 2024, Tezzy and Riley set out on a seven-and-one-half-month adventure, beginning in the Philippines as Tezzy's daughter prepares for her wedding. The trip included exploring the breathtaking landscapes and vibrant culture of the Philippines as Tezzy reconnects with her family. Also on the itinerary were forays to Thailand and Japan, providing unforgettable experiences along the way. 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.

MANIC DAWN: The Strange Adventures Of A Mad Father And A Loyal Son

Karl Kahler (2024) A son's intimate memoir of a troubled father explores Jerry Kahler's lifelong battle with a severe type of bipolar disorder. Often harrowing and sometimes hilarious, "Manic Dawn" reaches a shocking climax when Jerry shoots a police officer in Costa Rica and potentially faces life in prison. Available on Amazon and other platforms listed at <https://www.karlkahler.com/manicdawn>.

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 care giver "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

DIARY OF A CRYPTOCURRENCY ABDUCTION

Ryan Piercy and Allen Dickinson (2022) The complete, true story of Ryan Piercy's 2015 kidnapping and 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.

THE ACCIDENTAL EXPAT: A Costa Rican

Adventure Adelia Ritchie (2024) An unexpected sharp turn led the author to relocate to Costa Rica. She shares her learning curve in sometimes hilarious, but always direct, conversations, describing the challenges and rewards of starting anew, alone, and in her seventies. Filled with fun anecdotes, practical advice, and thrilling adventures, this biography is a must-read for anyone considering a similar move. Available at Amazon.

THE BRIBRI AND THE BRIDGE: Tales from Life with the Indigenous People of Costa Rica

Nanci Wright-Stevens (2025) After Nanci and her husband retired to Puerto Viejo they saw the plight of the Bribri and decided to form a charity to provide them support. Nanci's stories of her adventures bring to life an evolving culture filled with exotic animals and extraordinary people. Paperback on Lulu, Ebook on Amazon. 20% of profits go to The Bridge.

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. (Also presented as an eleven part blog on iheart radio starting in October 2025.)

ART, PHOTOGRAPHY:

COSTA RICA, A Nature Portfolio Charlie Doggett (2022) This book contains the best nature photos from the author's first seven years of living in Costa Rica. A coffee table book of memories of this Central American country. Contains 88 photos in multiple categories on 84 pages of premium matte photo paper, soft or hardcover. Available at [Blurb.com](https://www.blurb.com)

COSTA RICA BIRDS Charlie Doggett (2024) A selection of the best photos from thousands of Costa Rican bird photos taken over ten years. Use as a coffee table book to learn about Costa Rican Birds ,or to identify the birds in Costa Rica. 86 pages of 170 photos printed on premium quality paper in 8x10 inch soft or hardcover. Available at [Blurb.com](https://www.blurb.com)

PURA VIDA BUTTERFLIES Second Edition Charlie Doggett (2023) Over 345 photos of the 240 species of Costa Rican butterflies makes this the largest book of its kind available. Use as a coffee table book or for identification and research. Complete with an index of both common English names and the Latin scientific names. 132 pages. Available at [Blurb.com](https://www.blurb.com)

WIND SPIRITS! Charlie Doggett (2025) After ten years of photographing nature, this hard cover coffee table book contains some of the author's favorite photos of seashore and freshwater birds. Each photo has both the English and Spanish common name of the bird plus the location of where it was photographed. 48 pages of 49 species of birds. Available at [Blurb.com](https://www.blurb.com)

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 visualize the changes taking place to the natural and human environments of the country. Prologue 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

BURNING MAN 2: METAMORPHOSES Renee Michel (2024) A review of Ovid's Metamorphoses making connections to the current global climate crisis and the need to transform our economic, political, and

technological systems. 170 pages, large format landscape. Available on [Blurb.com](https://www.blurb.com)

TRAVEL, RELOCATION, CULTURE:

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.

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.

COSTARICA CHILLIN Riley Jackson (2023) Begun as a blog in April 2019 when I first visited Costa Rica and felt a strong pull to eventually move there. Documenting this life-changing experience, I aimed to share it with friends and family. The passion culminated in the creation of a book that captures the essence of my journey and allow others to experience the beauty and adventure of Costa Rica alongside me. Available on Amazon.

SAN JOSE COSTA RICA. A Stroll Through The Heart And Soul Of Costa Rica's Capital City Michael Miller (2023) A stroll through the “heart and soul” of Costa Rica's capital city, this unique first-person guide gives a new look at downtown San José. Learn about the museums, restaurants, theaters, and other important sites. A companion to *The Real Costa Rica*, this introduction to the country's history and culture will begin to show how and why Costa Rica is such an extraordinary country. Available at TheRealSanJose@gmail.com or at Amazon.

QUITO AND THE GALAPAGOS Adelia Ritchie (2025) In this full-color travel adventure, scientist-turned-storyteller Adelia Ritchie takes readers on a wildly entertaining and visually stunning journey through the wonders of Ecuador – from volcano-rimmed Quito to the surreal, wildlife-rich Galápagos Islands. With her lively group of expat adventurers, she encounters sea turtles, blue-footed showoffs, lava lizards, karaoke bars, marine iguanas, and a romantic boat captain. Available on Amazon

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

Authors have announced the following books are to be released soon. Watch for them.

THE ACCIDENTAL JOURNALIST: Where the Jungle Meets the Sea C.White Foss The second book in the *The Costa Rica Chronicles*, trilogy. The protagonist returns to Costa Rica with a foolproof plan – but within weeks everything falls through. Life takes an unexpected turn when a neighbor asks her to write a local story to send to the one-line newspaper, A.M. Costa Rica, and becomes their Caribbean correspondent. Available soon on Amazon

THE CHINADIARIES: My Year in Hunan C. White Foss Told through journal entries by the author, juxtaposed with the stories of her Chinese neighbor Emily, she is pulled into a non-stop roller coaster ride of experiences. As the author struggles to understand the Chinese people and their culture, her personal reflections provide a deep dive into China's painful past and a prediction of its future. Available soon on Amazon

COLLECTORS CORNER'S BODIES Helen Dunn Frame Jennifer Haslett Vandergriff, Lady Sarah Clark, and their spouses, operate Collectors Corner in London.

Jennifer finds David Weatherall's body in a back room. His ex-wife, their landlady, becomes a suspect because she inherits an apartment building that he owned in a nearby residential district. Then Jennifer discovers a second body. The sleuths work with the Bobbies to solve the homicides. Available on Amazon in February 2026.

ORDINARY GIRL: My Life in Extraordinary Times Barbara Wolfe-Johnson. A captivating memoir of opportunities, challenges, proud accomplishments, and heartbreaking loss. The book describes early abuse, dispiriting poverty, and unlikely careers with a NASA contractor, the U.S. Army, the CIA, and the United Nations. Set in Germany, Africa, Jordan, Iraq, and finally Costa Rica, her life is rich with adventure, joy, and great pain. Available at online book retailers in December 2025.

THE CELEBRITY JOINT The Story of a Restaurant and its Owner Mark Schreiber Entrepreneur Sheldon Haseltine's adventures focused on his famous Manhattan restaurant Joanna, patronized by the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and John Gotti. Also included are chapters covering his property cases here in Costa Rica, his education at the world's most expensive school in Switzerland and the Hotel School at Cornell. Available in 2026.

WORTH SEARCHING FOR:

There are literally hundreds of books, fiction and nonfiction about Costa Rica 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 first-hand observation, this social and cultural history describes how Costa Rica's economy, government, education, and health-care 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 has 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

If you have published a book and would like to have it included in the 2026 Bookshelf, article, send a short email describing the contents (limit 75 words), along with the author's name and year of publication, to: service@arcr.cr

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ALAJUELA NORTH

by Berni Jubb

May the Fast Pass Be With You



It's October. The hotel's quiet, the storms are loud, and like all innkeepers in the low season, I have too much time to think. Time to watch good films about failed revolutions ("One Battle After Another", Paul Thomas Anderson's fabulous tale about revolutions and generational differences), and time to observe that it now takes as long to cross Alajuela as it does to drive to San José. Somewhere between remembering reading "The Velvet Monkey Wrench" (a revolutionary urban planning concept from a generation ago) and watching One Battle After Another, a thought struck: it's time to do something real.

THE CRISIS IN THE STREETS

Our cities are choking. The daily commute between Heredia, Alajuela, Cartago, or San José devours hours. We

live in a renewable-energy paradise – 98% clean electricity! – and yet we crawl through quasi-gridlock.

Costa Rica as a whole has an estimated one million cars moving through its streets every day (in urban areas) – the third highest vehicle density in Latin America (231 cars per 1,000 residents) (Tico Times). The recent surge of Chinese-made cars – especially EVs – in Costa Rica is boosting the stock of private vehicles, which in turn places more pressure on urban roads. Changing vehicle type is thus not a solution.

Apps like Uber and DiDi offered temporary relief but have instead multiplied the number of vehicles, not reduced them. Bus ridership is collapsing as the middle class expands and buys more cars. We're building trains that collide with cars (once in 2016, it even collided with itself) and bus lanes that

evaporate in chaos. Have you read the news today? Entire bus lines (not lanes but LINES) are disappearing in Costa Rica as Uber and private transportation takes over. And the congestion increases.

Unlike the 1960s, we can no longer pretend that buses or trains will solve the problem. Trains are an imaginary solution when nobody knows what to propose. The truth is, Costaricans love freedom of movement, not the timetables of bureaucracy, and that's why Uber thrives – not only because it is cheaper, but because it feels more personal, direct, human.

Costa Rica has a habit of turning good ideas into great revolutions, and with the country's scale, spirit, and history, it could become the first country on Earth to change the paradigm. We have already been messengers to the planet about peace, clean water, and national parks. Maybe now is the time we take on traffic.

A LESSON FROM YELLOWSTONE

In 1969, two young Costarican students – Mario Boza and Álvaro Ugalde – visited Yellowstone National Park. Inspired, they asked a radical question: Why not here? With President Daniel Oduber's later support after Manuel Antonio removed his objections (that is ANOTHER story), they turned that idea into the world's first coherent national park "system" in the developing world.

From Poás and Santa Rosa to Corcovado, Costa Rica built a living, breathing network of parks that now covers more than a quarter of the country. That act of imagination redefined our national identity and our economy. Is it time to apply that same audacity to our cities?

Oh yes!

A LESSON FROM THE VELVET MONKEY WRENCH

Back in 1973, as a curious young reader, I stumbled upon The Velvet Monkey Wrench by John Muir – not that John Muir, the other one – a visionary engineer and humorist who imagined a world where machines existed to serve people, not the other way around.

Applied to cars, traffic, and urban life, Muir's vision proposed smaller, lighter, simpler vehicles; community-controlled transport systems; cities designed around pedestrians and shared mobility instead of private ownership and parking lots. He imagines neighborhoods

powered by renewable energy, where technology supports local autonomy and human connection.

"In the future, people won't own cars – they'll just borrow a clean one that works and return it before it smells like French fries." aka "Automotive Communes" (I really do not think he even said that last as there are no copies of the book scanned or online... I believe AI must have made it up, as I searched diligently for quotes, but I liked the quote, so gosh darned, I'm keeping it. Likely years from now, this quote will show up as real in someone else's research as they examine the success of Costa Rica's traffic revolution.

To be clear, this proposal does not eliminate private transport; it just allows it to actually go places.

The Velvet Monkey Wrench made a mark on me. Half a century later, that vision suddenly feels possible – even inevitable here in Costa Rica, where technology, clean energy, and cooperative values already coexist.

It will depend on the political will to trigger it and Costarican exceptionalism to carry it through; our national knack for doing the impossible (no army, clean water, national parks, etc).

A TEN-YEAR MOBILITY PLAN?

Here's the idea: shared, autonomous, electric fleets, operated as public cooperatives, one city at a time. It could take longer and probably will.

HOW IT WOULD WORK

To enter a city, you'd park your private car at a peripheral hub – solar-roofed and with chargers humming away – and step into a waiting autonomous electric vehicle. That car takes you downtown, drops you where you please, and continues on its way, ready for the next passenger.

Those cars don't care where they pick you up or drop you off; Artificial Intelligence (AI) manages the flow and balance, and renewable power fuels the fleet. To leave the city, tell the App to bring transportation to you. At night, the vehicles would automatically redistribute themselves from clustering in or near cities during the day to charging stations and parking hubs in the evening.

Yes, there are lots of bits and pieces needed to fill out this idea – rights of residents within city lines, rights of through traffic, rights of existing electric cars, rights of motos (none given to any with over 80dB exhausts!) Visionaries don't

need so many details – we have urban planners to fill in the potholes in the idea.

HOW TO ACCOMPLISH THE VISION?

Today, we have the missing link that didn't exist way back when – now operating in San Francisco, Phoenix, and Austin, TX, are autonomous, driverless cars that understand (via AI) how and when to distribute themselves according to need.

What about those who don't own a vehicle? The same well-designed bus system that presently exists would remain in place and would transfer those who need it in and out of the central areas. And for those who don't live near a bus line, taxis would still operate outside of the cities.

Those who are "just passing through" (aka, a "Fast Pass") would get a cheap rate and use a new/updated one-way system which would create an easy and quick way to pass through the community. The first step is to increase traffic light synchronization and accelerate the traffic flow north/south and east/west. It is something that already works in San José (you can pass six traffic lights at a time on Avenida 2 or returning on Avenida 8. Alajuela has no light synchronization, so that number is one or two traffic lights, if you are really lucky.) Years ago we were sitting in a muni meeting and overheard the programmer from San José came in, looked around, and went away muttering something about "it's complicated".

As in London and Stockholm, Costa Rica's cities could adopt electronic congestion pricing – a virtual boundary around San José, Heredia, Cartago, and Alajuela would be established, and a vehicle deviating from the "Fast Pass" routes would trigger a digital toll – not as punishment, but as a gentle and expensive reminder that clean air and road space has value. Those who want can still drive in a city, but they'll pay the true cost of that choice. And there would be special rates for those who have addresses within the city boundaries, of course.

THE HUMAN TRANSITION

So what about the taxi and Uber drivers – the thousands who rely on the daily grind? Have you noticed how quickly ride-share has eaten up taxi drivers and bus lines in Costa Rica?

Here's where Costa Rica's cooperative DNA shines. Those same workers can become the new backbone of the system: fleet stewards, technicians, trainers, cleaners, safety monitors, and mobility guides. Some will operate

accessibility vehicles; others will assist the elderly or manage last-mile deliveries. In short, they move from "drivers" to co-owners: same skill, new dignity.

And for those persons who don't know where in the city their destination is located, there are current taxi and Uber drivers who know the streets better than any AI that could retain their traditional roles; a cadre of vehicles with human drivers who understand traffic patterns, customer service, and the small courtesies that make human transport humane, who would be available at the hubs and within the cities.

For those ready to retrain, institutions like INA and the universities could create targeted programs with government incentives. No one left behind; everyone re-skilled. This area will need a lot of work to make a complete entity, but it would be worth the work.

FREEDOM, NOT PROHIBITION

Let's be clear: Costaricans love their cars. Their Sunday drives. Their spontaneous beach runs. That won't change. Private car ownership remains sacred. But daily urban driving becomes optional – intelligent, intentional, not habitual. The family car travels less and stays home as much as possible, making it cleaner, cheaper, and more useful for weekend escapes to the beach. The goal isn't to ban cars, it's to make driving inside cities a conscious choice.

What we need now is leadership. In the late 1960s, Boza and Ugalde had the vision; a few years later, Oduber committed to making it real. They lucked out, too, in that Costa Rica is a great place to visit, and we lucked out in attracting foreign visionaries like Dan Janzen and others who helped put the park system together. And TOGETHER, they turned an idea into a national legacy, the park system that redefined our country.

WE HAVE LITTLE CHOICE

We stand at a similar crossroads today. The truth is, the old math doesn't work anymore. As the middle class expands bus ridership shrinks. Trains are of tiny help, and bus lanes are nonexistent or just not working when people are not interested in them. We're simply out of road.

Somewhere out there is the next leader – one who will see that transport reform is not just about roads and vehicles, but about quality of life, social equity, and national identity. Someone who can summon the same imagination, the same political will, and help Costa Rica take its next evolutionary step.

THE ALAJUELA MODEL

Let's start small – right here in Alajuela; big enough to matter, small enough to manage. Imagine COMA – no, that's not the state of our traffic but "Cooperativa de Movilidad Alajuelense" – a joint venture between the municipality, ICE (our national electric company), local car-rental companies, and the transport syndicates:

ICE/CNFL, etc., provide renewable charging infrastructure.

The municipality sets policy, safety, and one-way flow.

Car rental firms handle fleet maintenance.

Taxi and Uber drivers become fleet stewards.

Local banks manage billing through smart transit cards.

Profits circulate locally – improving roads, lowering fares, and funding community programs.

Residents become members, not customers.

If it works here, it scales to Heredia, Cartago, and San José – four smart, self-managed hubs. A model for the world.

The good downside is that if it doesn't work in Alajuela, it cannot make it any worse!

TURNING THE VELVET MONKEY WRENCH

In the late 1960s, Boza and Ugalde imagined a national park system. Oduber made it real. Their courage gave Costa Rica some pretty major bragging rights.

Now we need another act of imagination – and another leader with the courage to make it real. Someone who sees transport reform not as a construction project but as a social transformation. This isn't just about traffic. It's about time, air, dignity, and sanity.

If Costa Rica could redefine conservation, it can redefine mobility.

Let's turn the wrench one more time.

Berni Jubb is a long-time Costa Rica resident, hotel owner, and sometime philosopher of traffic (which usually takes on the form of cursing the last moto to attempt suicide in front of his car). His earlier essay, Reserva Costa Rica, imagined the entire country as a functioning ecosystem where technology and nature cooperate, not compete.



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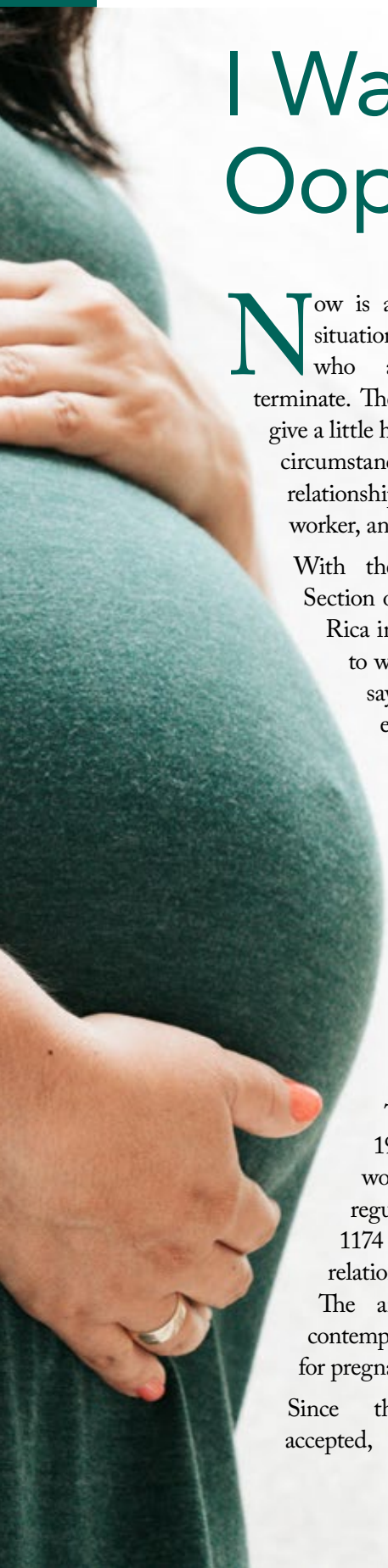
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LEGAL UPDATE

by Romulo Pacheco

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



Now is a good time to review the situation of the pregnant employee who an employer wants to terminate. The first thing I need to do is give a little history about how this special circumstance came into effect and the relationship between a maid, or other worker, and their employer:

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

Then, in the Labor Code of 1948, the relationship between workers and employers became regulated by articles 1169 to 1174 of the Civil Code, written in relation to the renting of services. The articles, however, did not contemplate any type of protection for pregnant workers.

Since then, the internationally accepted, fundamental dispositions

that have the intention of protecting women, as it is in the case of Convention For The Elimination Of Any Type Of Discriminations Against Women signed by the United Nations on 18 December 1979, were adopted and made a part of all Costarican Legislation since 1984.

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

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

So, what this means is that unless an employer who wishes to fire a pregnant worker has a just and rightful cause, and has notified the Labor Authorities, they should be prepared to reach into their pocket!

The law is designed to assist the newborn and mother in having a safe birth and to provide them with sufficient time necessary for this purpose. Remember that neither you nor I would be here without the law for women becoming pregnant; the law of nature.

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

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LEGAL UPDATE II

by El Residente Staff



New Digital ID Cards

Costa Rica has officially begun issuing its new digital identification system cards, also known as cédulas. The new cards will replace the old design cards, also known as DIMEX cards. The new digital card will serve as a resident's online identity, storing personal information in secure databases. It enables holders to access digital services, verify their identity, and interact with institutions electronically. Officials noted that the initiative is part of a broader national effort to modernize Costa Rica's identification system (Cost Rican nationals will also be receiving a new design digital card) as well as to improve verification of foreign residents' identities.

The transition from the traditional printed DIMEX to the new digital version has been underway since at least July 2024. Those who have renewed their residency cards since that date have been issued the updated versions. The new design contains standard details, including name, date of birth, and country of origin, and features a QR code that links directly to the DGME website, allowing for instant authentication of the document.

As part of the change, residents are instructed to save an image of their new Digital DIMEX on a device such as a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. That is, take

photos of both the front and back sides of the new card and save them on their device. A digital copy of the card will be sent to the holder via email.

The digital format is expected to become mandatory after 2025. However, both the current and the new digital version will remain valid during the transition period. All requirements, fees, and validity periods stay the same as those for the old printed version. Authorities recommend beginning the renewal process at least three months before expiration to avoid fines or complications with residency status.

It should be noted that the process for obtaining the new card is different for foreign residents than for nationals; expatriates must apply for the new card through the General Directorate of Migration (DGME) at dimex@migracion.go.cr.

You must send a photo or your Dimex information.



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ON THE GRID

by Ivo Henfling

Nine things I hate about bad landlords



We stopped doing rentals at GoDutch Realty many years ago. Selling a property is often easier than dealing with bad landlords, bad tenants, complaints from both parties, and being caught in the middle. And all for very little money. Ending handling rentals was a sacrifice because realtors don't receive a regular paycheck at the end of the month (sometimes many months), so the rentals helped pay the bills. But doing rentals created more problems than most will even believe. I'll never recover the many hours I have spent in court defending landlords. (I'll save the discussion of bad tenants for another article and confine this to bad landlords.)

The truth is that no matter if you rent in Costa Rica or elsewhere, you'll find bad landlords. Unfortunately, many fail to appreciate a good tenant when they have one. Especially when a tenant takes good care of their property and pays on time, finding a good landlord can be as difficult as it is for a landlord to find a good tenant.

So what can you do if you have a bad landlord and are tired of dealing with them? You can take one of two steps:

1. You can buy a chainsaw and kill them. (I don't recommend that.)
2. Buy a house. (Life is easier when you don't have to deal with a landlord anymore. If that is your choice, contact us.)

BAD LANDLORD CATEGORIES

Bad landlords can make life very difficult for both themselves and their tenants. Basically, there are two categories of bad landlords:

1. Those who can not allow the tenant to enjoy the property they rent and interfere in everything the tenant does.
2. Those do not deal with problems, don't repair things, and hope the problems will go away.

A BROKER'S PERSPECTIVE

As a real estate broker, I have dealt with many bad landlords and have grown tired of them. But instead of pulling my hair out, I sat down and made a list of nine kinds of bad landlords:

1. The worst one is the landlord who will not return the security deposit. Even though the tenant has fulfilled the term of the agreement and has returned the rental in the same good condition as it was received, they refuse to refund the deposit.
2. Another is the bored landlord who drinks himself silly by noon, then tries to socialize with the tenant.
3. An equally vexing landlord is the one who has a son who loves to play his favorite music as loud as he can late at night or on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Complaints change nothing.
4. The fourth type is the oversexed landlady/landlord who seeks "special favors" and/or hits on the tenants at all hours.
5. Next is the landlord who will not fix the roof... until the whole soggy ceiling comes down and messes up all your furniture.
6. The landlady who complains about tenants having too many visitors and informs them that their visitors should leave by 10:00 pm.

7. The landlord shows up with his gas-powered weed whacker/ power mower/chainsaw/leaf blower at 6:00 am to do the yard work or chop branches.
8. Then there is the landlady whose family uses the tenant's parking spot all the time, so the tenant has to leave their car on the road.
9. Finally, the landlord says there is hot water in the kitchen, but there isn't. (An example of why you should check everything BEFORE you sign the lease.

Nonetheless, there are many excellent landlords – those who appreciate a good tenant and take good care of them. If you find one, make sure to let them know; it'll make them feel good.

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

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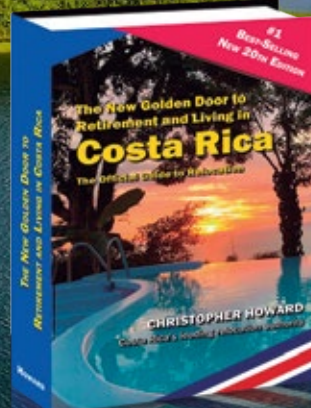
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Scam Alert

by El Residente Staff

Unexpected Letter, Text, or Email from the U.S. Supreme Court?

THINK SCAM FIRST

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is warning the public about a new government imposter scam. This scam comes in the form of an official-looking letter identified as a “certificate” on fake U.S. Supreme Court letterhead using forged signatures of U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. This high-pressure scam urges individuals to cooperate with the named SSA official, pressuring them to send money or share personal information.

The scam letter is personally addressed to the recipient and claims they are a primary suspect in connection with legal proceedings and criminal charges. The letter may use the real name of an SSA executive and claim that the proceedings “are conducted with the oversight of Attorney General Raúl Torrez” of New Mexico. The letter further claims that according to findings from SSA and the incorrectly named “Drug Enforcement Agency,” the recipient may have been subjected to identity theft, noting that their Social Security number (SSN) has been compromised. The letter states that SSA will issue a new SSN.

The scam letter also indicates that the U.S. Supreme Court requested financial institutions to freeze all the recipient’s assets and urges full cooperation with the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The letter falsely claims that the recipient cannot maintain a balance exceeding \$10,000 in any banking institution or hold \$80,000 – \$100,000 in any investments or financial institution. The letter ominously closes by stating, should the recipient encounter any difficulties in safeguarding assets, the recipient will bear full liability for any losses incurred following the suspension of their SSN. Scammers most likely will follow up with text messages or telephone calls.



“On every level this letter is completely false,” stated Michelle L. Anderson, Acting Inspector General. “Scammers continue to exploit fear and confusion by impersonating government agencies and officials. These criminals are falsely accusing an individual of a crime and using federal agencies and federal officials to try to scare and legitimize their scam - if you get this type of letter, rip it up and report it. Be aware of any variations of this scam.”

PROTECT YOURSELF

Beware of scammers pretending to be from SSA or another government agency.

Stop. Think scam. Talk to someone you trust before paying.

Visit ssa.gov/scam to report Social Security-related scams and learn more.

Stay up to date on the latest scam warnings and tactics by following SSA OIG on [X](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Visit the [Federal Trade Commission](#) for consumer protection tips.

SOUTHERN LIVING

by Adelia Ritchie

An Unexpected Gift

When a Tico smiles at you, the sun comes out.

Today was the day to run a few errands in town, pay my *facturas* (bills), hit the ATM, and grab a few groceries. It's always a fun adventure, no matter what, and I eagerly look forward to whatever surprises may befall me. I was not disappointed this day.

Because it was Friday and close to the first of the month, there wasn't a parking space to be had at any bank. The elderly *parqueo* (parking lot) attendant waved me away, with a huge smile (is he flirting with me? I wondered), and it felt like he was inviting me to "come back later." I giggled to myself.

The next adventure was having to negotiate the jam-packed one-way streets for about 30 minutes, until I could worm my way two blocks over to the CoopeAgri for a kilo of Epsom salts for the garden (known in Costa Rica as *sal inglaterra*, or English salt. I have no idea why it's called that).

Again, no parking available.

I should know better than to come to town on a Friday morning. After circling a few more times, I gave up and decided to park behind the Aeropost/DHL office, where the friendly attendant sports a yoga-ball stomach and struggles to lift the gate to let me in. "Buen día, senora," he smiled, grinning and staring a hole in my brain while handing me the little ticket with 10:45 scrawled on it. I couldn't stop myself from smiling back, responding, "Buen día! Cómo estás?"



Thankfully, there was a line of cars behind me waiting to enter, and I was spared a more lengthy conversation.

While I was in the neighborhood, I stopped at the DHL office to see my rep, Jordi, the most precious young man I've ever encountered, except for every other precious, adorable, handsome, smiling Tico guy in town. "Hola, Jordi! Cómo estás?" I'm embarrassed because I lost my ID card and don't remember my DHL address!" His smile was a beacon of sweetness and delight at seeing his favorite customer again (I'm sure this is true). "No problem! Let's get your account updated." My heart was pounding, wanting to be just a little closer to his heart.

Leaving the DHL office a random elderly Tico stopped me on the street to say, "Pura vida!"

Yeah, right. They see my blond hair and think I'm a sucker

for a friendly greeting. Then he asked me if I spoke English? "Yes," I said. "Y hablas Español?" "Sí, un poquito." In Spanish, he peppered me with questions – Where are you from? Where do you live? It's good that you are learning Spanish because you live in a Spanish-speaking country." And more. Always with an expression that looked like he was barely able to keep himself from hugging me.

That's when I realized I had been speaking in Spanish with him – an actual conversation without even thinking about it. With smiles and solid eye contact. We said goodbye and walked away grinning, feeling good, and loving the *pura vida*.

Never, back in my home country, had I ever experienced anything remotely like this. Yet, this is normal behavior here. And I love it! I wallow in it.

Next stop, the *pulperia* (convenience store), to pay my gas and electric bills. Joaquin, the proprietor, has been slow to warm up to me, and he speaks no English whatsoever. But he will try to stifle a grin when I massacre his language, yet I keep trying because he's my milk and beer guy! Today I sensed a breakthrough. I told him that I needed to pay my facturas, and I also needed *una caja de huevos* (literally, a box of fifteen lovely brown eggs). This is how it went:

ME: "Buen día! Cómo estás! Necesito una caja de huevos, por favor, y pagar mis facturas." I prided myself on my correct pronunciation, but now I know that I shouldn't have felt that way. Not at all.

HIM: "Huevos?" (Like, "what's that?")

ME: "Si, huevos, por favor. Una caja."

HIM: "Ah! Huebos!" (At last, meaningful communication. He was trying to show me by pursing his lips just so that I needed to hit that "V" sound with a bit more lip, to sound more like, but not exactly like, a "B".)

And then he laughed, wished me *pura vida*. I left the store grinning like a drunken sloth.

I was still grinning when I arrived back in my own driveway. Grinning BIG. I can't describe the feeling, but it's partly being welcomed – as an immigrant, as (an elderly?) woman, being treated with curiosity and respect – feeling hugged without ever being touched. Even by strangers. Let me tell you, it's a beautiful thing.

Ticos have this remarkable gift, and it seems to me that they are constantly on the lookout for someone to give it to, or at minimum, to share it with. All it requires is for one to notice the gift is being offered and to accept it by looking deeply into the eyes of the giver and simply smiling back.

It's electric. To make a connection like that with a perfect stranger is thrilling and uplifting. The only meaning is, "I wish you *pura vida* and happiness forever and thank you for sharing this brief moment with me."

Adelia Ritchie is an editor, author, scientist, and technical writer. Her recent book, "The Accidental Expat: A Costa Rican Adventure," was inspired by her adventures in setting up a household in the Southern Zone, where she currently resides.



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ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE

by Christine Monteith

Christine vs. The Green Sheen

I welcome today's clear sky and take it as a signal to lay down my battle-weary tools: a vinegar-filled spray bottle, scrub brush, and microfiber cloths. The clear, warm day indicates the imminent arrival of the Dry Season. It initiates a temporary truce between me and "The Green Sheen."

In the years that I've shared stories of my life in the Southern Zone, I usually reflect on the awe of the discovery of various challenges. With good fortune, a little patience, humor, and the goodwill of friends and neighbors, my husband and I have overcome many hurdles.

However, over the eight years that I've enjoyed life in our retreat, I continue to face an unyielding foe. The constant state of moisture during the rainy months (April to November), which leads to a condition that I label as "The Green Sheen." That's where every outside surface (flat, vertical, smooth, and rough) attracts a thin layer of mildew. The constant rain, interspersed with just brief spans of sunshine, creates perfect conditions for pollen-laden moisture to coat the roof, terrace tile, metal railings and stairs, painted walls, sliding screens, and windows.

There are upsides to this tropical humidity. Elsewhere in the world, my fine, straight hair drops thinly from my scalp to my shoulders. Here, my hair is full and bouncy with a hint of a wave! Elsewhere, my skin feels tight and itchy, requiring a heavy slather of emollients. Here, my skin feels soft and plump with just a light cover of lotion.

On another level, the nourishing rain filters through the soil and into the roots of all the trees and plants that provide us with a delicious variety of fruits and vegetables.

The freshwater that pours from the skies into wide rivers and crooked creeks eventually feeds into the Golfo Dulce. This rainwater dilutes the saline content of the ocean water. The mild salinity provides a comfortable

medium for marine mammals like dolphins and tiger sharks to calve their young. As the pods find refuge, we enjoy observing their journey to the back of the gulf. It is spectacular to watch as dolphins and whales splash in the rolling swell.

On a more personal level, it's not like I'm a clean freak that feels compelled to maintain every surface antiseptically clean; it's just that when we moved into our newly-built home, the fresh paint was blemish-free. But it isn't easy to keep up that aesthetic level.

There is, however, something to be said about being a cleanliness freak. Not long after we moved in, I was rummaging around in the back of the closet for something and my hand encountered something fuzzy. As I warily pulled the object toward me, I discovered that a leather belt had grown a green furry coat. Ugh!

As the years have passed, I've discovered techniques to mitigate the situation. One tip is not to store any leather items here. Leave those things in the accommodating homes of relatives in North America.

As for "The Green Sheen" on the terrace tile and the metal stairs, I find that if I don't look down, I don't see it. Oh, I still wipe down the sliding screen doors at least once a week because if I don't, the mildew layers up so much that I can barely see outside. I have learned that it's not what I can see in the microscopic that's important, it's what I can enjoy in the panoramic; the delightful view of cloud-dotted mountains, surf-washed coastlines with their green-tangled jungle, and the fiery sunsets.

And there is something else the Rainy Season has taught me; to not to sweat the details.

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

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AMERICAN LEGION COSTA RICA POST 10

Website: www.alcr10.org - Facebook: [amlegioncr](https://www.facebook.com/amlegioncr)

Matthew Lopes 8968-6935

Open to NATO Country Veterans

Meets at Yakky's Restuarant nd Bar, located on Calle 134 in Escazu Centro, at 12:30 PM on the first Thursday of the month.



MARINE CORPS LEAGUE COSTA RICA

Website: marinecorpsleaguecr.com - Facebook: [mcleaguecr](https://www.facebook.com/mcleaguecr)

Andrew "Andy" Pucek: (506) 8721-6636

Meets 2nd Saturday of the month, Tap House Restaurant, City Place, Santa Ana, 11:00 am

Helping indigenous children & schools - Keeping up with Veterans Benefits & Issues - Helping veterans and their families

PLEASE HELP US HELP OTHERS

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.costaricaaa.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.costaricaaa.com

► American Legion Post 10

Meets at Yakky's Restaurant and Bar, located 50 meters NE of the corner of Avenida 30 & Calle 134, Escazu Centro, at 12:30 PM on the first Thursday of the month. Open to all NATO veterans. For more information call Matthew Lopes, 8968-6935

► 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 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 women 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, 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

► 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.

► 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@pwnocr.com The PWN website is: <http://www.pwnocr.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.

► The Umbrella Club of Costa Rica (formerly Newcomers of Costa Rica)

Is a group for English speaking women living in Costa Rica to share experiences, ideas, common interests, and to promote fellowship among members. The core of the Umbrella Club is the Interest Groups which meet monthly. There are two to three general meetings a year. There are no dues. For more information, contact:

Grace at 2249-1208 or 8369-7992, or send an email to: jaygracefernandes@gmail.com or Kelly at: kclayton2003@yahoo.com

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:

22 November, Saturday,
Teacher's Day Observance

1 December, Monday,
Abolition of the Army Day,
Non-compulsory Payment

25 December, Thursday,
Christmas Day National
Holiday

31 December, Wednesday,
New Years Eve Observance

Tips and Tricks for a Pura
Vida Life: A Seminar,
November 27 & 28
(Thursday/Friday)

Location; D' Sabana Hotel,
San Jose. Contact ARCR
Office for reservations.

**ARCR office will be
closed from Wednesday,
December 17th at 3:00p.m.
and will reopen on
Wednesday, January 7th,
2026 at 8:00 a.m.**

Definitions:

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
Rica workers.

NON-COMPULSORY PAYMENT HOLIDAYS:

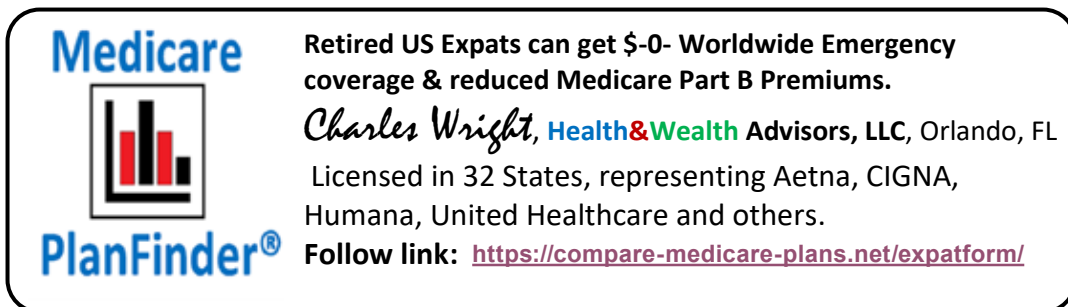
These are official holidays,
however the employer is
not required to pay their
employees double if they are
required to work that day.

ONE-LINERS:

The easiest time to add insult
to injury is when you're
signing someone's cast



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