

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Ballena,
Costa Rica and Beyond

July 2012



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Updates from the Osa

Lots to write about this quarter and things are looking great. Steve and I were in Costa Rica in June and much of July and within a week's time we saw major improvement to the main thoroughfare (if you could call it that). The weather was beautiful with bright skies during the day and showers late afternoon. With our groups we saw several types of monkeys, macaws, toucans, crocodiles, sloths and so many other wonderful creatures I can't name.

There are new people moving in regularly now. Many new homes are complete and it's been very exciting to talk to owners about the process. There's a lot of enthusiasm in town and it's infectious.

There's a new salon next to the relatively new butcher shop that I've

heard good things about. I meant to stop in but ran out of time. There also seemed to be quite a few new businesses opening up from Uvita to Cortes. Believe it or not but there's a new bowling alley being built (see page 4). If anyone would like to announce an event or new business please let me know.

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Costa Rica One of the Safest Countries in Latin America

According to the recent Global Peace Index (GPI) studies Costa Rica has remained one of the safest and most peaceful countries in Latin America. The country is ranked 3rd behind Chile and Uruguay and 26th worldwide. The US ranked 88th. The least peaceful countries in Latin America are Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Columbia.

The GPI evaluates multiple factors when determining the rankings. The analysts look at things such as; violent demonstrations, access to weapons, homicides and terrorist acts. They also take into account the functioning of government, civil liberties, literacy rates and gender equality.

The report noted that after a continuous decline the world became slightly more peaceful compared to last year. Steve Killelea, of the Institute for Economics and Peace, stated "What comes across dramatically in this year's results and the six year trend is a shift in global priorities. Nations have become externally more peaceful as they compete through economic, rather than military means."

The safest country in the world is Iceland and Somalia was ranked as the least peaceful. You can find more information here:

www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi-data/



Warner Rojas:
Congratulations to the first
Costa Rican to reach the top
of Mount Everest!

Costa Rica Remains the Happiest Place on Earth

The 2012 Happy Planet Index (HPI) was released in June and for the second time Costa Rica ranked first as the happiest country on earth. Costa Rica has the second highest life expectancy in the Americas, experiences well-being higher than many richer nations and a per capita ecological footprint 1/3 the size of the USA's.

Costa Rica's life expectancy at 79.3 is higher than the USA which is 78.5 and 4.1 years lower than that of Japan which has the highest life expectancy in the world.

Costa Rica has promoted sustainability in its policies and produces 99% of all its energy from renewable sources such as hydro-electric, wind, and geothermal power. The country has reversed deforestation and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2021.

The GDP in the country is \$11,569 per capita which is approximately 1/4 of the USA's.

The HPI blends subjective and objective data to build a picture of progress within a country. The Index uses global data on life expectancy, experienced well-being and ecological footprint to rank countries. It asks the question: "How much well-being is achieved per unit of resource consumption?" You can find more information here: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

Violent deaths decline by 8%

According to Costa Rica's Red Cross "Cruz Roja", deaths within the country decreased by 8% for the first six months of 2012 over the same period last year. This continues a promising trend with violent deaths in 2011 decreasing by 2% over 2010.

Traffic accidents are the number one cause of violent deaths. The provinces ranked from highest to lowest in violent deaths are: San José, Limón, Alajuela, Puntarenas and Cartago.

Costa Rica is Region's Best Country for Raising Children

Save the Children recently ranked Costa Rica 13th out of 80 Tier II countries on their *Mother's Index* and 3rd out of 81 on their *Children's Index*. This 13th annual study documents conditions for mothers and children in 165 countries and shows where mothers fare best and where they face the greatest hardships. Their studies have shown that providing mothers with access to education, economic opportunities and maternal and child health care give them and their children the best

chance to survive and thrive. The study pointed out that wealth and healthy children don't necessarily go hand in hand. Costa Rica, Brazil and Chile are 3 countries performing better on child nutrition than their national wealth may suggest. You can find the full results here: [State of the World Mother's Report](#)



	Costa Rica	Belize	Ecuador	Panama	USA
% of births attended by skilled health personnel	99%	95%	98%	89%	n/a
% of women using modern contraception	72%	31%	59%	54%	73%
Female life expectancy	82	78	79	79	81
Expected # of years of formal school	12	13	12	14	18
Ratio of female to male income	.46	.43	.51	.58	.62
Participation of women in government	39%	11%	32%	9%	17%
Under 5 mortality rate per 1000	10	17	20	20	8
% of children under 5 moderately or severely underweight	1	4	6	4	n/a
% of pop. with access to safe drinking water	97%	98%	94%	93%	n/a
Mother's Index Rank (out of 80 countries, 43 for the USA)	13	42	20	24	25
Women's Index Rank (out of 81 countries, 43 for the USA)	20	51	30	22	19
Children's Index Rank (out of 83 countries, 44 for the USA)	3	24	33	32	31

Residency Papers Can Now Be Renewed at the Post Office

What was recently a bit of a headache has been greatly simplified. Foreign residents in Costa Rica are now able to renew their residency cedula (official residency document) at several post offices in the country. In a joint program between the immigration service and the post office the country has not only made the process simpler but also faster.

Previously it was necessary for residents to travel to immigration's main office in San Jose. The first phase of the program added 12 new locations situated around the central valley and before the end of 2012 there will be a total of 60 post offices around the country able to provide renewed residency status.

Welcome to the Neighborhood

E.K. and Holly are from Cody, Wyoming. After a year of researching potential retirement locations outside the US, they settled on Ojochal as the place to start looking. After the 3rd day of the property tour they decided to look no further, they both knew that this was the place and purchased an ocean/mountain view lot in Suenos del Tropicos.

"We were just so impressed with absolutely everything about the development and village. Marcel and Patrick were great hosts at the guest house and we had the opportunity to have an in-depth visit with some current expat residents, who answered a lot of our questions about what we will be facing as retirees in Costa Rica. Just knowing that Ventanas has been doing this for over 20 years, getting to see some of the homes that have been built, touring the wood shop, meeting the office staff, and exploring the area stores (especially the grocery stores!) made this a very easy and exciting decision to make!"



E.K. and Holly from Cody, Wyoming



Pat and Joe from Ocean Pines, MD

Greetings from Costa Rica! We are setting our sites to relocate to Costa Rica in the near future! The road less travelled has lead us to the Osa Peninsula! Our two sons and their families are looking forward to our next move. I am hoping to retire from my dental hygiene career and my husband, Joe, will continue his career in real estate and life insurance planning. We are so excited to plan for a future in Costa Rica and a more relaxed life in the Osa Peninsula. Life just feels 'right' in Costa Rica. We look forward to making new friends and enjoying the beauty of nature in Costa Rica! Pura Vida! Pat and Joe

Linda and Mike are from Reno, NV. They recently retired as anesthesiologists. Linda also owns a real estate brokerage that she created about five years ago to keep her amused in retirement. She says "Will have to rethink that now! We enjoy running, biking, backpacking, and sailing and look forward to learning Spanish (Mike actually speaks it a bit), and maybe how to surf. Can't wait to meet all the new neighbors and get started building our home."



Linda and Mike on the floating islands of Lake Titicaca, Peru

Dear Kristina and Steve,

Greetings from Costa Rica! We are on our last night of a wonderful trip and we thought we'd share some highlights. We started our trip in the Osa at Bosque del Cabo in Matapalo. We saw all 4 species of monkeys along with scarlet macaws, toucans, arracari's, several species of snakes and plenty of morpheo butterflies. Our necks were sore from looking up at all the monkeys flying through the trees.

We then headed north to Uvita and stayed at Tiki villas, which had a relaxing polynesian atmosphere. Our single standing bungalow was outstanding as we had views of the water and the jungle. The pool was tranquil and heavenly as it also had a great view of the water.

As always, we had to stop at Tortilla Flats for lunch for our customary surfside sub. The expanded bar area is a nice addition. Ceviche and arroz con pollo were delicious and fresh at Mirador La Talanguera, which is between Uvita and Dominical with ocean views to die for.

Citrus didn't disappoint either as Craig had a wonderful asian pork burger for lunch. We also had our share of tasty wings at the Jolly Roger on the hill in Dominical. There are so many flavors of wings to choose from. Our dinners seemed to be italian themed as we ate at both El Fuego and Mama y Papa. The pizza at El Fuego was delicious as was the lasagna. At Mama y Papa, the bolognese is to die for. Nice hearty portions at both restaurants, both with relaxing atmospheres.



You won't be surprised that we visited as many beaches as possible, but our favorite is still Playa Ventanas. One beach we hadn't visited before was Playa Tortuga which was beautiful. It is quite expansive during low tide. We also walked all the way out to the Whale's Tail for the first time.

Lastly, this is our first time traveling late in the season and we found that May is a wonderful time to visit Costa Rica. Can't wait to do it again in 2013!

Pura Vida! Craig and Sue (owners in Phase 10)

Bowling in the Rainforest?!

On a recent trip to Costa Ballena we came across a curious site. In the town of Coronado, sandwiched between Ojochal and Chontales was a construction crew working diligently on what appeared to be a bowling alley. We'd never seen a bowling alley in Costa Rica let alone in our corner of the country. We're always game for some entertainment so decided to contact the company directly. Luis Lopez, the general manager, told us that they're working hard to finish the facility by December of this year. Baxter Bowling is going to offer cosmic bowling on weekends when you can experience glow in the dark bowling. They'll have leagues, food, party facilities, pool tables, a sports bar and more. We can't wait to check it out.



Baxter Bowling Facility, the Artist's Rendition



Baxter Bowling Lanes

Costa Rica Exports Increase

For the first half of the year Costa Rica's exports grew by 16% over 2011. Data released by PROCOMER (Foreign Trade Corporation of Costa Rica) showed that electronics, particularly the manufacture of microprocessors grew by 54.7%, agriculture grew by 7.3% and manufacturing by 19%.

Luis Liberman, Vice President, announced that banana exports declined a bit and that 20 years ago it would have been a tragedy for the country but now with diversification it wasn't crucial. One fruit that's experiencing a boom are Costa Rican mangoes. Mango consumption in the USA has grown substantially and Costa Rica supplied the USA with 24.5% of the tropical fruit for the first half of 2012. According to PROCOMER the country exports more than 4000 products with the USA being the major importer but there has been substantial growth with China and Chile. The Vice President said that they are in the process of approving

Free Trade Agreements with Peru, Singapore and Korea. Jorge Sequeira, PROCOMER General Manager also said that 25 foreign companies have made investments in the country in recent months.

Costa Rica's top exports are: integrated circuits, medical equipment, bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar, textiles and electronic components.



Intel is Costa Rica's largest employer

Costa Rica's Economic Forecast Grows by 4.8%

Costa Rica's Central Bank has raised its 2012 economic growth forecast from 3.8% to 4.8%. The increase is primarily due to stronger than expected activity in the manufacturing sector, said Rodrigo Bolaños, president of the Central Bank. "This is due to growth in demand in both the external and internal markets, but we forecast a slowdown for the second half of 2012," he said. The Central Bank also forecast inflation to remain at about 5% through 2013. The rate is now at 4.6 percent. Costa Rica's economy grew by 4.2 percent last year.

GDP in Costa Rica Expected to Rise 5.5%

According to Nomura Securities International Costa Rica's economy will expand faster than earlier forecasts and will outpace inflation. GDP will climb 5.5% which is an increase from the earlier forecast of 4%. Boris Segura, an analyst for Nomura wrote "For the first time in recent memory, Costa Rica is poised to show real GDP growth that exceeds its inflation rate. This speaks volumes about Costa Rica's macroeconomic stability."

Costa Rica Great for Outsourcing

Tholons, the international business consulting firm, recently revealed in a study named "The 100 best destinations for outsourced operations by 2012", that San Jose, Costa Rica is considered one of the top 10 emerging cities closely behind Sao Paulo, Brazil and Buenos Aires, Argentina. The country also ranks 18 among the best in the world to outsource operations, business and information technology.

The services sector in the country has been increasingly offering more sophisticated services and is well positioned around the world.

Considerations When Comparing Areas and Developers

With any development be sure to ask the following questions, there have been a lot of failed projects in Costa Rica.

- Is the developer financially stable?
- Is any of the development funded by loans (potential for default)?
- Is the infrastructure complete (road, water, electric)?
- What is the track record and history of the development?
- Is your potential purchase in a development or stand alone, is it secure when you are not there?
- If you will be building, do you have a reliable, experienced, financially sound builder?
- Are there time limits that you must comply to, can you build your own home or hire any builder of your choice?
- Is the development sustainable? Is there adequate water supply, environmental issues?
- Are their environmental permits in hand (Minae, SETENA) from the regulatory overseers?
- What services are available from the developer/builder? Rental management? Property management? Residency assistance? Landscape services? Pool design/build?, Interior design? Help with banking?
- Is there a resale market readily available?
- How is the property zoned, farm zoning or residential zoning, mixed use, commercial, en condominio, can you do what you want?
- Is there an HOA and CC&R's? HOA's in Costa Rica are important to ensure funds are available for future maintenance but be sure they are reasonable, ours average about \$300 per year
- How large is the expat community? Are there services readily available: shopping, domestic help, gardening, pool cleaning, things to do?
- How safe and secure is the community, the development and the individual property?
- How far away are healthcare services and what level and quality of service is available?
- Are there ample restaurants, retail, philanthropic activities?
- How accessible is the area by air, bus, taxi, car, 4 wheel drive or 2 wheel drive? Drive time from International airport?
- Stability of the government, currency, democracy, property rights, banking system? Political stability?
- What is the level of income in the area compared to you, will you be a target, rich and poor in the community and the local crime rate.
- What is the social community like, unemployment level, opportunities, happy people?
- Economic conditions within the country and area in particular?
- How is the cost of living, specifically property tax, cost of healthcare, insurance, inflation?
- What is the future outlook of the area you are considering? Accessibility, infrastructure, major projects, healthcare?
- Any environmental issues, volcanoes, flooding, dry spells, fires, rain, cold, hot?



Don't let a nice gated entrance fool you. These are failed developments in Costa Rica.

The Pavement is Coming!

Many of you have asked me over the years if they will ever pave the roads in Ojochal or Chontales. I've told some of you that I have mixed feelings about them doing so since it will speed up the traffic and change things. Once paved, the dogs won't want to take their afternoon naps any more in the middle of the road. The kids won't play stickball

on the road. Well the day has come.

The municipality recently announced that the paving of Ojochal will begin this year. It will be done in five sections, ending at the entrance to phase 9 on one leg and at the Tortuga River bridge at the other. The first section will be from the highway to the elementary school. While we

were there last week there was lots of heavy equipment working on the underlayment. New hydrants are in and the paving should begin soon.

Greetings from Pacific Lots of Costa Rica. It's been another busy year. We recently started offering a new -7 day country and property tour. Our first two were in July and proved to be very popular. We've scheduled another December 1 - 7 and expect it to be a sellout. For more information go here: www.pacificlots.com/7-day-tour/. In other news, the water and electrical work is nearly done in Suenos Del Tropicos and Tropicos Verde. We can assure the utilities will be completed by the time your home is completed so now's the time to get your house built. Many of you in our older phases will be pleased to know the municipality is preparing to pave the roads in Ojochal. They've submitted a plan to pave in 5 segments, ending at the Tortuga River bridge and toward the entrance to phase 9. There's also a new bridge being constructed over the Balso River in Ojochal that will shorten the ride to phase 9 and improve accessibility. Also see the article about the new Baxter Bowling and Sports Complex being built just south of Ojochal and just north of Chontales, right in the middle of our developments. Even I was amazed when I saw it being built.

I also wanted to thank all of you that took the time to complete the survey about our new offerings of home packages including land. We received nearly 2000 responses. For those of you who'd asked me individual questions within the survey, please contact me directly since there were too many responses to search through and we were unable to answer questions sent through the survey. The results of the survey indicated that many of you are looking for a smaller 2 bedroom, 2 bath, single story home on a small lot with clubhouse & pool and the median price was between \$150,000 and \$200,000 that you'd be willing to pay for such a package. They won't have ocean views for that price but will give many of you the ability to purchase a second home with rental income potential without breaking the bank. Keep watching our newsletter since we are now working out the details and should have something to offer pretty soon.

In the past 3 months we did shows in Panama and the Dominican Republic and we'll be at the International Living event in Las Vegas in September and in San Jose, Costa Rica



in November. We'll have special tours around the Costa Rica event that I'm sure will sell out so if you plan to attend the IL event in San Jose in November and want to take our tour, contact us soon to insure space is available. With the uncertainty around us, Costa Rica is becoming more popular every day. Come see us and find out why....

Stephen Linder

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Utility Update for Chontales

It's good to write today with an update of activities in Chontales, our largest master planned community within our developments. Our crew there is very busy!

The main infrastructure of the water system for all projects in Chontales is in place; the water collection system is completed allowing an intake of 40 liters per second of water (10.5 gallons) to feed the developments, a particle filter is included along the way and a 65 m3 holding tank (17,000 gallons) is completed, its purpose being to serve as a water reserve for the area.

Of course, water is already available in Radiant Sun Valley, Vientos del Sur (Chiverre) and Tropicos Verdes (Condo del Cielo), but of particular interest is the fact that we have just begun working on the first stage of the water system for Suenos del Tropico (Rutchailo), our biggest project to date! At this point the collection tank is completed and much of the underground piping is now installed.

Likewise, we have signed a contract for the electrical infrastructure for residential service in Suenos Del Tropicico, which means that homes initiating building will be delivered with all services in place! Most of the electrical poles have been delivered and the engineering plan and permitting are complete. At this point anyone wishing to build in either Suenos Del Tropicico or Tropicos Verde can be assured that the utilities will be in place by the time the home is completed. I'm also excited to say that the first new homes are nearing completion in both phases, with many more in design and permitting.



Sylvaine inspecting the progress on the water collection system



A friend of ours in Quepos has asked us to get the word out that he's selling his fishing business. We've chartered his boats on numerous occasions, always having a terrific time. The fishing charter has been in business for over 15 years, includes 4 boats (ranging from 28 to 33 feet), fishing and office equipment, office space and a large client base. The owner will stay on for a while to help the new owner successfully transition into the company. He's asking \$650,000. Please contact me if you'd like more information. And remember we can always build you a luxury home a short commute away!