

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica
and Beyond

JANUARY 2008

Updates from the Osa

We're delighted that Marcella and Sylvain have recently opened their new restaurant, Citrus, to rave reviews. They're serving Mediterranean Fusion cuisine and are a hit. We've also been the beneficiaries of a new high-end supermarket, La Corona, in Uvita. Here you can find macrobiotic and organic food as well as soy and almond milk and brown rice. They also have a great meat and seafood department and a complete liquor selection. Previously residents would travel to San Isidro de El General for their higher end staples.

According to the Latin Business Chronicle Costa Rica's CAFTA approval was one of the 5 best events in Latin America last year. They write that a no

vote would have been a major blow to pro-business president Oscar Arias and sent a negative signal to foreign investors. Interestingly, the state run telecommunications monopoly ICE as a result of the CAFTA agreement has sudden plans for modernization in order to saturate the market and discourage competition from the US. They hope to add 1.5 million GSM cellular lines for a total of 3.5 million lines by the end of 2008. These third generation lines will have better bandwidth to allow for new functions such as video conferences and internet access.

Other positive news for the country is that Costa Rica's poverty rate fell almost 4% in the past year.



The National Institute of Censuses and Statistics states that this was the largest drop in 15 years. Additionally, the latest job report of the International Labor Office (ILO) pointed out that Costa Rica has the lowest unemployment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean. Costa Rica reported an unemployment rate of 4.8%, below the figures of 18 other countries of the subcontinent and four Caribbean islands.

Kristina Welburn

Kristina@PacificLots.com
305-295-0136

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Tourism continues on the upswing

Costa Rica's Minister of Tourism, Carlos Ricardo Benavides, has announced that Costa Rica closed 2007 with the arrival of 1.9 million tourists, 10.15% more than in the previous year. This has increased foreign exchange 18% over 2006 to \$1,921 million. He also mentioned an additional \$800 million has been invested in the tourism sector.

Benavides credits the dramatic increase to the arrival of 7 new airlines offering new flights into the country as well as several American and European airlines offering more frequent trips to the country. He further explains that next year the Ministry of Tourism will receive the highest budget in history, \$14 million.

According to data most tourists arrived from the United States. The average age of tourists visiting the country was 43, travelers stayed at least 11 days and spent \$1,200. 68% are on vacation while 18% were in the country for business purposes. 65% of the tourists come to enjoy the beaches but also want to visit forests. 44% are attracted to the flora and fauna of the country and 37% are interested in visiting the volcanoes. Recommendations from friends and relatives are what motivated 65% of the visitors to Costa Rica while the warmth of the Costa Rican people appealed to them most.

Costa Rica is anticipating receiving 2.3 million tourists by 2012.

Licorera Feliz

Craving imported chocolates?

Residents of Ojochal are lucky to have a wonderful gourmet store, Licorera Feliz, in the Ventana De Osa Plaza. Licorera Feliz offers a vast array of gourmet treats including imported cheese, liquor, wine, beer, cigars and organic food. They boast one of the largest wine selections in the country with 300 varieties as well as a myriad of imported beers and champagnes not found elsewhere. Here you can find the perfect ingredients for a seaside picnic or delicious meal at home. The store is a great place to find hard to get gourmet ingredients as well as things like Cuban cigars or a great selection of Tequilas.

The amiable owner, Kumari Lefebvre, is originally from Montreal and has been in Ojochal for 14 years. She's been running the shop for 9 years and also owns the adjacent Green Leaf gift shop as well as the Mystic Dive Center. She's multilingual and is happy to assist customers with procuring almost any gourmet products.

Conveniently located in the Ventanas plaza it's the place to go if you're craving something that may not be found in traditional Costa Rican grocery stores. Be sure to stop by.

They're open every day from 9 until 6 and can be reached at 506-786-5233.



Tree Tomato of Costa Rica *Paradise Post*

By Tricia Stapleton

Part of the appeal of living or traveling in an exotic country is the chance to sample unfamiliar foods. One of the foods not to be missed while in Costa Rica is the tomate de palo or tree tomato. Although its place of origin is not certain, the tree tomato is generally believed to be native to the Andes of Peru and probably also Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia. Here in Costa Rica it is cultivated and naturalized in the highland mountainous regions.

The fruit is 2 or 3 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide and resembles a hen's egg in shape. Skin color can range from, blood-red to orange -yellow with firm outer flesh color varying accordingly from orange-red to orange - yellow and the pulp surrounding the seeds ranging from dark-purple to yellow. The fruit has a slightly resinous aroma and the flavor suggests a cross between a tomato and apricot.

Peeled, diced fruits, with diced onion, breadcrumbs, butter and appropriate seasonings are employed as stuffing for a variety of roast meats. Tree tomato slices, alone, or combined with sliced apple, may be cooked in pies. Peeled, sliced and seeded tree tomatoes, with lemon rind, lemon juice and sugar, are cooked to a jam; or, with onions and apples, are made into chutney. Whole, peeled fruits, with sugar, are cooked to a sauce for use on ice cream. The peeled fruits may be pickled whole, or may be substituted for tomatoes in a hot chili sauce.

In addition to its culinary uses, the tree tomato is also known to have various medicinal properties. It has been used to relieve stress and help to cure migraines and severe headaches. It is used for colds, sore throats, liver diseases and diabetes and it is said to improve the immune and circulatory systems.

Cosecha Casera Chirripo/Chirripo Homegrown
...connecting conscious consumers
and sustainable producers
San Gerardo de Rivas, Perez Zeledon
Costa Rica, Central America
Tel (Orders) 506 735 5531 Mario
Tele/Fax 506 735 5351
Celular 506 365 4040 Tricia
Email chirriphomegrown@gmail.com



Citrus

RESTAURANTE + LOUNGE

Citrus Restaurant and Lounge

Entrees \$5 - \$20

Ojochal de Osa, Costa Rica ~ Located

across from the Police Station

Open: Tuesday - Saturday from 11am to 10pm

Citrus is brand new on the scene, where euro-chique meets the jungle both in cuisine and setting. Citrus represents world-class cuisine at unspeakably low prices as Exotica does. Marcella serves delicious steak, seafood and vegetarian dishes. This is the same Marcella of the

Manglarsur floating restaurant, which was closed a over year ago to open this restaurant. The tradition of excellence continues. The food is Euro-Latin fusion and is at least as good as upscale U.S. big-city restaurants. Oh, and a wine room? In the jungle? The menus are written on chalkboards and change daily. It's official—Ojochal has the best cuisine, per capita, of any city, town, or village in Costa Rica . Contact Marcella at 506-786-5175 or restocitrus@yahoo.ca. Citrus has been packed from the day it opened. Reservations are a must.

The Ojochal Ghost Connoisseur

Costa Ballena Women's Club

What started last year as a small group of women meeting for lunch has grown surprisingly fast. The Costa Ballena Women's Club (formerly the Ojochal Women's Club) now consists of a total of 161 interesting women who have moved to town from all walks of life. They may speak different first languages and come from various backgrounds but their love for Costa Rica and desire to give back has brought them together.

The premise was to grant a venue for women in and around Ojochal to provide community service, social activities and business networking opportunities. The premise is working.

The club's activities are quite astonishing and varied. They truly have something for everyone. This month

they're sponsoring a community First Aid Class offering instruction on basic lifesaving techniques that everyone should know. They collected gifts and musical instruments for needy children over the holiday season. Additionally, they've increased community awareness of recycling and have raised money and supplies for local schools.

They also offer a newcomer's support group assisting women with adjusting to life in Costa Rica as well as offering translation services and Spanish classes. They support new members to the community with information on where to shop and what to do in the area. There is no need to worry about boredom in Ojochal.

Social activities include belly

dancing, yoga, gardening, cooking, etc.... If something is of interest to you you'll be sure to find others with similar interests. They have recently added "field trips" to their repertoire, visiting museums and attractions as a group and have added activities for girls.

The group meets regularly, publishes a monthly newsletter in 3 languages and a website in 8 languages. www.costaballenawomensclub.com.

Not only are they making friends and having loads of fun, the women are improving our entire community.

If you would like more information you can contact the Costa Ballena Women's Club at ojochaliwc@hotmail.com.

Tres Rios Recycling Program



The Tres Rios recycling program was started as a joint project between the foreigners who live in the valley and the local school. It is part of a national project run by the University of Costa Rica with the assistance of the Municipality of Osa. We collect recyclables from Dominical to Cortes.

The objectives of the project are two-fold. Firstly, to decrease the amount of recyclable material which goes to the landfills and more importantly to help educate people of the benefits and importance of recycling. By involving the local school, we hope to educate the children who will then take the message home.

Items which are acceptable for recycling are; glass and plastic drink bottles (no food containers), plastic containers which have not contained chemicals or petroleum products, beer and pop/soda cans (no food tins). At the moment we are unable to accept paper or other metal items.

Please, no garbage. It is amazing how much garbage we do get - it's not pleasant to sort it.

It would be greatly appreciated if items are rinsed and sorted into glass, plastic and cans. This makes our work a lot easier.

Items can be dropped off at the Tres Tucanes Yamaha dealer in the Cinco Ventanas Plaza (behind the gas station) or at the salon communal (the building next to the soccer field) in Tres Rios.

We ask you all to take the time to recycle - it will help to preserve this beautiful country.

Casa del Pacifico

Casa del Pacifico assists homeowners with a smooth transition from possession to occupancy. Their commitment is to ensure your home is complete and all of your furnishing and decorating needs are taken care of before arriving in Costa Rica.

As a result of their established connections with major suppliers, furniture dealers & local manufacturers, you can be sure you are receiving the best prices and top quality merchandise backed by warranties and service.

As your delivery date nears, they'll manage the implementation of final construction inspections and act as your arbiters and advisors for the final completion.

Their full services include: the selection and acquisition of all merchandise; housekeeping; storage services; appliance & merchandise installation & set-up; Sky TV satellite services; Internet services and temporary caretakers. More information is available at:

www.casadelpacifico.com

New Species Discovered in Costa

We know Costa Rica has a dizzying array of flora and fauna containing 5% of the world's biodiversity, including 878 species of birds, 228 types of mammals, 218 reptiles and 175 amphibians. Just last month three new species of salamanders were discovered by an expedition organized by the Costa Rica Natural History Museum. This increases the number of salamander species in Costa Rica to 43.

The new species were discovered in La Amistad National Park along the Southern border of Costa Rica. La Amistad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the largest forest reserve in Central America however it's one of the least explored places on the continent.

Two of the new salamanders are nocturnal, coming out at night to feed.

One is 8 centimeters long and black with a bold red stripe down its back and small yellow markings on its side. The second is 6 centimeters long and deep brown with a pale cream underside. The third is a tiny 3 centimeters long with maroon coloring and black markings on its side.

Sometimes mistaken for lizards, salamanders (called "sallies" by people who raise them) have soft, moist skin covering their long bodies and even longer tails. They have no scales, claws or ear openings. Most salamanders are carnivorous eating insects and small invertebrates. The largest eat fish, frogs and "ouch" other salamanders.

Salamanders should not be



touched. The oils in our skin is toxic to them and they cannot tolerate the salts or heat of our hands. Sadly, people are salamanders' worst enemies. Humans polluting and destroying their wetland habitats has caused great declines in many salamander populations.

According to WildlifeExtra.com on average, 2 new species of fish are found every week, and it is thought that the jungles of the world contain many more amphibians and reptiles than have yet been named. Even now we still get a few new bird species discovered every year, and, amazingly, new species of mammals are still found occasionally.

La Amistad National Park

La Amistad, International Peace Park, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in south-eastern Costa Rica and includes most of the Talamanca mountain range and its slopes. The location is unique to Central America where fauna and flora have met from North and South America to interbreed. Tropical rainforests cover most of the area. It's been estimated that most of Costa Rica's native species live there including more than 250 species of reptiles and amphibians, 600 species of birds, 215 species of mammals and

14,000 species of plants. La Amistad is reputed to harbour the world's second most diverse butterfly fauna.

Explorers will be rewarded with glimpses of tapirs, giant anteaters, monkeys and coatis. All 6 species of neotropical cats exist in La Amistad; puma, ocelot, margay, oncilla, jaguarundi and the largest population of jaguars in Central America.

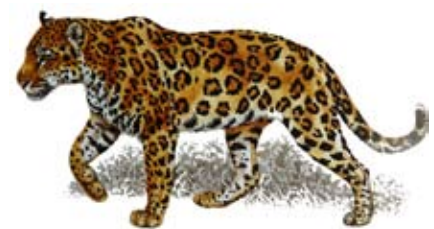
The park has been managed and created jointly between Costa Rica and Panama. 479,000 acres (almost twice the size of Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado) are in Costa Rica and an additional 510,000 acres are in Panama.

La Amistad is the largest, most remote National Park in Costa Rica with more virgin forest than all of the other parks. It protects widely diverse habitats, from tropical lowland wet forest (rain forest), tropical highland forest (cloud forest) and subalpine/alpine rainy páramo

(tundra). Much of the park has never been explored, and it would be ill advised to venture very far beyond its boundaries without an experienced guide.

In addition to its biological diversity, Costa Rica's largest population of indigenous communities inhabit the Talamanca highlands. Plants with medicinal value are used by indigenous and non-indigenous people. Medicine men ("awápas") use a large variety of plants to treat a wide range of ailments from anemia and ulcers to snake bites.

The entrance fee is \$7 and trails in La Amistad are unmarked. There is no lodging in the park, however camping is allowed in some areas.



Jaguar

Welcome to the Neighborhood

We'd like to welcome Lucinda and Ken to our community. Lucinda Chandler is an avid traveler, backpacker and cyclist (cycling, alone, across the USA in 2007). She is originally from Wisconsin, moving to Massachusetts during her highschool years and since 2001 living between Scottsdale, Arizona and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts where her partner Ken Chisholm is the Director of Human Resources and General Services at Martha's Vineyard Hospital as well as the Administrator of Windemere Nursing Home. He is an EMT, enjoys traveling, kayaking and is a New England Patriots fan!

Lucinda is also the CEO and Founder of www.guidedcycling.com in which she provides unique & exciting guided cycling tours on recumbent trikes for the ultimate in cycling comfort!

Ken and Lucinda are looking forward to designing and building their dream house on their newly purchased lot in Phase 9, which has both fantastic ocean and mountain views!

"We feel lucky to have joined such an outstanding tour led by Steve and

Kristina from Pacific Lots! We are looking forward to building a dream home in a country that has figured out how to balance its environment of beautiful and exotic animals and flora and the humans that live among them! It was also refreshing to experience the kindness and pleasantries of the Ticos! As we drove past so many of the people smiled and waved! Imagine that! "



We'd also like to introduce Bettie and Jim. Bettie is a practicing RN who is slowly closing down a 13 year private Geriatric Care Management practice. When their home is built in Costa Rica, she hopes to become involved in the community and volunteer time at the new hospital.

Jim recently retired after being a 20 year Building Commissioner for a Town just west of Boston. He is also licensed as a Plumber and operated his own plumbing company prior to becoming the Commish. Both live just West of Boston.

Bettie and Jim enjoy the outdoors, adventure and gardening. They fell in love with Costa Rica upon arrival and are looking forward to the day when they will be able to enjoy the clean fresh air; the beautiful lush land; the ability to have a ready supply of fruits and vegetables; the great warm steady temperatures; and the friendliness of the Tico people. There are only positive experiences to be had.

In the meantime, they are building a home in Ogunquit, Maine on the seacoast.



Also new owners in our community are Brad and Renee Makimaa. Brad and Renee reside in Key West, Florida with their 17 month old daughter, Caylaa. Brad is a Podiatrist. Renee is a nurse, boat captain, and, most importantly, a full time mom. Brad is an avid golfer and they both enjoy outside activities such as swimming, diving, sailing and fishing. The Makimaa family looks forward to spending lots of time in Costa Rica. They love the beaches, the rain forest, the people, and the laid back lifestyle. Brad can't wait to show his little girl a toucan!!

If you'd like to contact a new owner or would like to be introduced in an upcoming newsletter please contact us at info@PacificLots.com or at 305-295-0137.

Wow, It's 2008 already! Kristina and I just finished another 8 day escorted property tour of Costa Rica with 6 couples. We'd like to welcome all our new friends and neighbors from the trip as well as all our other new clients from the past few months. We'd mentioned to tour members that the Ojochal Woman's Club is soliciting donations for the local schools and I was touched to receive nearly 100 pounds of art supplies, backpacks, children's books, tooth brushes and other dental care products, etc. from our group upon arrival into Costa Rica.

It's amazing the changes we are seeing in the Ojochal area. First, the municipal government is working feverishly at widening and improving the main road in Ojochal, with rumors of new pavement to follow. The much awaited opening of Citrus, a new restaurant in Ojochal has everyone in town raving. Ojochal clearly has some of the best restaurants in all of Costa Rica. Also exciting are the 5 new commercial plazas that have recently opened in nearby Uvita. Two new banks, a huge new furniture store, a new appliance store but most exciting is the new La Corona Supermarket, loaded with hard

to get food items, macro, natural, fresh and exciting things to eat and drink. It's nice to see filet mignon in their meat department at less than \$4 per pound and a huge new seafood department with great fresh items like sea bass, prawns and lobster tails. I've never been much of a shopper but the choice and selection in our area is clearly catering to our large international base of home owners.

Work continues on the Costenera Highway and we were happy to make the drive from Quepos to Dominical in a bit over an hour. MOPT continues to work on the new bridges down the coast and the road is just about ready for pavement, what a change from only a year ago, when the trip took over two hours.

We have a busy show schedule this winter, primarily in Florida but it looks like our new reps, Forrest and Sandy Hawkins, will be exhibiting in Las Vegas or LA in the next month or so. The guest house just got complete bathroom makeovers in all the rooms and a complete paint job on the building is just getting started. Prices continue to rise so those of you who have not yet gotten down to purchase your piece of



paradise, perhaps you may want to join us on our next 8 day tour, scheduled April 5-14. As always, the 2 night guest house tours run three times per week, what are you waiting for?

See you in Paradise,

Steve Linder
Steve@PacificLots.com

p.s. If you'd like to receive a complementary video about Costa Rica and our development please send me an email.



Adrenaline Rush in the US



Adrenaline Rush in Costa Rica

"To pull together a group of strangers, navigate a foreign country with that group, while maintaining happiness and awe within the group is remarkable!"
Lucinda



"This was the only way to see the country. If we had gone on our own we would have never seen so much nor would our interest in returning be so great." Jim

"We enjoyed absolutely every aspect of this trip. We never would have seen, or done many of the activities if it hadn't been for Steve and Kristina. I especially loved the zip line. There was nothing I didn't enjoy." Bettie

January Tour



"We felt cared for without being fawned over, and the total lack of sales pressure made it a great experience." Julie

