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EL RESIDENTE

November
December
2026



ALAJUELA NORTH

Surviving a Volcano: Poás in Our Backyard

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

The Holidays are Coming
Why Costa Rica?
Behind The Mask
Rethinking Ants

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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

There are some things of importance in this issue. First is the annual BOOKSHELF article, a listing of books published by Costarican residents, is here! There over 20 new books listed, just in time for you to select the ones you want to give as Christmas gifts. The second important thing is a new writer joins *El Residente*, Sofía Valverde Mora. She will be sharing important information for those living in the Southern Nicoya Peninsula. Welcome Sofia! And last but not least, the staff of El Residente wishes all our readers to have safe and Happy Holidays.

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RETIREMENT - RELOCATION - RESIDENCY

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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.

CORRECTION In the *Local Heroes* article in the September/October issue of El Residente we incorrectly said that Biesanz Woodworks was closed. That was incorrect; Biesanz Woodworks is open. For more information about their hours and how to find their location, they can be reached at 8787-8666 or 2289 4337. We apologize for any inconvenience. FYI, the business is for sale.

REVERSAL Aeropost (formerly known as Aerocasillas) the mail forwarding service that had recently announced they would no longer bring U.S. Mail from Miami to Costa Rica, has reversed themselves. Aeropost has quietly restarted bringing letter mail addressed to their Costarican customers to Costa Rica. Aeropost still cannot accept outgoing mail, but can assist in purchasing goods from the USA and delivering them to customers here.

MAILING THINGS TO THE USA (Via Costarican Correo). When attempting to mail something to a USA recipient, before the Correo will accept it they will input the address information into a computerized system. If verifying information for that address is not found, before accepting the item for mailing the Correo will require the sender to supply an email address and telephone number for the recipient.

3.6% INCREASE IN SOCIAL SECURITY The Social Security Administration announced a 3.6 percent benefit increase for 2027. Social Security benefits include Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). On average, Social Security retirement benefits will increase by $75 per month. For additional information, visit www.ssa.gov/cola



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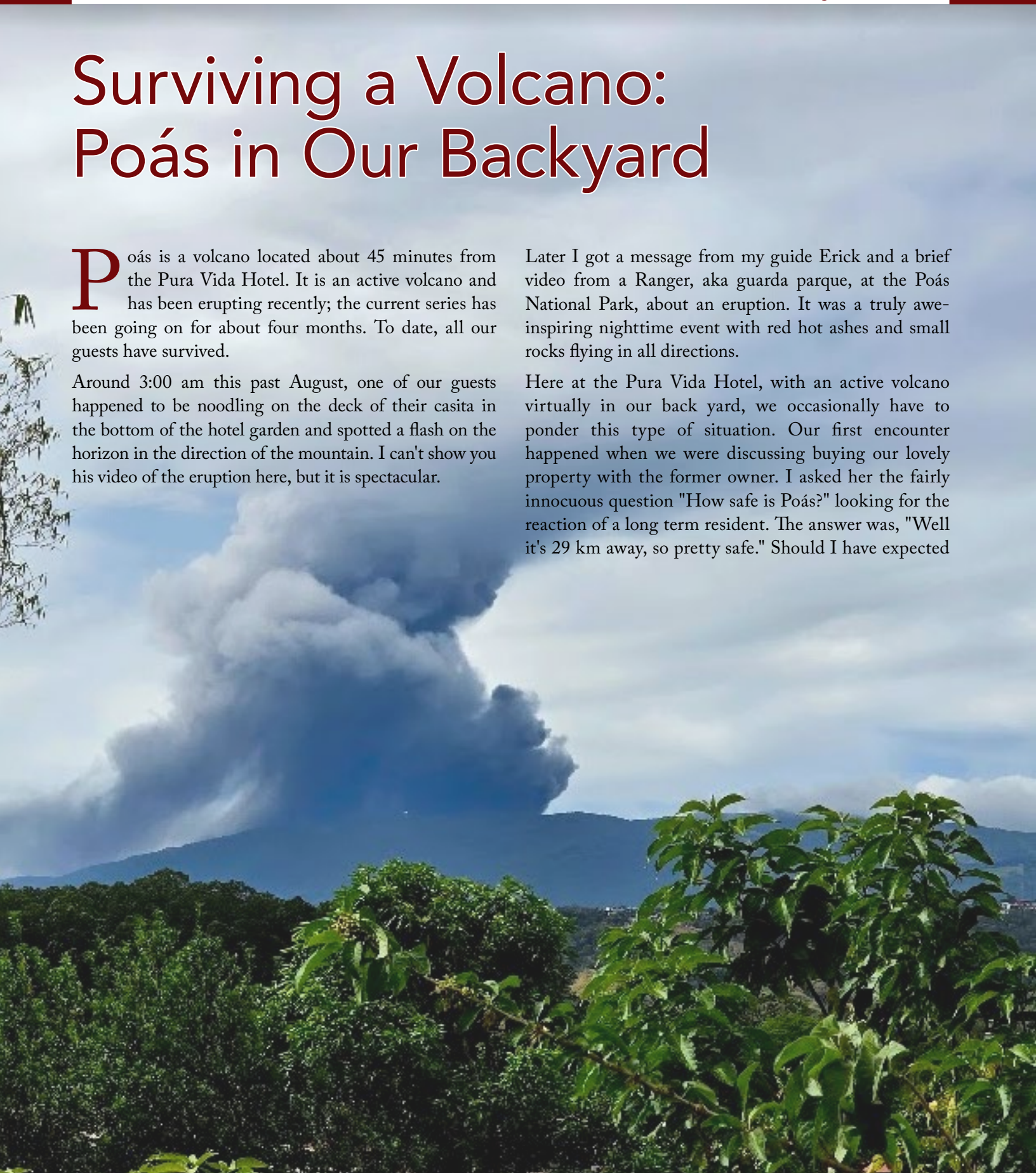
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Alajuela North

by Berni Jubb

Surviving a Volcano: Poás in Our Backyard



Poás is a volcano located about 45 minutes from the Pura Vida Hotel. It is an active volcano and has been erupting recently; the current series has been going on for about four months. To date, all our guests have survived.

Around 3:00 am this past August, one of our guests happened to be noodling on the deck of their casita in the bottom of the hotel garden and spotted a flash on the horizon in the direction of the mountain. I can't show you his video of the eruption here, but it is spectacular.

Later I got a message from my guide Erick and a brief video from a Ranger, aka guarda parque, at the Poás National Park, about an eruption. It was a truly awe-inspiring nighttime event with red hot ashes and small rocks flying in all directions.

Here at the Pura Vida Hotel, with an active volcano virtually in our back yard, we occasionally have to ponder this type of situation. Our first encounter happened when we were discussing buying our lovely property with the former owner. I asked her the fairly innocuous question "How safe is Poás?" looking for the reaction of a long term resident. The answer was, "Well it's 29 km away, so pretty safe." Should I have expected



more from someone selling us property located near the slope of an active volcano?

We are now approaching our 24th year here and have experienced multiple eruptions. The current cycle that began in 2025 seems to have intensified recently; there has been two major phreatic (steam-driven) explosions within the past 90 days. Previous disturbances have included:

- An active period 2017 to 2019 which caused a complete closure of the park. That event included multi-ton incandescent rocks being spewed out of the crater and damaging the viewing platform.
- Another was between 2006 and 2009. Some say the volcanic activities were responsible for the big Chinchona earthquake that caused cracks in many buildings locally, and destruction of the village of Chinchona. Technically, the mountain was not the direct cause of the earthquake, though Poás does share some of the same plumbing (as volcanologists like to say) as those which were responsible for the quake.
- There was an earlier period of major activity which started in 1952, with major ash clouds; something which we don't typically see now

Costa Rica is indeed a location for a host of natural wonders and one reason why many of we "residentes" chose the country. I mean, how many places on the entire planet can you visit the rim of an active volcano? The number apparently is four4: Mount Yasur, South Pacific, Mount Bromo, Indonesia, the Masaya Volcano in Nicaragua, and the Poás Volcano, right here.

For those who want to pay a visit and see the (possibly but unlikely dangerous) caldera, the Poás National Park is open as of this writing (under hard hat restrictions.) Getting a reservation could, however, be the most difficult part of the visit. Here are some tricks and techniques the



locals use of which you should be aware (aka. how to survive the national parks' SINAC web site).

The first step is booking your visit. To get in you need advance reservations, obtained online – you cannot get in without a booking for the day of the visit. Have your passport(s) handy and ready for the task – the site requires the numbers on them (but does not look at them ever again.)

To conduct the reservation process, go to: http://www.sinac.go.cr/EN-US/Pages/default.aspx. It's not the best site in the world and the booking process is a specie of medieval torture, so do it on a computer, not on a phone with a 3-inch screen! We recommend it be done from within a padded room where your spouse and kids cannot hear you cursing the screen and/or hurt yourself. Also, it is best to clear the immediate area of objects you might hurl. The process will guarantee that the web site's URL will be engraved in your memory for life, but not in a good way, because the site has a particularly evil trick – if you take too long to enter some requested information, it randomly times out and asks you to start again saving NOTHING. (The timeout function was designed to infuriate anyone: 1) With a group of six or more, or 2) Who doesn't remember where their passport is and takes minutes to find it, or 3) Trying to scratch in passport numbers and such on a tiny screen, and/or 4) Over 60.

If you lose patience and can't find a 12-year old to do it for you, wait until the next day and a reduction of your blood pressure. If you do wait a day, before re-attempting to log in, try to think about the prompts differently as they are not based on normal logic.

If the time you want is not available for the day in question, fill in ANY time you like as the park rangers are fed up dealing with times when everyone arrives late. They no longer care about times, but the web site has not been so trained. Explaining this concept to your spouse with OCD tendencies is another part of the problem:

"Honey we are going to Poás tomorrow!"

"Yay, great!"



"We're leaving early, getting there about 9:00 am."

"But honey why do the tickets you just forwarded to me say 3:00 pm access?"

"Oh don't worry about it!"

“Whada you mean, “Don’t worry about it”? I don’t want to get up at 5:00 am and end up sitting waiting hours for them to let us in!”

Yes, booking tickets may induce family tensions never before experienced. (Also, be aware any of my data above is subject to change without rhyme or reason.)

Now you may say why would an innkeeper with a hotel somewhat dependent on this ornery volcano be telling you all this stuff? Because despite all the hurdles, it is a super fun visit, in between total cloud-outs, and it is NATURE! It is EXCITING!

We can organize a day trip with a van for you, if you like, or you can drive yourself easily. Tickets are sometimes available at restaurants on the way up, but don't count on that. Access starts at 8:00 am, and we advise getting to the park as early as possible, particularly in the rainy season, otherwise it is invariably clouded over by noon.

BTW, you should be aware that after a series of eruptions in 2017, the Park Service built some blast shelters at the rim. However, if you watch eruptions on Poás, as we have for many years, you will occasionally see the rocks are often ejected sideways at an estimated speed of 330 to 500 feet per second (225 to 340 mph). In other words, in the event of a volcanic blast people on the viewing platform would have only 2 to 4 seconds before the first ballistic debris would arrive at the craters edge. The government agency responsible finds the presence of these blast shelters quite comforting.

I always ask the next volcanologist at the breakfast table "well how are we doing?" at early warning detection of exploding volcanoes. For earthquakes the history is not so great for the maximum warning time:

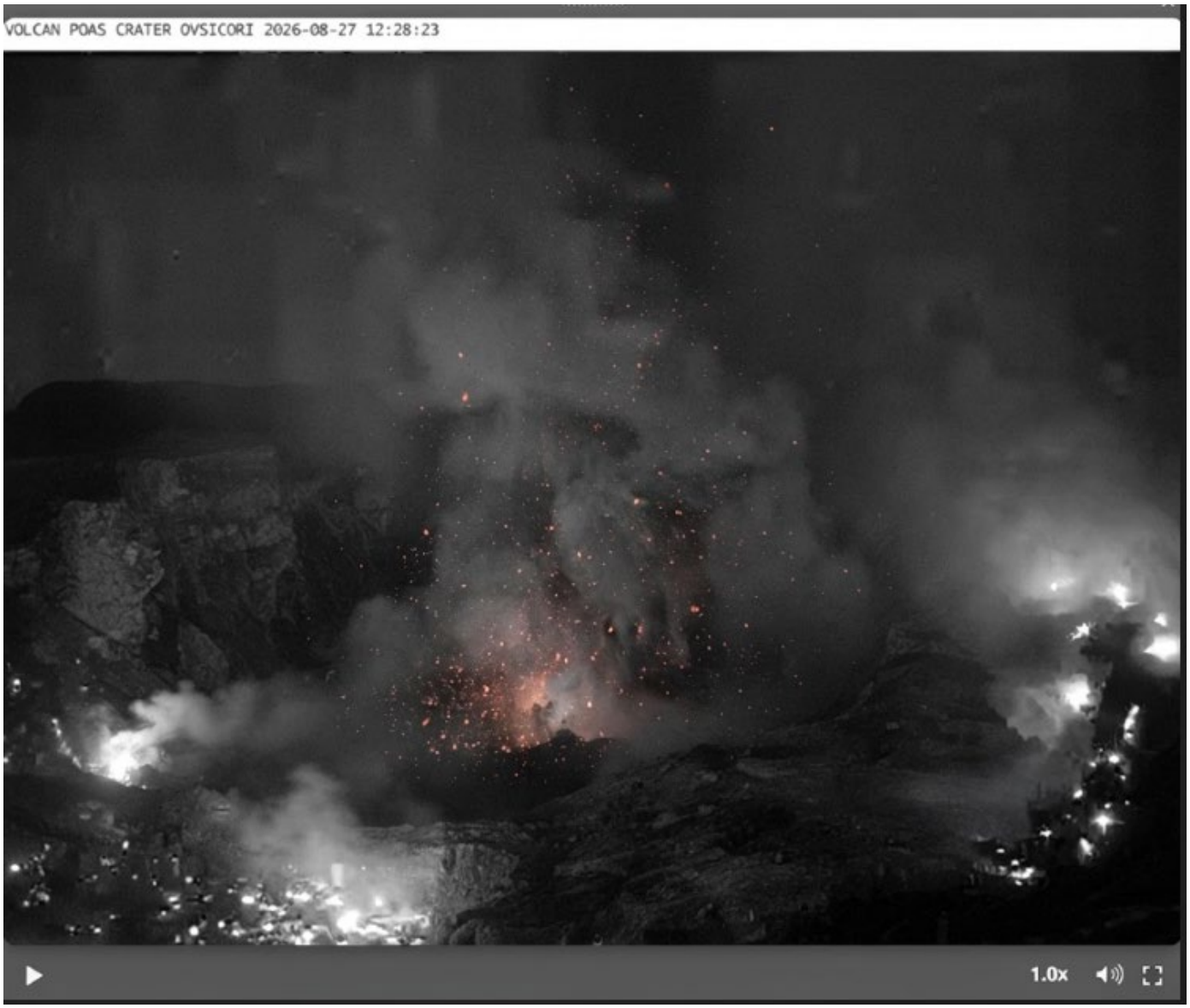
- 1900's 0 seconds
- 2000 0 seconds
- 2015 0 seconds
- 2026 5 to 45 seconds at the center

For Volcanic eruptions on phreatic volcanos like Poás the history is getting better - I asked "how long would you have for someone know a phreatic explosion is about to happen?"

- 1900's 0 seconds
- 2017 0 seconds though they did know we were in an active phase
- 2025 March 1 to 3 minutes before launch
- 2026 July a 15 minute warning based on a shift in pressure waves using the OVSICORI digital array
- 2026 August theoretically a 5 to 10 minute warning from acoustic micro-sensors

So are we getting better at predicting volcanic explosions? The science is improving. Poás is monitored by a network of seismic instruments, acoustic sensors and other equipment that allows scientists to listen to the volcano as well as watch it.

About those sensors. The interesting development is the use of “infrasound” sensors. These detect pressure



waves generated by volcanic activity, including explosions that may be difficult to observe directly. Combined with seismic records and other measurements, they help researchers understand what is happening inside the crater and identify changes that may signal increasing activity.

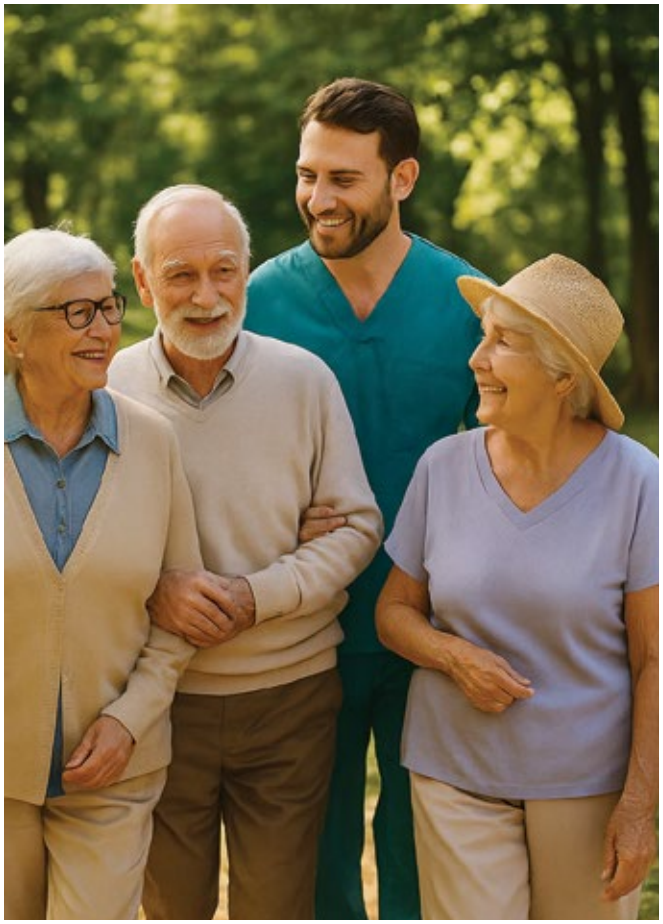
There is an important distinction, however, between detecting an explosion as it happens and predicting one before it begins. The sensors are already proving their value in recording eruptions, but how much advance warning they can reliably provide remains a more difficult question.

For those of us living in Poás's neighborhood, every additional minute of reliable warning would be welcome. It is encouraging to discover that the people studying our troublesome neighbour are getting better at listening to it.

As I started to write this article I had misunderstood the technology now on top of Poás as I had believed those blast shelters were pablum for the masses but it turns out civilization and volcanologists are doing a pretty good job in the last few years.

Yes you can survive Poás! Makes for a beautiful morning, we recommend combining it with Laguna de Hule (visited by nobody) or La Paz Waterfall Gardens (visited by everybody).

Berni Jubb is a long-time Costa Rica resident and part-time philosopher of traffic, which includes sending traffic control suggestions to his local muni which are totally ignored but, in his mind, quite brilliant. He and his wife Nhi operate the Pura Vida Hotel (www.puravidahotel.com) in Alajuela, where they happily explain the mysteries of Costa Rica allegorically to bewildered guests at the breakfast table.



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Local Heroes Project

by Linda Leake



The Association of Residents of Costa Rica (ARCR) has a program of identifying and honoring Local Heroes. What is a local hero? A Local Hero is an expatriate who is unselfishly doing something that will benefit their community or contribute positively to Costarican culture. Here are two people who by their actions, are Local Heroes.

Our first candidate is Mary Ann (Mitzi) Stark. She came to Costa Rica in 1979 with a degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and lives in Alajuela on a coffee farm on the slopes of the Poás Volcano. The majority of her neighbors are Costa rican. She speaks fluent Spanish and cares deeply about them and their Costarican life and culture.

Mitzi has a car and uses it for many things to help her neighbors. One way is that she transports neighbors' dogs and cats for needed veterinary services. Another is that she has a neighbor who uses oxygen from tanks that have to be refilled every few days, and Mitzi transports the large and heavy tanks to the hospital 13 km away for refilling. She also uses her car to transport stray cats to a local neutering clinic, which she helped organize.

With her background in journalism, Mitzi has written many articles for the Tico Times, a local English-language newspaper. In these articles, she describes her travels and involvement with Costarican people and events. For example, she wrote a piece about an artist in Alajuela named Juan Carlos Chavarría, Senior. Señor Chavarría, who is the Director of the Fundación Transformación en Tiempos Violentas, has exhibited his work in the Juan Santamaria Museum.

She has also written about Roberto Poirier, a Costarican man in Turrucares who can advise and help you with getting a snake out of your house!

Mitzi currently writes a column for this magazine called Out and About which describes, among other topics, local festivals, typical Tico food, and how to enjoy a visit to the Central Market in San Jose. These articles not only provide publicity for Costarican culture and its people, but also serves to inform English-speaking expats about aspects of Costa Rica they might not otherwise know about, helping them to better understand the country in which they have chosen to live. In Mitzi's own words, "There are so many

interesting things going on (here) and most of the 'gringos' don't know about them because they don't follow the Spanish media."

For more information, Mitzi can be contacted by email at mitzstar@gmail.com

Our second Local Hero is Harve "Tommy" Thomas, the founder of The Green Ark Foundation, an extensive Botanical Garden, restaurant, and hotel complex in Santa Barbara, Heredia. The mission of his organization is to educate and share knowledge about the use of plants, both personally and for the good of our planet. In Tommy's own words, the "garden is alive with plants you use every day for good; medicine, perfume, natural dyes, oils {and] cloth."

Tommy and his wife, Patricia Riley, arrived in Costa Rica from the US in 1986. They had spent time in India with the Peace Corps and had learned about many spices there. Tommy first bought a local spice company called Los Patitos. At that time Costaricans didn't use many spices so his products offered them a different way to cook. He later sold that company.

Following the sale of Los Patitos, he began to build The Ark Botanical Garden. It has several sections, each with an extensive number of plants:

The Medicinal Garden has plants can produce natural and inexpensive remedies for physical ailments.

The Culinary Garden contains a wide variety of herbs, spices, greens, and chiles, to name a few. Chefs love to use them, including in The Ark restaurant.

The Essential Oils Garden is where the plants that produce oils used in preservatives, flowers cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals, are grown.

The Colorant Garden has plants which are used in the textile dyeing process.

The Foundation's web page has a long and impressive list of the plants grown in each of these areas.

Tommy uses the Milpa crop growing system where complementary things like maize, beans, and squash are planted together, as each one helps the others. This system is based on ancient methods used by the Maya and Mesoamerican peoples.

The Ark offers tours through its diverse gardens, one of the most extensive collections of plants in Central America. There is also a plant nursery which allows people to purchase potted herbs, flowers, vegetables, medicinals, ornamentals, and fruit trees.

There's plenty to see when you visit. Besides the gardens; there is The Ark Restaurant and some attractive hotel rooms connected with the property. Also, there is an independent small business owned by a Tico family: The Costa Rica Meadery, which produces wine, beer, mead, spirits, and other artisanal alcoholic beverages that transform some traditional Costarican drinks. And a recent addition is a US-certified herbalist, Cathy Kading, who has opened an Apothecary at the lower entrance.

Tommy's contributions to the Costarican culture have been both through employment and tours where people learn about a wide variety of plants, many of which are native. More importantly, his efforts with this wide ranging project has educated many Costaricans about the plants that are being preserved here. It is Tommy's intention to leave the Ark Botanical Garden as a legacy to Costa Rica.

We encourage you to visit The Ark and have an enriching experience touring their facility. Expect to spend several hours as seeing the complete facility can't be done quickly. It is located 45 minutes West of Heredia on the General Cañas Highway. To learn more about Tommy's amazing heritage, visit The Green Ark Foundation website at: https://theark.green/

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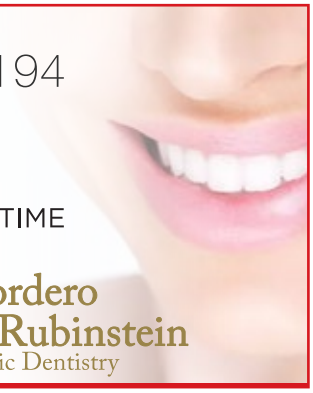
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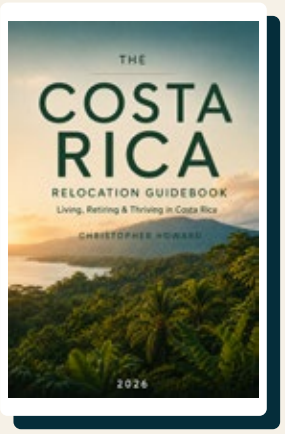
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Out and About

by Mitzi Stark



The Holidays are Coming

Christmas, Hanukkah, summer vacation, parades, and parties. The end of the year means holiday time. Stores have been preparing for it since early October, with windows full of Christmas trees, little snow-covered houses, Holy Family figurines, and snowmen. (Yes, it does occasionally snow here at higher altitudes, and one time someone made a foot-high snowman with twig arms. I saw it on the news.)

At this time of the year I rediscover all my favorite annual events, but every year they seem new. One of them is the ***FERIA HECHO AQUÍ*** (Made Here Fair), a huge holiday fair filled with top-quality items made in Costa Rica. Baskets, leatherwear, cosmetics, spicy preserves, honey and chocolate, rugs, ornaments and decorations, and much, much more. This year, it takes place on December 4, 5, and 6 in the more than hundred-year-old Aduana Building on Av. 5 and Calle 23. And it is FREE! It runs from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and includes cultural activities.

A very popular event is the ***FESTIVAL DE LA LUZ*** (Festival of Lights). It is the huge, colorful parade with floats, bands, marchers, and dancers that takes



place every year. This year it is scheduled for Saturday, December 12th, starting around 6:30 p.m. in San Jose. It will leave from Plaza de la Democracia and wend its way to the Torre Mercedes on Paseo Colon. It is well worth seeing but will be crowded, late, and cold. The major TV channels will cover it with stories and history about the bands and floats, so you don't have to miss it; like me, you can watch from the comfort of your recliner at home.

The **HOLIDAY RAMBLE** takes place in Cruz del Norte, San Joaquín de Flores, halfway between Heredia and Alajuela. Every year, a neighborhood group goes all out with holiday lights and decorations in front yards, on window sills, and along the streets, bringing holiday spirit to this charming town center. It starts the last week in November, and the lights come on every night around 5:30. If you come early, visit the church and stroll around the gardens while it's still light. There is no charge, and there will be food booths for cake and traditional food. There is a certain reverence here. Nobody shouts or pushes, so you can take your time admiring all the displays. After walking the area, find a bench along the central plaza across from the church to watch kids, grown-ups, and



dogs cavort on the grass and enjoy a summer night. The light show goes on until the end of December. Weekends may be crowded.

HEREDIA PARADE AND *PASACALLE*. A Pasacalle is a parade that can be very informal, with groups and individuals joining in. The main parade, with everything a Christmas parade offers, bands, floats, etc., begins at 6 p.m. Sunday, December 13th. The Pasacalle will be earlier on, but the time has not yet been announced.

The **SAN RAMON TREE LIGHTING** is an event that includes all the lights in the park and on the streets. It is planned for the weekend of November 27, 28, and 29. The event will include family activities in and around Central Park. Active San Ramon will also hold a contest for home portals (entryways) and other events. Check San Ramon Navidad 2026 on Google for holiday programs.

ALAJUELA BRILLANTE will take place on Saturday, December 5th, in the park. There will be a parade, bands, and lights, and it's great for the whole family. The hour and more details will be posted at a later date.

Many other cities will have programs for lights, parades, bands, and food. Find out what's going on in your area by Googling the name of your area and "navidad 2026". (If you look for Grecia, add Costa Rica, or you will get the country of Greece.)

TAKE THE TRAIN There is a local train that runs between San Jose, Cartago, Heredia, and Alajuela, which only runs during peak hours during the week, but what better way to visit the capital or the other cities. INCOFER (Instituto Costarricense Railroads) schedules are found by doing an internet search for incofer horario, or incofer. go.cr. I will take the 8:30 a.m. train from Alajuela to San Jose to attend the Hecho Aquí Feria,





and the 4:30 p.m. train from Alajuela to San Joaquin de Flores to visit the light show.

A walk through any **CENTRAL MARKET** will show you what goes into a traditional Costarican Christmas. Displays of figures for the portal or manger scenes, complete with the Holy Family and the oxen and cows are abundant. The principal figures, plus sheep, angels, poinsettias (aka shepherds), and oriental kings are available in all sizes. There is also sand in different colors to arrange around the portal, forming dunes and paths, plus long strings of tinsel called *lluvias*, stars and ornaments, poinsettias, and *pastores* (shepherds) to decorate with. And there will be stacks of banana leaves for the tamales, too.

A portal can be as elaborate as you want, but be warned: if you have pets in the house, it can be a problem. My neighbors almost filled their living room with various colored sand dunes and little animal figures, with lights and ornaments dangling around the stable. It was a work of Christmas art. They forgot about the cat when they left to attend Christmas service at the church. They took the whole thing down the next day.

The traditional Costarican holiday delight is the tamales, usually crafted by the whole family working on an assembly line around the dining room table. The dough, made with mashed potatoes and *masa* (corn flour), is spooned onto a banana leaf and passed to the next person, who adds rice and vegetables. The following step may be adding a small slice or two of pork or other meat. The next person folds the tamal into a banana leaf and ties two together with string. The traditional family will make 100 or more, enough to last a week. Tamales are cooked up in a pot of boiling water and are served with Lizano sauce.

Refreshments are coffee *choreado* (a Costarican brewing process where hot water is poured through a cloth bag

with coffee grounds to make a beverage.) Another drink is *Rompope* (Costarican eggnog) with a dash (or two) of rum added. In bygone days when everything was made at home, there was *guaro* (an alcoholic beverage made from sugar cane) illegal and "hot" from the still. I've sampled it and it is different from the commercial product sold today.

Don't forget NEW YEAR'S EVE with the tradition of eating twelve grapes at midnight and kissing everybody in sight. One end-of-year tradition still seen are the big, gaudily painted ceramic pigs with a slot on top for loose change, found in the central markets. Their purpose is to save up for next Christmas or next year's *marchamo* (vehicle license renewal), due in December. Gone are the days of bonfires and fireworks at midnight on Dec. 31, which have been banned in many cities. There will still be noise and cheers at the stroke of midnight.

No matter how you celebrate them, I wish you happy holidays.

Mitzi Stark

mitzstar@gmail.com





Guest Column

by Ken Reilley



Why Costa Rica?

I'm often asked, by friends and by people thinking about leaving their home country why my wife, Ava, and I chose Costa Rica.

For a long time I didn't have a good answer, not a real one, anyway. There are the obvious ones: comfortable weather, gorgeous scenery, lovely people, excellent healthcare, good food, a cost of living that makes retirement feel like a possibility instead of a restriction. All of that mattered when we were deciding where to live, but none of it, by itself, explains why we're still here.

In the year or so we've called Costa Rica home, I think I've finally figured out how to say it plainly: Costa Rica lets us live the life we have always worked and hoped for.

Before moving we thought we were choosing between countries, comparing climate, safety, infrastructure, cost, healthcare, every practical box you check when making the biggest decision of our lives. Costa Rica kept checking more of those boxes one by one.

Somewhere in that process we also went on a relocation retreat with about forty-five other people who were all weighing the same move. We made friends there, good friends, some of whom have since relocated to Costa Rica, and we realized we wouldn't be doing this alone. That, more than any spreadsheet of costs or healthcare rankings, was the actual turning point. The question itself changed from where we'd be most comfortable to where we'd most enjoy actually living.

Those aren't the same question, and they certainly don't have the same answer.

A LIFE WITH ROOM IN IT

Costa Rica hasn't eliminated life's frustrations. There are bureaucratic quirks, things that take longer than expected, plenty of moments that call for adapting rather than expecting things to work the way they did back home. But those inconveniences are rarely what we remember at the end of the day.

What stands out is the space. Literal space, since we live somewhere quieter and more rural now. But more than that, space in our lives, with less pressure to fill every moment. We can have coffee and actually just have coffee. We can sit outside and watch the weather change. We can decide to go somewhere because we feel like it, rather than because we've spent the whole week waiting for our one available window of free time.

For most of our lives, the good parts always seemed to be the events: the vacations, the special dinners, the accomplishments. Living here has taught us something different; the ordinary days are the life. And when the days themselves get simpler, the benefits compound. Our life here doesn't have to be organized around rushing everywhere, consuming everything, or constantly climbing the next rung on the ladder. It can be satisfying to simply do "enough."

COSTA RICA DOESN'T DEFINE OUR LIFE

Back home in the U.S., it felt like every environment pushed us to chase something, whether it was success, status, or just staying busy. Costa Rica asks very little beyond being present.

That feeling hit for the first time on a hike to a waterfall not long after we arrived. No schedule, no destination we were racing to reach, just the trail, the sound of water getting louder, and then the falls themselves. It has nothing to do with anything you'd find on a postcard, and everything to do with why we're still here.

That won't appeal to everyone. Some people thrive on competition and speed, and there's nothing wrong with that. But we discovered we wanted something else: room to enjoy what we'd already worked for, time for each other and for friends, time to do nothing when doing nothing sounded better than doing something.

Costa Rica doesn't define our lives. It gives us the freedom to define it ourselves, which is probably worth more to us than any single box the country checks.

COMFORTABLE WITHOUT BEING BORING

There's a misconception that a quieter life means a smaller one. That hasn't been our experience. Life here is rural, but not isolated. Towns, restaurants, healthcare, and the everyday services we need are all within reach. We can have rural peace without giving up urban conveniences. We can spend the morning doing very little (or nothing!) and still go out for a good meal that evening. We can travel, explore, make plans with friends. Our life here is comfortable without being boring, which may be the best short description of what we were actually looking for.

REAL FRIENDSHIP REQUIRES TIME

Of everything that's surprised us here, this is the biggest: the friends.

Ava and I lived in Las Vegas for years. Old friends would fly in to visit fairly often, but we only made a couple new friends that we're still in touch with. Similar story in Arizona: a couple of longtime friends passed through on road trips, and we were friendly with neighbors, but that was it. Zero new friendships over years of living there.

Here, we have a dozen good friends, several of whom have become great ones, and another couple dozen people we look forward to socializing with multiple times a month. It happened in a fraction of the time it took us to make almost no new friends anywhere else we lived.

It's easy to say Costaricans are friendly, and they are, but friendliness isn't friendship. Friendship needs repeated encounters, invitations, shared meals, and enough breathing room in your life to actually show up for them. That's the part we'd been missing without realizing it. There's something uncomplicated about sitting around a table, eating, talking, laughing, and noticing that nobody's in a hurry to leave. Those moments don't make anyone's list of Costa Rica's attractions, but that circle of friends has become our anchor here. We'd be a little lost without it, and we didn't even come close to building one anywhere else we lived.





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CENTRO MÉDICO
SAN JOAQUÍN

Indigenous Affairs

by Carol Vaughn

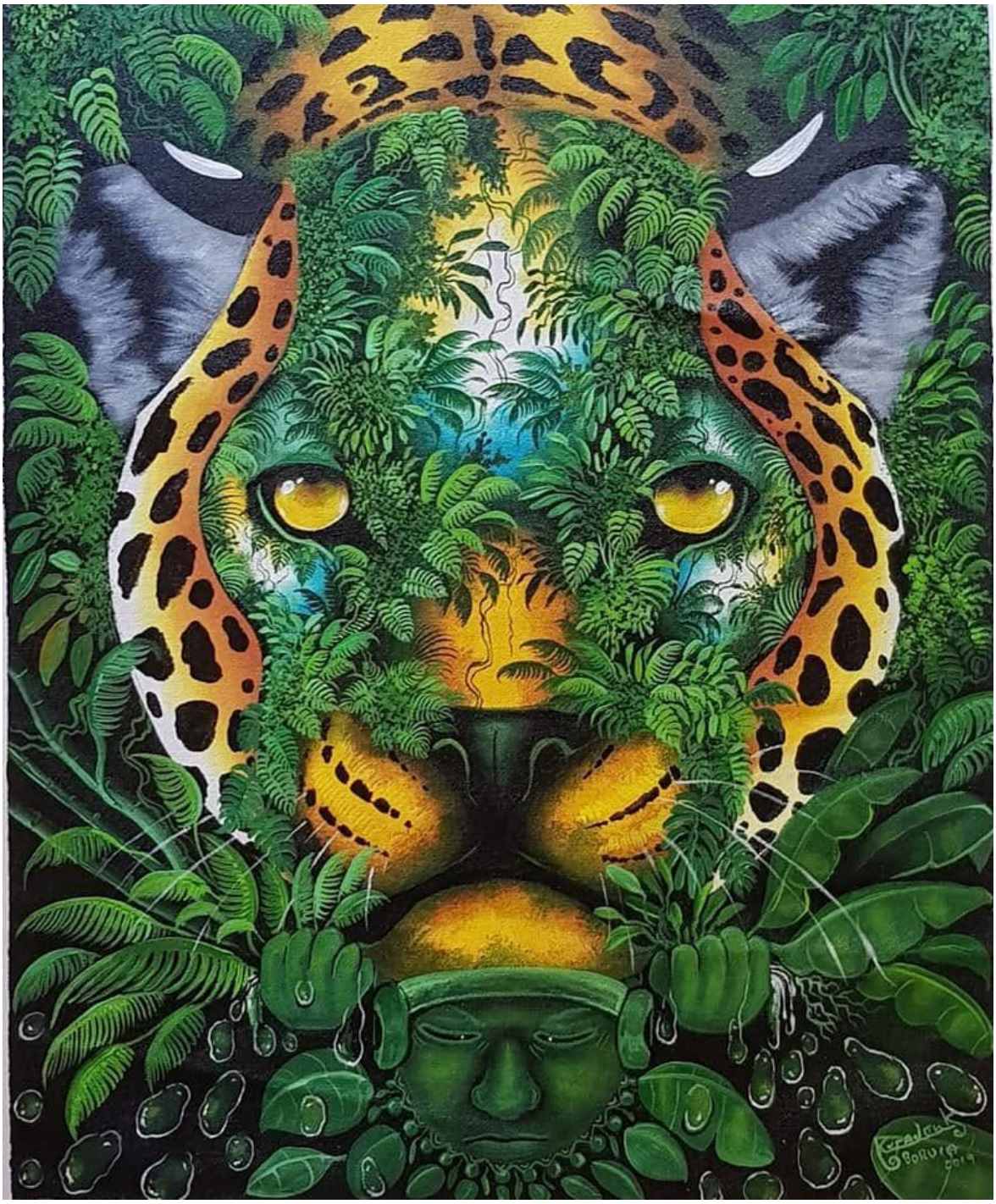


Behind The Mask

Meet Kamel Gonzalez Rojas: Boruca master painter, muralist, mask-maker, historian, and National Treasure of Costa Rica.

In a remote, quiet village of the Costarican southern zone called Boruca, an artist steps back from his easel for a moment to scrutinize a painting in progress in the September afternoon shade. He is muscularly built, black hair down to his shoulders, barefoot, and dressed in an old t-shirt and pants covered with paint splotches. His German Shepherd puppy "Lobo" is curled at his feet, also decorated with a few paint splatters.

The artist goes by the name of KURA^DENKA, meaning Footprint of the Jaguar, and he is quietly leaving his own footprint on the world of contemporary art, while preserving the legends and culture of his ancestral people: The Boruca.



The story of the Borucas is an amazing triumph of a people who survived colonization of the 1500s by the Spaniards, major population losses and social disruption under the Spanish colonial rule, attempts to replace their beliefs with Catholicism, and the inevitable 20th century onslaught of roads, outsiders settlements, and economic changes. Through it all, the Borucas have survived.

Kamel began painting at the age of nine, learning to carve and paint masks at the feet of his father, Ismael Gonzalez Lazaro, who is considered the father of Boruca mask-making. Ismael was awarded the prestigious Costa Rican National Treasure Award and Kamel spent his childhood learning to carve and paint the iconic Boruca balsa masks under his father's watchful eye.

There are only 5,000 or so remaining Borucas in the world today. They are an endangered world population, struggling to keep their legacy alive in their village where 80% make a living through mask carving, traditional weaving, giving tours, and hosting tourists at the annual Dance of the Little Devils celebration.





Kamel gradually moved away from solely making masks, and began painting canvas and murals steeped in Indigenous Boruca identity, spiritual symbolism, and contemporary visual expression. His subjects include jaguars, tapirs, iguanas, forest guardians, ancestral spirits, lush forests, and the handsome faces of his people. His paintings are alive with the colors and energies of his native land – filled with intricate detail – drawing the viewer beyond the visible world to discover deep connections between man and nature.

The world has begun to come knocking at the gates of Kamel's humble home called Cu^Ca, tucked away in a corner of the Boruca Village. He was the first Boruca artist represented by the prestigious international art gallery, Galeria Namu. His show "Rainforest Masks of Costa Rica" was presented at the Museum of Botany and Arts in Sarasota, Florida. He was featured at the Expotural Festival in Madrid, Spain. He has been part of several exhibits in the National Museums of San Jose. He is regularly a part of events associated with the famous stone spheres of Costa Rica at Finca 6.



Kamel has been invited to Veracruz, Mexico in November, with 18 other artists to perform at Festival de Mascaras Danzantes (Festival of the Dancing Masks). He will be the Artist in Residence in December at Galeria 1084 in Uvita. The Costa Rica Star dubbed him "the finest contemporary Indigenous artist of Central America". His career has skyrocketed, also helping support the many other artisans of his village survive and continue to preserve the Boruca culture.

As with many artists around the world, it is challenging for Kamel to make a living solely from his art. Canvas, acrylic paints, wood frames, anti-humidity treatments, and mailing fees all add up. Additionally, Kamel is very active within his village, helping younger artists develop their craft. Kamel has expressed interest in eventually creating an Arts Center for Boruca, one that would help artists of every discipline. His followers have no doubt that with the help of his ancestral spirits, Kamel will create his Arts Center in the near future.

Kamel's attitude still remains one of continuous surprise at the attention his work receives. He carries the preservation of his people on his shoulders, yet maintains a relaxed and calm demeanor through it all. He is happiest on his patio, surrounded by cans and tubes of paint of every hue. And with Lobo.

For more information on Kamel's show in December at Galeria 1084 in Uvita, please see: www.galeria1084.com For more information on Kamel's art please see: www.kamelart.com

For information on booking Kamel as a speaker, commissioning a mural, or purchasing a mask or painting, please call Carol Vaughn at 506.6036.4283.







Useful Numbers

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CONFUSED BY THE METRIC SYSTEM?

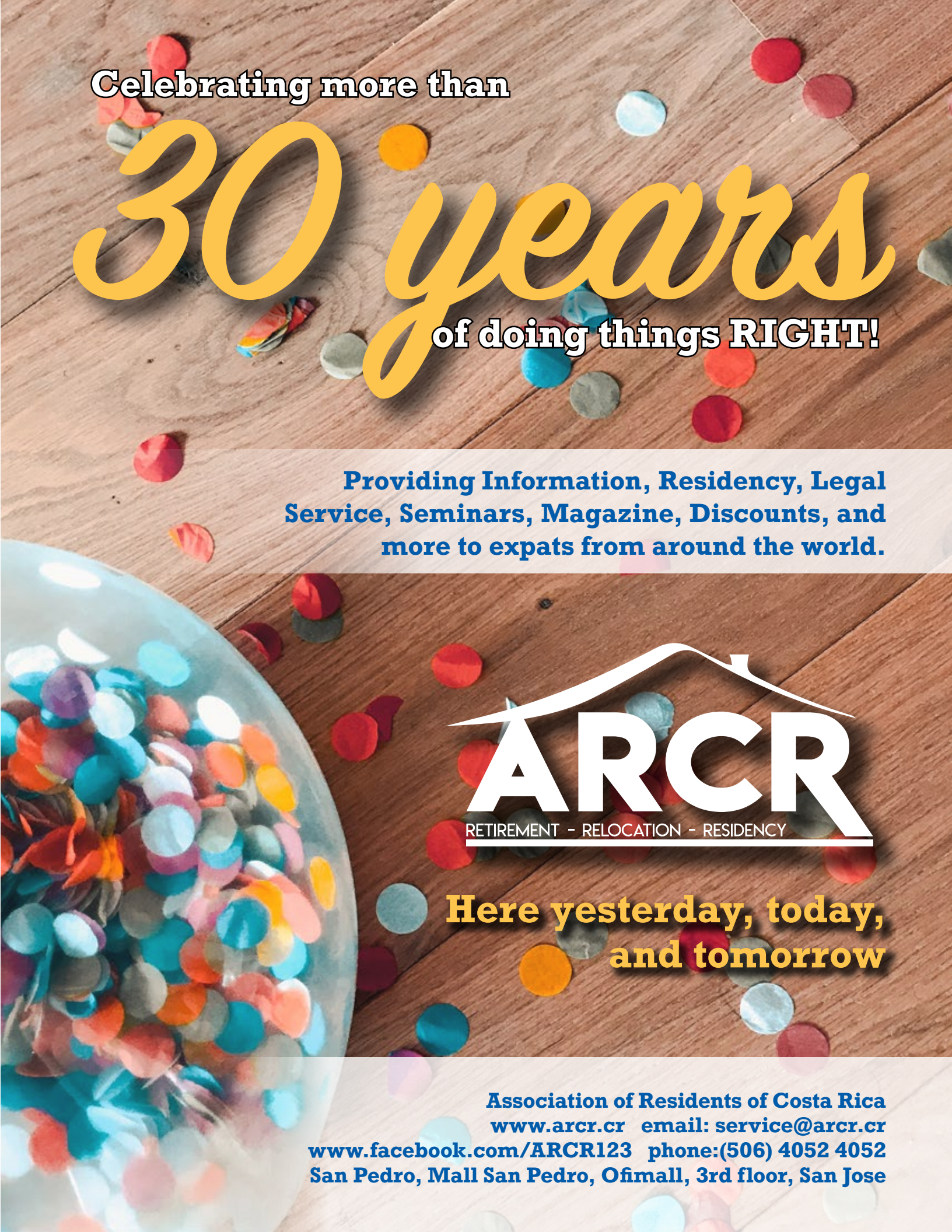
Need to know how to convert common measurements used in Costa Rica to Customary US Standard measurements? Use the handy conversion chart below!

Milliliters × .034 = Fluid Ounces	**Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares**
Kilograms × 2.205 = Pounds	**Hectares × 2.47 = Acres**
Millimeters × .039 = Inches	**Kilometers × .62 = Miles**
Meters × 3.28 = Feet	**Centigrade × 1.8 + 32 = Fahrenheit**
Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet	**Liters × .264 = Gallons**

(These are APPROXIMATE factors, NOT EXACT.)

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2026 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 you need to add to your library or share with a friend or loved one. The list is constructed 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 experiencs, even if only a little. Available on Amazon.

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 it's 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.

DEATH IN COLLECTORS CORNER Helen Dunn Frame (December 2026) After several years of

retirement in England, Jennifer Haslette-Vandergriff, Lady Sarah Clarke, and their spouses opened a London shop called Collectors Corner. When they find two bodies in back rooms where they planned to expand, the four become sleuths again. Joined by Detective Superintendent Eric Tibbles of Scotland Yard and a New York detective, Harrison Halfpenny, they solve the murders. 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.

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.

WEPA: A JOURNEY TO THE ENCHANTED ISLAND OF PUERTO RICO Angelic Gonzalez (2026) This time young readers join Liam on a magical journey through Puerto Rico, where a little coquí frog leads him through the island's colorful culture, history, traditions, and natural beauty. Along the way, Liam discovers what makes Puerto Rico truly enchanting, and learns the joyful meaning behind "Wepa!" Available on 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

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.

A GOOD PLAGUE – A Dan Landes Mystery Robert Rahula (2026) Dan Landes is one of many expats who thought he had escaped the madness of the world when he emigrated to Panama twenty years ago; it was his piece of paradise. International events intrude and he tries to help his friend, Police Chief José Fernando, solve the murder of an unidentified man whose body is found in a field. Available on Amazon, Kindle, and Audible.

THE BIRDMAN COMETH – A Dan Landes Mystery Robert Rahula (2026) Dan Landes friend Ricardo lies alone in a hospital bed in a foreign country, hoping that his doctors can save his life. But he is plagued by a vision of a mysterious shaman coming to steal his soul. Follow ex-detective Dan Landes as he tries to help his friend unravel a lethal case of mistaken identity. Available on Amazon, Kindle, and Audible.

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.

PARADISE REDUX: Ghosts On The Isthmus (BOOK 5) Roan St. John (2026) Maya returns to Malpaís expecting ghosts, but the dead have a way of becoming evidence. A couple buried in a garden, forged deeds, and warnings to stop looking pull Maya deeper into a country where truth can be more dangerous than deception. The fifth Expats on the Isthmus novel explores what happens when paradise's buried secrets refuse to stay buried. Available on Amazon.

EXPATS ON THE ISTHMUS: Museum of Lunacy (BOOK 6) Roan St. John (2026) Maya Warwick thought she had seen every form of madness Malpaís could produce. Then a box of documents, photographs, and handwritten notes reveals something more disturbing: land fraud, vanished fortunes, corruption, and violence form a system that protects itself while outsiders pay the price. The final Expats on the Isthmus novel asks what happens when paradise becomes the exhibit. Available on Amazon.

MASTER OF MAGIC VL Stuart (2026) As a child, Elden had a magic power so dangerous that few adults could control it. The Brotherhood found him and molded him into a warrior. War almost destroyed him. Sent away as mad, he escapes and finds Master Verian and his true healing. 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

ZADE VL Stuart (2026) In 2041 a rogue bioweapon leaves billions dead. By 2167, survivor ave managed to normalize life in the United Districts of America, but in District Six, one man's ambition threatens everything. His weapon? ZADE. Fighting him will take a brilliant young scientist to the brink of madness. Available at Amazon.

NON-FICTION:

CREATIVE REFLECTIONS ONE: Stories and Poems by the Costa Rica Writers Group Edited by Edie Bakker (2026) All the writers of this book have interacted with Costa Rica at one time or another. Their unique voices have produced stories and poems which span continents, generations, genres, and life. They take readers on journeys at once familiar and unexpectedly delightful. United by their passion for storytelling, they demonstrate that memory and imagination know no borders. Available on Amazon.

CREATIVE REFLECTIONS TWO: Stories and Poems by the Costa Rica Writers Group Edited by Edie Bakker (2026) Here are more engaging stories by the members of the CRWG. Some examples from these two volumes are; A wedding in Sri Lanka, fixing a bathroom, surviving down a river, experiencing old age, an ordinary schoolboy's triumphs, saving a turtle, a magical hat, riding out a storm on a submarine, and numerous other themes. Available on Amazon. Order both!

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.

CONVERSATIONS UNCHAINED: Mastering Authenticity, Connection, And Transparency In Critical Conversations Theresa J Gathers (2026) A practical guide to navigating difficult conversations with greater courage, self-awareness, and intention. Blending reflective exercises, real-world insights, and an integrated workbook, it equips readers with tools to communicate authentically, foster meaningful connection, and approach conflict with transparency and integrity. The book empowers individuals and leaders to transform challenging conversations into opportunities for growth, understanding, and lasting change. Available on Amazon

MY LIPSTICK WILL ALWAYS BE BRIGHT Kim Hurley (2026) This memoir follows a woman's childhood and a love of cats. Through grit and resilience she builds businesses that include pet-sitting and a cat exclusive veterinary hospital. With humor and honesty, her story takes you through love, loss, burnout, and multiple reinventions of herself. In the end she must choose between the life she built and a dream calling her to Costa Rica. Available at Amazon

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.

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.

LOVING GOD: LOVING JOE Jasmine Kent (2024) Sensual, romantic, devastating; I wanted to go into the mission field, but life throws you curves! This is a true story of intense love, abuse, abandonment, fear, and bliss. It's about forgiveness. It questions all of societies norms. Did fear and loneliness drive me

to regrets? Or did passion drive me to delight? You will explore feelings you never imagined. Available on Amazon.

ORDINARY GIRL: My Life in Extraordinary Times Barbara Wolfe-Johnson (2026) 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 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.

ANDY WARHOL ATE HERE Mark Schreiber (2026) The true story of one of the trendiest restaurants in New York City and its outlandish owner, Costa Rican resident Sheldon Haseltine. Drawn from Haseltine's scrapbook of press clippings, it relates entertaining celebrity anecdotes to recall the last half of the twentieth century. A candid portrait of a serial entrepreneur and one of the most outlandish characters you will ever meet. Available in hardcover and Kindle on Amazon

WHERE THE JUNGLE MEETS THE SEA: Rewilding a life in Talamanca Costa Rica C. L. White (2026). Connie returns to Costa Rica ready to build her new life - and nothing can go wrong. But when plans unravel she discovers that life's best plot twists happen when you least expect them. With a long-distance editor clamoring for content, she discovers that becoming an accidental journalist might be the best mistake she ever made. Available on 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.

ART, PHOTOGRAPHY:

350 COSTA RICA BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS Charlie Doggett (2026) Beautiful, full color photos of 350 species of colorful Costarican butterflies with both English and Spanish common names plus the Latin scientific name of each. Available at Blurb.com

ROCA VERDE BUTTERFLIES Charlie Doggett (2026) 180 species of butterflies photographed in residential Roca Verde, Atenas, and Alajuela. Available only at: Blurb.com

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

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

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

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

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

TRAVEL, RELOCATION, CULTURE:

THRIVING IN COSTA RICA Edie Bakker (2026) If you are thinking about moving, or have moved, to Costa Rica, this book is absolutely essential. It covers visas, packing, housing, driving, pets, relationships, and food, among many other topics. This book has been critiqued and embellished by experienced Westerners and Costaricans who live in this beautiful country. It is fascinating, handy, and reliable. Make your stay in paradise easy! Pura Vida! Available on Amazon.

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 COSTA RICA RELOCATION GUIDEBOOK Christopher Howard (2026) This new relocation guidebook is an updated and abridged version of the best selling, "The New Golden Door to Retirement." The book covers everything you need to know to successfully relocate to Costa Rica, including important contacts and insider information from A to Z. The eBook is not available in bookstores, but ONLY through www.liveincostarica.com and www.costaricabooks.com

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

COSTA RICA 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

LOVE CULTURE: A MEMOIR OF COSTA RICA 2nd edition C. L. White (2026) This book combines travel writing, social criticism, and a soulful exploration of human relationships. A humorous, gritty panorama of Costa Rica, this book has something for everyone – men and women alike – whether you're looking for an arm-chair adventure or a how-to for changing your life boat captain. Available on Amazon

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

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

BY MY SIDE Edie Bakker Filled with loneliness from a life of changing foster homes, a teenager dreams of having a dog. After the dog comes a boyfriend, at last. The three of them are intertwined as life throws its curves. Will she be able to manage the dog with her moves? Is the boyfriend worth keeping? Will they finally bring her love? This story is bittersweet!

THE CHINA DIARIES: My Year in Hunan C. L. White 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

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.

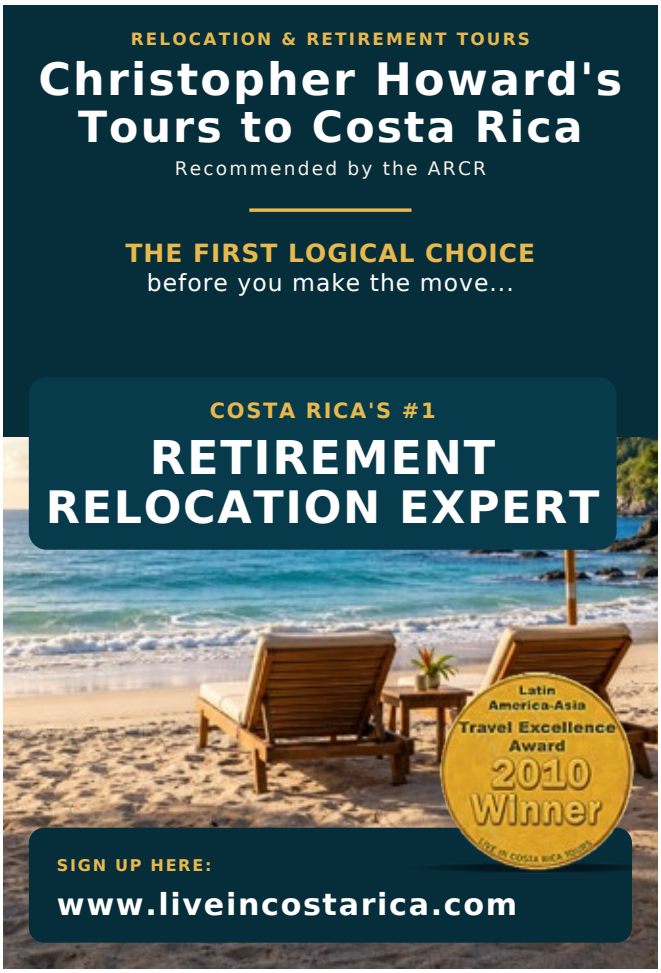
THE TICOS: CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN COSTA RICA Biesanz, Biesanz, and Biesanz Written with over fifty years of first-hand observation, this social and cultural history describes how Costa Rica's economy, government, education, and health-care systems, family structures, religion, and other institutions 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

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Caribbean Connection

by Connie Foss



Rethinking Ants

"Look to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways and be wise." — A Proverb

One morning in my small house in the jungle of Costa Rica, I awakened to a common sight: a thin line of tiny brown bugs emerging from the windowsill and crawling to the electric socket on my bedroom wall. Still foggy-brained without my morning coffee, I took a photo and sent it to a friend here who is an expert gardener. "What is this? Termites, or just small ants?" Termites were on my mind because a neighbor had recently been forced to clear out all her furniture and repaint her walls due to an invasion of termites. "Just ants" was the answer.

Later, as I sat at the outdoor kitchen table sipping morning coffee, I sensed another type of ant, very tiny, almost invisible, as it crept along my arm doing its job of cleaning up the environment, which, in its small world, was ME. Brushing it away, I was reminded of the comment of a good friend who had visited Costa Rica a few years ago and said she didn't like it. When I asked her why, she replied, "too many bugs."

When I returned to the bedroom, the scene of the invasion, the line of ants had completely vanished. They apparently had a destination in mind and were only passing through, only temporarily trespassing on my territory.

The same is true for what is known here as "cleaner ants," larger, biting ants that march in relentless single file through anything in their path, including houses. If the

cleaner ants choose to visit your home, the only thing to be done is to politely take your leave and go somewhere for a few hours; when you return, your house will be free of all the dust and stray mites or dead flies hidden in corners or under furniture.

A neighbor told me the name of a gigantic ant that recently crossed the patio tile in front of us. I asked her if this giant, solitary ant meandering across human territory was dangerous. She stooped down to look more closely and shook her head. "No, it's good. It's a Tiger ant. It's pretty- see the yellow and black stripe?"

A good ant. Who would have thought?

That led me to rethink ants, insects, and nature. My conclusion? Bugs are not really bad; they are just "bad" to we humans when they're when they are where we do not want them to be.

One summer, a neighbor in my old neighborhood in the United States hired someone to spray her lawn for mosquitoes and fleas so her dog could go outside. It was too much trouble to spray her dog's fur or use a flea collar. The bug spray was touted as being harmless to the environment and nontoxic to all other insects besides mosquitoes and fleas. And, it didn't work.

I once saw a woman spraying bug repellent into the air of her patio instead of on her skin. Really? If you don't like insects at night, go inside, or spray the repellant your own skin, a smaller environment that you can control.

Honestly, I used to be one of those people, not thinking as I sprayed on Off! during camping trips and hikes, never realizing that what I was doing might cause needless death of insects that have a purpose in this web of life. We are now hearing that insect species are becoming extinct by the thousands each year. But do we worry about what will happen because of it?

Everything has a purpose, a very good purpose, for being here to begin with. So why do we scream and grab the can of Raid, or call the Bug Man whenever we see more than one insect in our space?

Why is it that in Costa Rica, where there are "too many bugs," people can spend time outside at night without receiving a single mosquito bite? In fact, that is one of the reasons why I chose to live in this country. Somehow, even with all the insects, there seems to be a healthy balance of the good and the bad. I recently learned that mosquitoes pollinate the cacao flowers. That's chocolate! Don't mess with my chocolate!

In Costa Rica (I can only speak for this country, although I suspect the same is true for many others in temperate climates), where there is no hard winter freeze to kill pests



and fewer acres of industrial farms and paved parking lots, why are there more bugs but fewer bug problems? Maybe the difference is because of the way people in this culture perceive insects?

If it is true that the insect population has been decimated and we continue to see more species become extinct, why are the bugs so bad in the United States? How have insect infestations become so terrible that people find it unpleasant to be outdoors at night in the summertime? Why are farmers forced to find new insecticides to effectively battle new infestations, year after year? Why is the bug problem getting worse there, even though we have dozens of different types of insecticides, from roach hotels to ant traps to wasp spray and mothballs, available for our consumption? Is it perhaps something to do with the people, not the bugs?

So now, some of us no longer indiscriminately murder any and every bug in our path; we learn to identify the good and the bad ants, for example, and respect their place in the ecosystem.

Every insect has a purpose. We just don't always know what that is. If a pesky bug happens to get in your way for a while, please try to remember, it has a right to be here, too. All insects have essential roles to play in the bigger scheme of things.

Ogden Nash once wisely said, "God in his wisdom created the fly…and then he forgot to tell us why."

Next time you see an ant in your house, I beseech you: please think before you spray or stomp on it to kill it. They're only bad when nature is out of balance.

Connie Foss has been a resident of Cahuita for five years and has lived and worked in Costa Rica since 2009. She chose to settle in Costa Rica because of its commitment to protecting green spaces and preserving the environment and biosphere.




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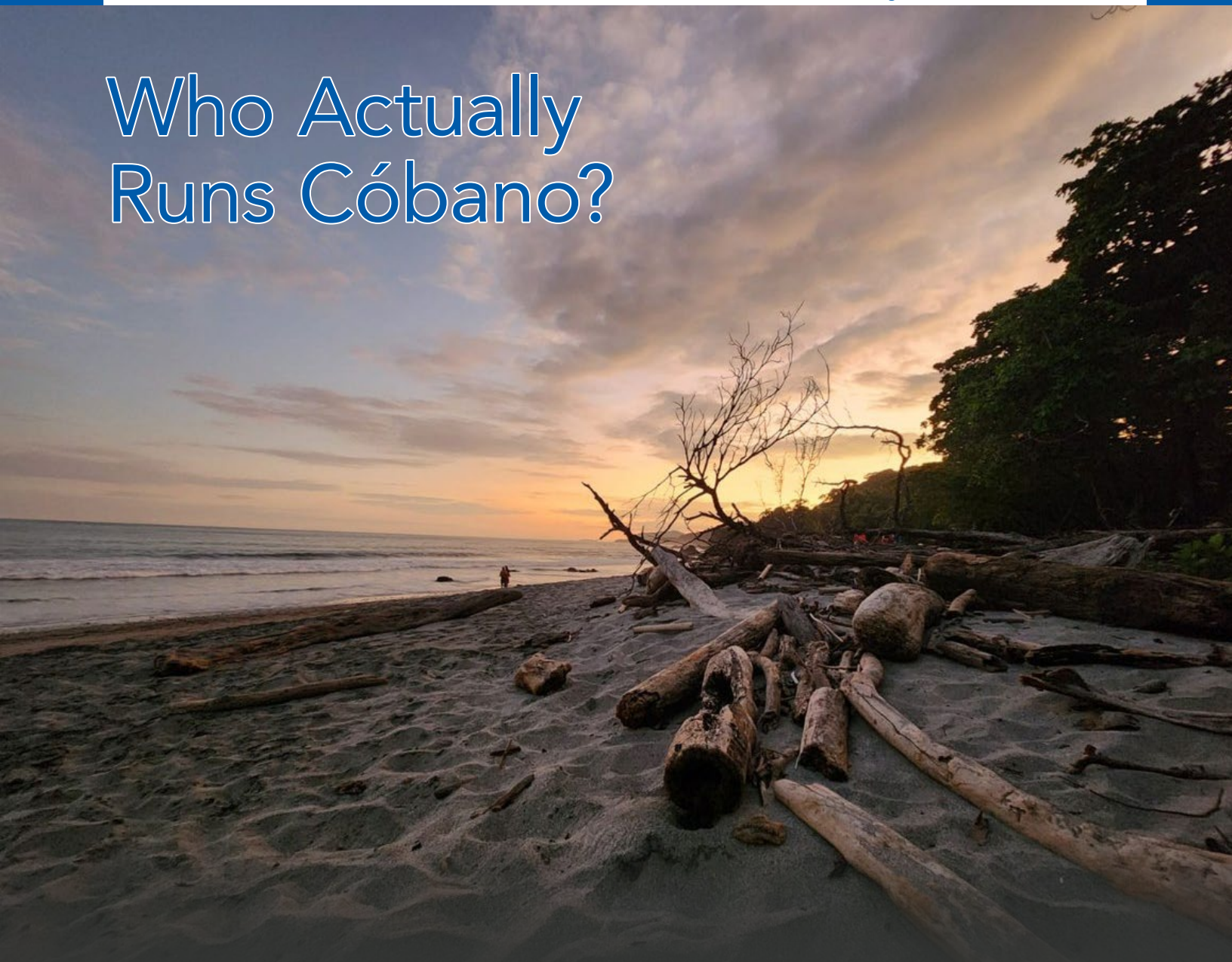
Meets 2nd Saturday of the month, Tap House Restaurant, City Place, Santa Ana, 10:00 am

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PLEASE HELP US HELP OTHERS

by Sofía Valverde Mora

Who Actually Runs Cóbano?



A resident's guide to the district council at the tip of the Nicoya Peninsula

Where do I pay my property tax? Who fixes the road to my house? Who do I call when the water stops? These are the questions newcomers ask most, and many assume the answer is the Municipalidad de Puntarenas, since Puntarenas is our *canton* (county). Usually it isn't. From Tambor to Santa Teresa, Mal País, Montezuma and Cabuya, local government sits in Cóbano town, in a *Concejo Municipal de Distrito* (district municipal council). Costa Rica has seven of them.

A COUNCIL OF OUR OWN

Article 172 of the Constitution, as amended in 2001, lets a municipality create district councils en *casos calificados* (in special cases). *Ley* (law) 8173 of 2001, the Ley General de Concejos Municipales de Distrito, gives these councils *autonomía funcional propia* (their own functional autonomy) and keeps them *adscritos* (attached) to the cantonal municipality. In practice, Cóbano runs its own services and spends its own revenue. But, on paper, it is still part of the canton of Puntarenas.

Cóbano got its first district council by decree in 1986, and the 2001 law named it among the councils that carry on. In 2024 the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones declared officials elected for seven: Cóbano, Paquera, Lepanto, Colorado, Cervantes, Tucurrique and Peñas Blancas.

WHO SITS WHERE

The executive is the *Intendente* (district mayor), elected by popular vote is given the same duties and powers as an *alcalde* (mayor). The legislative side is a council of five *concejales* (councilors), all district residents, chaired by the *síndico* (district representative). For the term from May 2024 to April 2028, the Intendente is Ronny Montero Orozco and the Viceintendente is María Zulay Mora Jiménez.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

Article 9 of Ley 8173 lets the council collect service fees, *patentes* (business licenses) and other local taxes directly, so that money is spent here. In July 2025 the council unanimously approved a 2026 budget of ¢4,445 million, the largest in its history. Property tax brings in just over a quarter of it and business licenses about 15%.

The council is your office for:

- Property tax *(impuesto sobre bienes inmuebles)*. Under Ley 7509 the rate is 0.25% of the property's value on the tax records. The council takes the declarations and handles the *no afectación*, a partial exemption for an individual's only property, up to a legal ceiling.
- Building permits and the *uso de suelo* (land-use certificate). Since October 2021, permits are filed online through APC, the platform of the CFIA (the engineers' and architects' association). Small works (*obra menor*) are still filed at the counter. The checklist includes a water-availability letter from the local ASADA (*community water board*) or AyA, and the building tax must be paid before work starts.
- Business and liquor licenses.
- Local roads and garbage collection.

ROADS AND GARBAGE

The district has about 218 kilometers of local roads, and in 2024 about 90% of them were still gravel or dirt, so paving is a constant priority. The road from Cóbano to



Santa Teresa and Mal País was finished in March 2023, and the 2026 budget funds new asphalt at Menchita, San Isidro, and Manzanillo. Since April 28, 2026, Ley 10935 has named district councils explicitly in the share of fuel-tax money set aside for local roads. Route 160, the national road through Tambor and Cóbano, belongs to the MOPT (public works ministry) and *CONAVI* (national roads council), and the council presses them for repairs.

On garbage, the Intendente's annual report in March 2025 listed ¢85 million for a new collection truck, a transfer center being designed with Fundación Nicoya Península, money for compost bins, and work on separate collection of organic waste.

THE COAST

Under Ley 6043, the first 50 meters from the ordinary high-tide line are the *zona pública* (public zone), is open to everyone. The next 150 meters are the *zona restringida* (restricted zone), State land the council can grant under a *concesión* (a long-term coastal lease). In tourist zones, concessions need a development plan approved by the *ICT* (tourism institute) and the *INVU* (housing and planning institute). The council's website lists 14 coastal regulatory plans, and its 2026 budget counts 136 active concessions.

WHAT IT DOES NOT DO

Responsibilities for drinking water belongs to AyA and the local ASADAs, though the council set aside more than ¢11 million in 2025 for materials to support them. Environmental permits go through SETENA, and protected areas such as the Cabo Blanco Absolute Nature Reserve belong to SINAC. The police *(Fuerza Pública)* and public health answer to national ministries.

WHO TO CALL

- Property tax, permits, licenses, local roads, garbage: Concejo Municipal de Distrito de Cóbano, Phone: (506) 4070-1234 (property tax ext. 130, building permits ext. 127, licenses ext. 126, council secretary ext. 110). Hours: Monday to Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Website: www.municobano.go.cr
- Water supply: your community's ASADA, or AyA
- National roads such as Route 160: MOPT and CONAVI
- Protected areas, wildlife, logging: SINAC
- Complaints about any public service: Defensoría de los Habitantes (ombudsman's office)

HOW TO TAKE PART

You don't need to be a citizen to be heard. Under Article 41 of the Código Municipal, council sessions are public. The council's website lists ordinary sessions on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. They are broadcast live, and the agenda includes *audiencias* (hearings for the public).

Draft regulations, other than internal rules, are published in *La Gaceta* (the official gazette) for at least ten working days of public comment (Article 43). If a council decision affects you, you can ask in writing, with reasons, for it to be reconsidered (*revocatoria*) or appealed (*apelación*) within five days. Budgets, regulations and decisions not yet final are excluded (Articles 162 to 166).

Under Articles 90 and 93 of the Constitution only citizens can vote, and the Código Municipal requires the Intendente and the councilors to be Costarican citizens. Foreign residents take part the way many of their neighbors do: they turn up.

A CANTON IN THE MAKING?

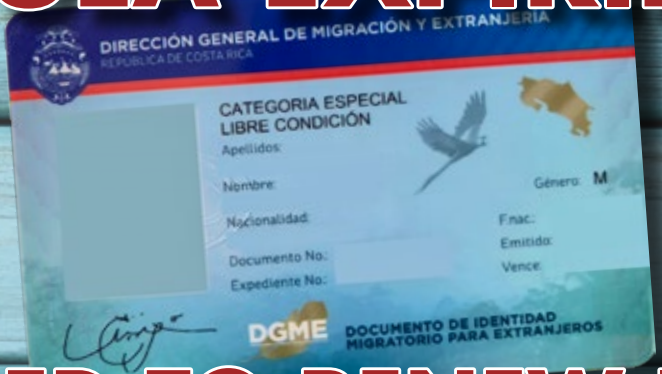
Bill 23.109 would make Cóbano Costa Rica's 85th canton. It passed a first vote in the Assembly, 41 to 8, in October 2024, and the Intendente has urged lawmakers to hold the final vote. In February 2025 the Assembly sent it back to the first-vote stage to amend the text. It is not law. Assembly rules archive a bill four years after filing unless lawmakers extend it, and this one was filed in May 2022, so check its status at www.asamblea.go.cr.

In the meantime, the office hours and Tuesday sessions above still apply. If you want to raise something at a session, call the secretary at ext. 110 first and ask for an audiencia.

Sofía Valverde Mora lives in Delicias, in the Cóbano district, and writes about life and property on Costa Rica's southern Nicoya Peninsula for Tierra Tropical Magazine. Sources for this column can be obtained at: tierra-tropical.com/columns/sothern-nicoya-notes. Sofia can be reached via email at: sofia@tierra-tropical.com

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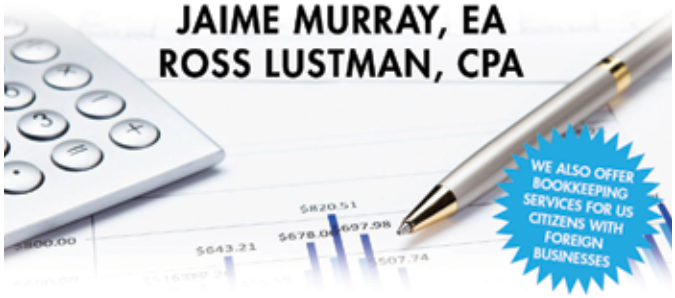
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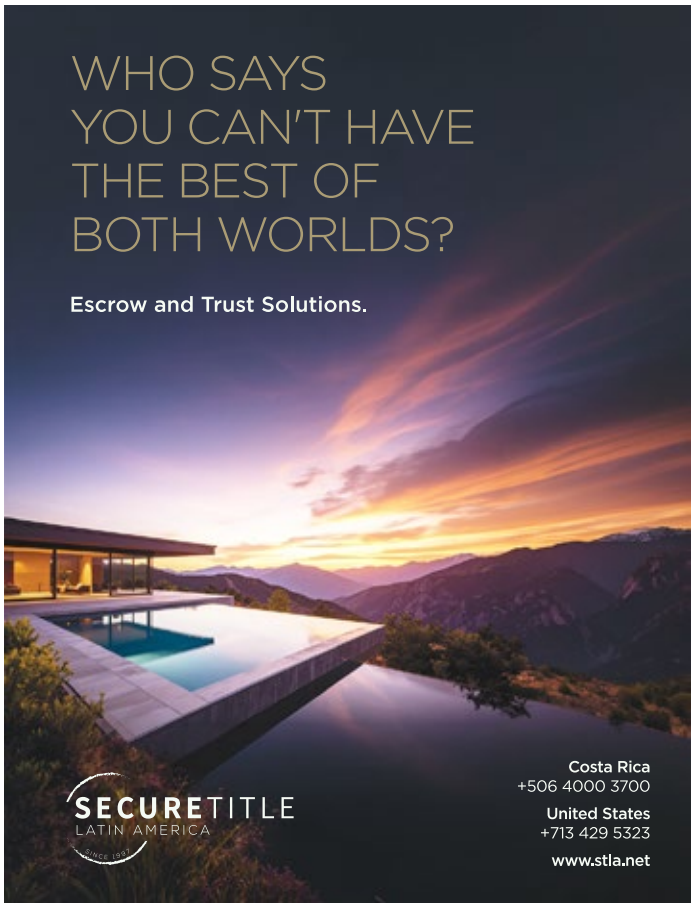
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by El Residente Staff



SCAM ALERT 1

There's an old scam in new clothes going around (isn't there always a new one?) It involves the Costarican Correo (Postal Service) where intended victims receive an official looking email, (in Spanish) in which they are informed:

> *Your package needs confirmation*
>
> *We have tried to process the delivery of your shipment, but we need you to confirm some information before we can complete the dispatch. This step is mandatory to release your package from the distribution center.*

This information is followed by a block with an official looking "Tracking Number" (*Numero de Seguimiento*) then a paragraph with instruction on how to retrieve the package. Next is a green box with a link to an official looking Correo website where further instructions on how process the delivery will be given.

DO NOT CLICK ON THIS LINK, DO NOT GIVE THEM THE FINANCIAL OR BANKING INFORMATION WHICH IS REQUESTED.

According to the Costarican Post Office (Correo) this is a scam. If you have any concerns, go to the nearest Correo office.

Update: A variation of this same scam is also being circulated via SMS text messages on cell phones.

SCAM ALERT 2

If someone tells you you've won a contest and asks you to change your Social Security direct deposit information to claim it, it's a scam – and it can cut off access to your benefit payments and potentially leave your bank account vulnerable to theft. IMPORTANT: No legitimate contest or prize will require you to change your Social Security direct deposit information.

How the Scam Works: A caller says you've won a prize or contest and, to receive it, asks you to switch your Social Security direct deposit from your bank to a different account, such as a prepaid debit card. To do this, they ask for your personal and banking information. Victims have found themselves without their own Social Security payments once the deposit is redirected—and the scammer may call back and grow hostile if the victim tries to undo the change.

No legitimate contest or prize requires you to redirect a federal benefit payment to claim it. The Social Security Administration will never offer to increase your benefits in exchange for information or for a fee.

Remember:

- Never change your direct deposit information because of an unsolicited call, text, or prize notification.
- Keep your Social Security and bank account information private.
- You can review and change your Social Security direct deposit information yourself, safely, through your personal My Social Security account at: https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount.
- If you think your direct deposit has already been changed without your permission, contact SSA immediately by calling SSA directly at 1-800-772-1213.

SCAM ALERT 3

Some tech savvy folks have informed us that with the advent of AI scammers have gotten a lot more sophisticated. The upshot of that there are now scam emails that appear to come for a family member or a trusted friend THAT CONTAIN FAKE HYPERLINKS.

It's no longer easy to tell what email is "real" and what is fake. Scammers are using AI to read personal emails, once supposedly private, and extracting information that they use to create fake emails. The email and link looks as if it is legitimate and comes from a trusted source such as a member of your family, but is not. For instance, it could appear to be an invitation to attend a "surprise birthday party" for another family member and the link is to "verify your attendance"!

Nothing more is needed than a click on the link and they have you. Therefore, clicking on ANY link in any email, no matter who it appears to be from, must be done with caution! It was suggested that those persons who exchange emails regularly set up some sort "password" or establish some sort of code that identifies you, and you only, as the sender. It can be almost anything, but it should be changed regularly.



Legal Update

by Rómulo Pacheco



Bill 25796 and Foreign Passive Income

With Bill 25796 currently navigating the Legislative Assembly, we will take a deep dive into the proposal to see how it might impact the foreign resident community.

Introduced by the Ministry of Finance (Hacienda), this bill marks a major shift by moving Costa Rica away from a strict territorial tax model and toward taxing foreign-sourced passive income.

Here is a breakdown of where things stand today, how the proposed changes would work, and why the bill faces serious practical and legal challenges.

1. THE CURRENT BASELINE:

How Tax Laws Apply to Residents Today

Under Costa Rica's existing Income Tax Law (Law 7092), resident retirees (pensionados), rentistas, and temporary or permanent residents are treated under clear, long-standing principles:

Individual Tax Subjectivity: The law applies to individuals regardless of immigration status.

The Territoriality Principle: Only income generated within the national territory of Costa Rica is subject to

local income tax. Money brought in from abroad to live on is not taxed.

Tax Residence (183 Days): Staying in the country for more than 183 days in a tax year establishes tax residence (but this historically applied only to locally generated earnings.)

Immigration Exemptions: While resident status grants perks like customs duty exemptions on household goods and vehicles, it does not exempt residents from paying local income tax if they earn money inside Costa Rica.

2. WHAT CHANGES UNDER BILL 25796?

If passed, Bill 25796 would introduce a 15% tax on foreign-sourced passive income for all tax residents.

How Would This Affect Resident Retirees? Foreign Pensions Stay Exempt. The core foreign pension that qualifies a person for resident retiree status remains tax-free. Protections under incentive laws (such as Law 9996) remain intact.

Foreign Passive Income Is Taxed: If you earn passive income outside Costa Rica in addition to your pension, that additional income would be subject to a 15% Costa Rican tax rate.

Which Foreign Income Categories Are Covered?

Interest: Returns on foreign bank accounts or financial investments.

Dividends: Profit payouts from foreign corporations.

Rental Income: Rent collected from real estate located abroad.

Royalties: Revenue from intellectual property or copyrights.

Capital Gains: Profits from selling foreign assets or real estate.

3. DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF

Most Expats Won't Owe Extra Tax. To prevent taxpayers from being taxed twice on the same earnings, Bill 25796 includes a Foreign Tax Credit (FTC) mechanism. If you already pay tax on that income in the country where it is generated (such as to the IRS in the U.S.), you can deduct that tax dollar-for-dollar against your Costa Rican liability.

Example: U.S. Rental Income: Suppose a resident retiree earns $24,000 USD per year in gross rental income from a U.S. property and pays 15% ($3,600 USD) in U.S. federal tax.

Calculation Step	Amount (USD)
Gross Annual Rental Income	$24,000
U.S. Tax Paid to IRS (15%)	$3,600
Theoretical Costa Rican Tax (15% per Bill 25796)	$3,600
Final Amount Payable in Costa Rica	-$3,600
Final Amount Payable in Costa Rica	$0

4. HOW DIFFERENT INCOME TYPES INTERACT WITH THE IRS

Because Costa Rica and the United States do not have a bilateral tax treaty, standard U.S. tax rates for Non-Resident Aliens (NRA) apply:

Rental Income & Capital Gains: Taxed in the U.S. under progressive ordinary rates or long-term capital gains rates (0%, 15%, or 20%), plus potential state taxes or NIIT surtaxes. Since these rates typically equal or exceed 15%, the Costa Rican tax liability effectively drops to zero.

U.S. Dividends: U.S. brokers automatically withhold a flat 30% tax on dividends paid to non-residents. Because 30% is higher than Costa Rica's proposed 15% rate, no additional tax would be owed in Costa Rica.

Important Takeaway: Even if your final tax bill in Costa Rica turns out to be $0, a worldwide tax framework would still require you to formally file an annual tax return declaring your foreign income and claimed credits.

5. CURRENT COSTA RICAN TAX BRACKETS (FOR LOCAL SOURCE INCOME)

For reference, if you earn income within Costa Rica, the current progressive tax brackets apply:

Natural Persons (Individuals) and Independent Workers / Sole Proprietors

Annual Net Income Bracket (CRC)	Tax Rate
Up to ¢4,233,000	0% (Exempt)
Excess of ¢4,233,000 up to ¢6,321,000	10%
Excess of ¢4,233,000 up to ¢10,544,000	15%
Excess of ¢10,544,000 up to ¢21,123,000	20%
On the excess of ¢21,123,000	25%

Salaried Employees

Monthly Salary Bracket (CRC)	Tax Rate
Up to ¢952,000	0% (Exempt)
Excess of ¢952,000 up to ¢1,398,000	10%
Excess of ¢1,398,000 up to ¢2,453,000	15%
Excess of ¢2,453,000 up to ¢4,909,000	20%
On the excess of ¢4,909,000	25%

Corporations & Legal Entities

Large Corporations (Gross income over ¢24,118,000): Flat 30% rate on net income.

SMEs / Small Businesses (Gross income up to ¢124,118,000): Progressive rates ranging from 5% to 20% on net income.

OUR PERSPECTIVE

Is Bill 25796 Truly Viable? From a practical and legal standpoint, this proposal raises serious questions about its necessity, execution, and fairness. There are several issues that need to be resolved before implementation.

A. Bureaucratic Burden for Zero Revenue Given that most expats already pay taxes in their home countries at rates equal to or higher than 15%, this reform will generate little to no revenue for Costa Rica from the foreign resident community. Instead, it will create massive administrative overhead for *Tributación*, forcing officials to process thousands of informational filings that net $0 in actual collections. The primary target of this bill was likely wealthy local citizens and corporations hiding capital offshore – not expat retirees living on fixed incomes.

B. Unclear Filing Mechanics The bill fails to explain how foreign passive earnings will fit into the existing annual income tax return. If foreign income is subject to income tax, it must logically be part of a single tax return where deductions, expenses, and losses can be factored in. Creating a separate, secondary filing mechanism for foreign earnings creates two competing tax regimes for the same taxpayer base Creating a parallel, standalone collection mechanism outside Law No. 7092 threatens constitutional principles of tax equality (*principio de igualdad tributaria*) and statutory reserve (*principio de reserva de ley*).

C. Registration Dilemma for Non-Working Residents Currently, foreign residents who do not engage in local commercial or employment activities are not required to register with Tributación, just like local salaried workers earning below ¢952,000 a month.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- – Will non-working foreign residents now be forced to register proactively as active taxpayers?
- – How will foreign earnings interact with standard tax-exempt brackets?
- – Why does the bill delegate key rules to future executive decrees rather than defining them clearly in the primary law?

FINAL THOUGHTS

As drafted, Bill 25796 is riddled with technical gaps, administrative, and unresolved detail hurdles. Before it can ever become workable law, lawmakers in Congress will face intense debate and will need to rewrite major portions of the text. For now, it serves as an important reminder to keep a close eye on legislative proposals in San José – even if the actual financial impact on most expats may ultimately be minimal.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

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by Ivo Henfling



Moving to Costa Rica with a disability?

Are you concerned about moving to Costa Rica because you have a dietary problem or are disabled? Don't be. Costa Rica can be a delightful retirement destination for everyone; it just depends on where you choose to live. In other words, you need to find out what areas of Costa Rica do or do not fit in your picture. I'll cover the highlights of this important topic here.

DIETARY PROBLEMS

A few years ago I started having problems with celiac disease and lactose intolerance. When I found out I thought I might not be able to find as many specialized products in the grocery store here as easily as I would in a US store, but when I looked, I was amazed at all the options there are.

Large, chain grocery stores like Automercado, Walmart, and Mas X Menos (Mas X Menos is a Walmart store) have great dry and frozen gluten-free inventories. These products are quite expensive but available. There are a lot of homemade options too.

I have also found several restaurants that can serve a gluten-free diet. To find those restaurants, you can use the Celiac Pura Vida or the Celiac Group on Facebook. There is also a no-lactose Facebook group. I've also learned that good restaurants in Costa Rica will take

good care of your dietary problems. For example, I love Indian food, and the Blog Taste of India 506 takes great care of my dietary problem.

So, if you're a vegetarian or vegan, you'll have plenty of choices.

If you have diabetes, Costa Rica offers you all the necessary options. Nutritionists are up to date,and many have studied in the US and Europe; they can help you find the products and care needed.

GROCERY STORES

If you plan to live in the Central Valley you will find many grocery store options in cities like Escazu, Santa Ana, Heredia, and Curridabat. Smaller towns such as Atenas, San Ramon, and Orosi give you fewer options for dietary shopping.

You'll be most restricted in your allergy-free purchases in the beach areas. Cross-checking is very important to see whether all the products you need are available there. You may also need a nutritionist in that particular location.

Look for large chain stores like Automercado, Walmart, or Mas x Menos as they offer the best dietary choices. Though expensive, these stores carry a large inventory of dairy-free, gluten-free, and other allergy-free products. (Other large stores or chains may also offer a selection of dietary-focused products worth checking out.) You'll also find some products at *macrobióticas* (health food and natural product stores). Macrobióticas are popular here, and you can use Google Maps to find one near you.

LAW FOR DISABLED

5.35% of the population in Costa Rica has some disability. Thanks to a great job in the Legislative Assembly, Leyes (laws) 8661 and 7600 were created. Law 8661 promotes, protects, and secures full and equal rights of all human enjoyment and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities in Costa Rica. It also promotes respect for their inherent dignity.

DISABLED PERSONS' LICENSE PLATE

If you are a disabled person, you can acquire a special license plate at Consejo Nacional de Rehabilitación y Educación Especial. This is located in La Valencia, Heredia, Costa Rica. 200 metros norte del cruce de Jardines de Recuerdo. If you have trouble reading Spanish, use the Google Translate app to translate the whole website instantly.

Disabled drivers with a special license plate can also request driving on restriction days.

Unfortunately, like many laws created in the past, the government often forgets them. Institutions in charge don't have the funds to force anyone to follow the rules.

DISABLED PARKING

Ley 7600 governs disabled parking. Well-marked handicapped parking spaces are designated at nearly every grocery store, strip, and shopping mall. I can't find any formal information about disabled or handicapped placards or parking permits to put on your windshield, anywhere. I've seen some online comments from transit police saying that if it's clear that you're disabled you should not have to worry. I suggest you get a written doctor's statement if you have something non-visible, like heart or lung disease.

BTW, you will find disabled persons' parking spaces often used by non-disabled persons everywhere in Costa Rica. There is no control to prevent non-disabled people from using handicapped parking.

Seniors over 65 can also use disabled parking spaces without any certificate.

WHEELCHAIRS

If you have a mobility disability, you're usually better off in a rural location than in a city. That is because most Costarican cities are not very wheelchair accessible, for a good reason: gutters. During the rainy season, it rains a lot, and rain needs big gutters. You can hide a dead cow in some of those gutters. Some sidewalks do have ramps, but you might not always be lucky. Getting from one sidewalk to the other can be difficult, especially in a wheelchair. That's because the municipalities and property owners don't build ramps over those gutters. Or there are no sidewalks at all.

Some buses in San Jose have a handicap ramp installed, but many don't work, or bus drivers don't cooperate. Very few taxis have a wheelchair ramp installed, but they are becoming more common. If you depend on public transport and need wheelchair accessibility, Costa Rica might not be your best choice for a retirement destination.

THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Being blind or having a visual disability in Costa Rica can be difficult. Sidewalks often serve as angled ramps for carports, and crossing the street with all those humongous gutters when you're visually impaired could be difficult. Those gutters are often blocked by garbage and/or are full of water.

You will find that some pedestrian traffic lights have an audible, beep-beep signal for blind pedestrians, letting them know when it is safe to cross. Sidewalks, though, are often uneven and difficult to walk on, even for those who are not visually impaired. Many cities do have nice, wide sidewalks and ramps. Do your homework before you decide to move.

Most elevators in buildings have braille on their control buttons, and older coins have braille to denote their denomination. Newer ones do not. The newly implemented bills also have braille markings but each denomination is a different size so they are easy to tell apart. M.A. Erick Hidalgo Valverde designed a simple-to-use device so the visually impaired know which bill they're dealing with.

MOVING SUCCESSFULLY

If you are unsure whether your disability, dietary needs, or other special requirements will prevent you from moving to Costa Rica, do a thorough online review of all available options before you make a final decision.

Ivo Henfling is a Dutch expat who has lived in Costa Rica since 1980. He founded the first functioning Multiple Listing Service (MLS) with affiliate agents from coast to coast in Costa Rica. He was the broker/owner of GoDutch Realty until July 2026, and is now part of the team at Coldwell Banker Santa Ana. He can be reached at (506) 8698-4371 or by email: ivo@cbrealestatecr.com



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 Craig Carlson 6042-9921 or (575) 312-6684

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

▶ First Tuesday Lunch

The ARCR First Tuesday Lunch takes place the first Tuesday of the month, 12:00 at the Restaurant El Dorado on Calle 62A in Sabana North. Open to all, no RSVP required. For directions call Allen Dickinson, 7033-3475

▶ Marine Corps Warriors League

Meets the second Saturday of the month at 10 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@marinecorpsleagueecr.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 Municpal 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@pwncr.com The PWN website is: http://www.pwncr.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:

2 November, Monday All Souls' Day Observance

22 November, Sunday Teacher's Day Observance

1 Decmber, Tuesday Abolition of the Army Day Non Compulsory Payment Holiday

25 December, Friday Christmas Day, National Holiday

31 december, Thursday New Year's Eve Observance

Tips and Tricks for a Pura Vida Life: A Seminar, 27 & 28, November (Thursday/ Friday **Location:** Four Points by Sheraton San Jose Sabana. Contact ARCR Office for reservations

Definitions:

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

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.

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

The ARCR Office will be closed for holidays from 3:30 pm, Thursday, December 17, and will reopen on Monday, January 4, at 8:00 a.m.









