

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica
and Beyond

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Updates from the Osa

The biggest news this quarter is that the hotly debated CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement) has been ratified by a very close margin of 51-48. Voter turnout was a record 60% and there have been strong arguments for and against the referendum for several months. The proponents say that CAFTA will boost growth, cut unemployment and benefit the poor. Opponents believe it will jeopardize Costa Rica's farm industry and give foreigners too much control over the \$22 billion economy. It will also impact the state monopolies on telecommunications and insurance. The next step is enacting 12 laws by the end of February to put Costa Rica in compliance with the treaty.

On the local front we're waiting with mouths watering for Marcella and Sylvain's new venture, Citrus Restaurant and Lounge opening later this year. We're also expecting a new furniture and home décor store, Royal Palm Interiors, to open in early January.

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How Happy are We?

Costa Rica ranks 3rd among 178 countries on the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index (HPI) which rates human well-being and environmental impact. The index is designed to challenge well known indexes such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Human Development Index (HDI) which do not take sustainability into account. The HPI also recognizes that people would rather be happy and healthy than rich.

Each country's HPI value is a function of its average subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth and ecological footprint per capita.

More information can be found at:

www.neweconomics.org and
www.happyplanetindex.org

Women in Politics

Despite Costa Rican "Machismo" women are well represented as elected government officials.

Costa Rica, through a series of laws passed to ensure women were represented within the political system, has made tremendous strides in that direction. By 2002, the percentage of women municipal legislators in Costa Rica was higher than any other democratically elected national legislature in the world. According to the latest figures from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Costa Rica has gone from 16 percent to 39 percent of women in the national legislatures, ranking 4th worldwide.

In the United States women make up only 16% of the membership of the Senate as well as 16% of the U.S. House of Representatives. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, out of 133 countries studied, the United States ranks below the world average at 67th, right behind Zimbabwe, Panama and El

Salvador.

Top officials at the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean women's conference stated that countries which have more women in national legislative bodies tend to have stronger gender-equality laws.

"The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population." The IPU Council



Nicolas and France, owners of Crocodile in Ojochal, have been providing locals and tourists with exciting as well as serene diving and snorkeling expeditions since 2006. Nicolas has been diving for 20 years and has been an instructor for the past 3. He's dove all over the world including the Caribbean and the challenging dives of Newfoundland. However, he prefers Costa Rica for the variety and beauty of the ocean life.

They were both born in Quebec and moved to Costa Rica from Montreal. Nicolas was working as an electrician and France owned a large nursing home. After visiting Costa Rica repeatedly for the past 5 years they decided to take the plunge and move here full time a year ago. They had fallen in love with the warm climate and pristine nature. They've since found their new life suits them perfectly. They don't miss the pressures of Canada and it's been a beneficial and relaxing change for both of them.

On their days off they enjoy playing with their 3 dogs and while Nicolas likes reading, backgammon and learning everything he can about diving, France has been studying Pilates and is known to be a terrific cook.

For more information or sign up for a trip contact France and Nicolas at info@crocodile.com or at 011-506-786-5270.

Caño Island

Caño Island Biological Reserve is one of Costa Rica's well known national parks. The island is located off the Osa Peninsula in the Pacific ocean directly west of Drake Bay.



It's the exposed part of an underwater mountain thrown up by an ancient collision of the two tectonic plates on either side of Costa Rica. The center of the island features a plateau 295 feet high, covered by evergreen trees reaching heights of 164 feet. The border consists of white sandy beaches. There is a wide and well maintained trail going up to a lookout and an archaeological site.

Caño Island harbors a pre-Columbian cemetery and many tombs and artifacts are found in the undergrowth including granite spheres (*bolas*) which have remained a mystery since their discovery. The sizes of these ancient relics range from that of a baseball to a Volkswagen bus and can weigh as much as 16 tons. The stones are believed to have been carved between 200 BC and 1500 AD. Nobody knows exactly how they were constructed or what they were used for. Since being discovered in 1940 they've been relocated throughout the country (there are even a couple in US museums) adding to the difficulty in deciphering their purpose.

Only about ten species of birds call Caño Island home, including cattle egret, common black hawk, osprey, brown booby and northern phalarope. The mammals that can be found here include: opossum, paca, boa constrictor, brown tree frog and the transparent tree frog. Also found here are locust, wild fig, wild cocoa, rubber trees, wild strangler, cow trees, fern B, trumpet trees, plus more than 158 varieties of plants.

The real beauty of Caño Island is not found on its land, but underwater. The Caño Island's waters are some of the bluest in the country and are home to a spectacular variety of stunning marine flora and fauna as well as coral reefs. The island is surrounded by five

platforms of low coral reefs and has recently moved into the spotlight as one of the world's best diving locations. Both snorkeling and scuba diving found here are some of the best in all of Costa Rica. During the dry season, visibility

can be up to eighty feet enabling visitors to see the amazing amount and variety of sea life thriving there. With fantastic underwater visibility you may see turtles, dolphins, stingrays, manta rays, moray eels, barracudas, tuna, snapper and grouper swimming alongside a variety sharks and humpback or pilot whales.

In 1973 the island was leased to a Spanish developer with plans to build a megaresort. The island, however, was heroically saved by an outburst of popular displeasure and named Reserva Biológica Isla Caño. It's currently administered as part of Corcovado National Park.



Stone sphere in the courtyard of the National Museum of Costa Rica

Admission is \$8 and the ranger station is open for visitors from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Reservations are required as the number of daily visitors is limited. Several dive operators, including Crocodile in Ojochal, can arrange trips to visit the island.

La Parcela- Deluxe Oceanfront Dining

La Parcela – Have They Got a View for You!

4 stars (Out of 5)

\$10 – 25

South Rim of Dominicalito Bay

Whether visiting or living on the Ballena Coast, you absolutely must turn west off the Costanera at the La Parcela sign on the south end of Dominicalito bay at least once. Then you may go back every day until you leave. To offer a disclaimer to the competing restaurants in the area, La Parcela offers the unique treat of higher-end Costa Rican food along with amazing hospitality and a killer ocean view toward the Osa



Peninsula, all at the right price, the combination of which fetch the 4-star rating.

The short private road to La Parcela is stunning, with elevated views of Dominicalito Bay and the fishing boats that regularly park there between outings. When you arrive at the restaurant, the wait staff will undoubtedly greet you with the smiles and warmth you might expect from a 4 or 5-star restaurant in the states. Some of them have been working there as long as 20 years, and they take wonderful pride in their work. You will then be seated at a table with an staggering ocean view, which is safe to say since virtually every seat has one.

Once seated, order the tuna tartar, some of the freshest seared tuna you've ever tasted marinated in a ginger and soy sauce with diced avocado. Alternatively, try the amazingly fresh ceviche the way only Costa Ricans can make it. Wash your starters down with a guanabana shake, very characteristic and delightfully sweet. On to the entrees, the main course tuna is an amazingly

generous portion of Asian-cooked catch with wasabi and noodles. For that matter, all the fish dishes are delicious and fresh. If you're not counting calories, order the club, which is a grilled chicken club quesadilla with some of the best fries you'll get anywhere. It's just huge! Pass a side order of yucca (called cassava in the States) around the table, deep-fried and served with a side of Thousand Island sauce. The grand finale should be the flaming show of bananas flambé prepared tableside.

When we're on the Ballena Coast, we consume at least every other lunch at La Parcela. The combination of great view, service, and food is tough to beat for the price. Don't miss it!

The Ojochal Ghost Connoisseur

Chirripo Homegrown

When most of us think of Costa Rica it is the bucolic countryside, towering forests, teeming waterways and incredible animal and marine life that win our hearts and imaginations. When visiting or moving to this country we all would like to conduct ourselves in a way that is supportive of this image. As we have learned from new levels of public awareness in our home countries, chemical based, modern day agriculture which is also being practiced in Costa Rica is a threat to that natural environment. If you are living here or just visiting there is an alternative. By ordering your food from Chirripo Homegrown, you will be using your purchasing power to support local farmers and to become part of a growing movement that promotes farmer welfare, environmental stewardship, good health and fresh, delicious food. They offer weekly opportunities to purchase fruits and vegetables, free-range meat and dairy, sustainable sourced fish, bulk staples and loads of other ethically produced products. In addition they offer an array of gift and artisan items providing beautiful and ethical keepsakes for you and your family. For more information or to place an order please contact them at the addresses below.

Cosecha Casera Chirripo/Chirripo Homegrown

...connecting conscious consumers and sustainable producers

Cellular 506 365 4040

Email: chirripohomegrown@gmail.com



Gallo Pinto: The National Dish of Costa Rica



Gallo Pinto with eggs a la Buena Vista-

Gallo Pinto "Spotted Rooster" is considered the national dish of Costa Rica. It consists of black beans and rice as well as onion, peppers and cilantro. Patricia Vega, a PhD of history and a professor at the University of Costa Rica, has undergone a study on the origin and traditions of the local dish. Pico Gallo originated on the banana plantations of the Caribbean coast in 1940 where Costa Ricans worked alongside Nicaraguans who commonly ate a rice and beans dish which included ingredients that were difficult to prepare. When the Costa Rican's returned to San Jose they began to modify the dish into what it is today.

It's highly nutritious may be served for breakfast lunch and/or dinner. No trip to Costa Rica is complete without enjoying it at least once.

Fresh Baked Goods Available in Ojochal



Joel Yoder with Pie

If you're lucky enough to find yourself in our village on a Friday be sure to stop at the entrance to town. You'll find a delightful young man selling some of the tastiest treats and freshest dairy goods in Costa Rica.

Joel Yoder, is a Mennonite who lives with his wife and baby daughter along with about 75 others in a small community southwest of Ojochal. He's enjoyed traveling to several states in the USA, was born in Costa Rica and is fluent in English, Spanish and a dialect of German. Joel values hard work and when he's not selling his farm fresh goods you can usually find him working in his dairy. Perhaps because he's never idle he's able to stay so thin despite indulging in scrumptious pastries.

With more than 1.5 million Mennonites worldwide, 2500 call Costa Rica home. They place a strong

emphasis on disaster relief, peace and voluntary service. Persecuted in Europe during the seventeenth century they are now living peacefully throughout the world. There are several classifications within the Mennonite faith today and there is a wide scope of worship, doctrine and traditions among them.

Some of the all natural, handmade goods for sale include:

Cheese, yogurt and butter.

Banana Bread.

Carrot cake.

Pies including berry.

Cakes including chocolate.

Cinnamon rolls and donuts.

Bread (a wide variety).

Cookies including:

oatmeal, gingerbread, chocolate chip and peanut butter.

The Frogs of Costa Rica

Poster animals of Costa Rica, frogs are being heavily researched and abound throughout the country. 39 species can be found here. Ones that are poisonous are brightly colored to warn away predators. The red-eyed tree frog is one of the most famous. It is bright green above with blue sides, a white belly, orange hands and feet and red eyes. Other striking Costa Rican frogs include the blue jeans poison dart frog (bright red with vivid blue legs) and the green and black poison dart frog (beautiful lime green with black splotches).

Although they have skinny legs, suggesting weak muscles, they are excellent jumpers. Their adhesive toe pads allow them to climb even vertical surfaces. Most are nocturnal, emerging at night to forage for insects and to pursue romantic interests. One species actually attach their eggs to tree leaves over water and as the eggs hatch the tadpoles drop into the water below. Others lay 2000 or more eggs per clutch which hatch in 2 to 6 days. Since fish eat frog eggs survival chances are increased for frogs that can find "fishless water". Poison dart frogs lay their eggs in forest litter and then transport them to the water tanks of bromeliads.

Costa Rican frogs use several methods to deter predation; cryptic coloring that allows them to blend into their environments, rapid leaping, loud startling screams when grabbed by predators and poisons. One species produces skin toxins that cause sneezing in people even if they are not handling a frog and that cause pain and paralysis when ingested or when penetrating the body via an open wound. In some species even the eggs and tadpoles produce toxins making them unpalatable. The toxin that poison dart frogs secrete is due to their diet of alkaloid rich insects. In captivity these frogs lose their toxicity when they are fed insects that are not rich in alkaloids.

Virtually any time of day is a good time to find frogs in Costa Rica. Although, they're easier to spot during early hours, at dusk and during the rainy season. The best way to view these colorful creatures is by taking your time when walking in the rainforest and peering into bromeliads. Watch for moist leaf litter and large leafed plants, such as poor man's umbrella and philodendrons. They're also commonly spotted around streams, lakes and marshes.



Red-eyed Tree Frog



Blue Jeans Poison Dart Frog



Green and Black Poison Dart Frog

Welcome to the Neighborhood

We'd like to welcome Paul, Melissa and Drew to our community. They're currently living in Pennsylvania. Paul has been in the insurance business for 31 years. He has a BS in Business Administration from Clarion University, in Pa. His hobbies are golf, golf and more golf! Melissa was also in the insurance business (she represented a different company) for almost 20 yrs. When she had Drew she decided to stay at home with him. She's currently a substitute teacher with a BS degree in Business Administration from Geneva College in PA. Melissa's hobbies are gardening, reading and golf. Paul and Melissa both also enjoy being a spectator at Drew's various sports games, racquetball and being in the outdoors.

Drew is 10 and in the 5th grade at a local Christian school called



Bellevalle Mennonite School. He enjoys playing on the soccer, swim and baseball teams. He plays the piano and loves the outdoors too. He's also a golfer.

Drew is the greatest joy in their lives. All three of them enjoy traveling and are planning on building a home in Phase 10.

We would also like to introduce some new faces to our sales team: Jay White and Bija Satterlee. Both avid world travellers, they have chosen beautiful Costa Rica as their "destination of choice" for both investment and retirement. They own several lots at Ventana del Pacifico and are planning their first house build in the spring of '08. Jay is a 20 year Navy flight officer, who has travelled extensively throughout his career, and finds Costa Rica both relaxing and exciting. He is a successful business-



man in Boston, with involvement in real estate and owns several fast food franchises. Bija has travelled the world during her competitive ballroom dance career, but fell in love with Costa Rica on her visit several years ago. She has since spent extended periods of time there, travelling the country as an eco-tourist, and with her eye to real

estate. She is a Realtor in Massachusetts and knows good value when she sees it. "In my opinion, after researching all of Costa Rica, I find the southern Pacific zone to be not only my favorite place in the country, but the area most ripe for property appreciation." Incidentally, Jay and Bija will be leading a December 4-11 country/property tour.

Santa and Mrs. Claus of the North Pole have chosen to build a second home in our area. They recently visited Costa Rica and had a fantastic time. Their vacation property will be Rutchailo Verde and they're hoping to start construction as soon as the Christmas season is complete. You better be good!



Santa and Mrs. Claus



Santa's winter home



The Claus' reindeer

*"There is more to life than increasing its speed."
Gandhi*

Kristina

We had a terrific time and managed to see a significant chunk of the West coast. I'll provide you with our itinerary and a few observations for future travelers.

Day 1: Arrival in San Jose Day 2: We rented a 4X4 from VAMOS, (who provided very good service) and headed off southward to Drake Bay. The drive down was spectacular and the final 20 kilometres into Drake Bay were quite a challenge for a novice 4X4 driver. We had to negotiate very rough roads and undertake several river crossings. You can also get to Drake Bay by boat from Sierpe. The trip takes about 2 hours. Probably an easier option than the rough ride by road. Drake Bay is a lovely, secluded spot, well worth a visit. We did not have enough time to visit Corcovado National Park, but it looks like it's worth a visit. Day 3: Drove North to Ojochal and spent the afternoon looking at the beaches in the area. Our favourite was Playa Hermosa, well-suited for a long walk. Days 4 and 5: Spent at Ventana Del Pacifico. We were extremely well looked after and the staff were helpful and well-informed. Two days well spent. Day 6: Drove North to Manuel Antonio. A wonderful park, well worth the visit. Had a great meal at a neat restaurant called El Avion. Days 7 and 8: Headed North to Montezuma for a couple of days. We took a ferry from Puntarenas to Paquera to get there. We visited a great park near Montezuma called Caru. There are a number of nice walking trails and we saw lots of animals. Days 9 and 10: Hit the road again to look at some real estate in the Tamarindo area. We did not particularly like the very touristy nature of Tamarindo. Although Tamarindo's beach is nothing special there are many spectacular beaches in the area that are popular with the surfer crowd. We were not very impressed with the vegetation in the area, which is rather sparse. Days 11 and 12: Drove to Monteverde National park. We got a little lost along the way and ended up on narrow, rugged mountain pass that put our 4X4 and my mediocre driving to the test. It was well worth the drive and we did a canopy suspended bridge walk and took in the butterfly and hummingbird gardens. Days 13 and 14: Drove to Arenal volcano and had a great lava light show at night from our hotel room. We spent an afternoon and evening lazing at the hot springs. On our way back to San Jose we stopped for a visit of the butterfly gardens and La Paz waterfall then ended up in a world class traffic jam on the outskirts of San Jose. Day 15: Alas, it was back to reality and a flight home.

Observations:

- * Pack your bags, remove at least half of what you think you need and go;
- * Although it was the rainy season, we were not impeded in any significant way by weather. It rained mainly in the late afternoon or evening and not for long;
- * Credit cards were widely accepted. We carried very little cash and were able to get more when required from ATM machines;
- * If driving, rent a 4X4. The roads are terrible and distance does not translate directly into how long it takes to get somewhere. 20 miles can be 30 minutes or 3 hours. Cost Rica driving is a "contact sport". If you are a little courageous and a little crazy you will be rewarded with some of the most breathtaking scenery you will ever see.
- * We did not prebook accommodations. In the rainy season it was easy to find a hotel everywhere we went.
- * Although we brought along lots of bug spray we were amazed at how few mosquitoes were out. We were bothered on a few occasions by sand fleas, or "no-see-ums" in the evening at some restaurants.
- * The seafood is delicious and there was lots of variety.
- * Costa Rica has lots of great wildlife to see, including many bird species, reptiles and of course, monkeys. For those with a snake phobia, although they are out there, we did not see any and the people we talked to reassured us that they are timid and will generally move away from annoying humans unless you do something stupid and intimidate them.
- * As you and Steve told us, the vegetation in the Central and South Pacific coastal area is much more lush and tropical than on the Nicoya Peninsula, which is relatively flat and is essentially grassland dotted with outcroppings of trees.

When it's all said and done, Helene and I initially went to Costa Rica for the beaches and, believe me, the beaches around Tamarindo are gorgeous, but we unexpectedly fell in love with the jungle and mountains in the Central and South Pacific area. You were right, Ojochal is close enough to some nice beaches to get out for a walk when we want to, but its location, tucked into the mountain side is utterly serene. In the end we bought 2 properties in Phase 10.

Kindest regards,
David



We've had another busy quarter and had very successful shows this summer in the New England area, particularly the AARP show. We're focusing on the Florida market for the winter months (who can blame us) and will be traveling extensively throughout the state exhibiting at trade shows and fairs. We've purchased a large motor home to make life on the road more comfortable during our show tours. We'll do our best to let you know when we will be in your area.

We knew it would happen eventually; due to increasing construction costs Ventana del Pacifico has had to increase their building fees. As of January 1st, 2008 the price per square foot to build with us will go to \$85, still only about half of comparable construction costs in the US. It continues to be a competitive rate compared to other builders in the area and the quality is top notch. There will be an exception made only for the folks that are joining us on our January tour. Speaking of the January tour; we'll be traveling with a group of terrific people and will leave

San Jose on the 18th. We're heading toward Jaco for the first night. We'll then travel down the Pacific coast stopping at Manuel Antonio for a couple of days, with plenty of time to visit the national park. Next, we're moving on to Dominical for a day/night and then we'll spend three nights in Ojochal, where everyone will get a good feel for the value and beauty of the area. We'll head back to the capital via the inland road, stopping in the Orosi valley to round out our visit. I'm sure it will be a highly

informative and enjoyable trip. Everyone will have adequate time for pursuing leisure activities on their own as well as guidance for those who prefer more structure.

The hotel costs for the eight nights is estimated at about \$525 per couple and each guest is expected to cover their own meals and activities when not at the guest house. We charge \$500 per couple to join the trip, which covers all transportation within the country as well as lodging and meals while at the guest house. The \$500 is applied directly to the purchase price of a lot, along with a \$1000 credit toward airfare, if you end up deciding to buy something. If you are interested in joining us please let me know as soon as possible, as space is quickly filling up.

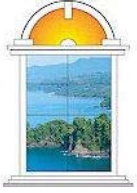
Stephen Linder



Typical beach traffic on the Southern Pacific



Typical beach traffic in the United States



We're continuously fine-tuning our message and services. If there is something you'd like to hear more about in our newsletter or have any suggestions please don't hesitate to let us know. As always we welcome referrals and recommend that folks take the time to see the community that we're so proud of.

To schedule a complimentary tour please contact us at 877-481-0300 or at info@PacificLots.com

Our newsletter is also available via email. Please contact us if someone you know would like to be on our mailing list.

"Pura Vida"

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*It's not too late
to own a slice of
Paradise!*