

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica
and Beyond

October 2008



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Updates from the Osa

The issue on virtually everyone's mind these past weeks is a potential looming global recession. Many people have been asking us how this could affect Costa Rica. The simple answer is that we don't know, but Costa Rica does seem to be in better shape to withstand a global downturn than many other countries. As of October 13th, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) projected that despite the Wall Street meltdown, Latin America's economy and trade will continue to grow however the growth rate may slow down in 2009. In its latest World Economic Outlook released this month the IMF estimated that Latin America's GDP would expand by 4.6 percent this year and for 2009 grow at 3.2 percent. Despite the slight revision next year, Latin America remains one of the leading growth areas in the world.

On the real estate front Steve and I have seen both trepidation and urgency from American's considering investing in this stable country. Costa Rica will continue to offer a vastly more affordable quality of life particularly due to the fact that housing expenses and healthcare are significantly lower than in the US.

The Ojochal area is continuing to grow and expand. In our next issue we'll be discussing the medical situation in the country as well as our area. Happy Halloween!

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Costa Rica The Most Democratic Latin American Nation

According to the annual Latin American Index of Democratic Development released in September, Costa Rica holds the top spot for democratic nations. The study concluded that half of Latin American countries have a low level of democratic development. Only the 3 countries with the highest scores (Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay) have not been subject to any crisis in recent times. The others regularly ascend and descend due to internal circumstances.

This is Costa Rica's first year in the top spot showing a 6% improvement over last year's scores. The nation scored 2% higher for Respect of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, largely attributed to female participation

in politics. Regarding social indicators, Costa Rica saw its ratings soar in 2008. Almost all indicators improved in this field, including a 16% improvement in the infant mortality rate. The country's CAFTA referendum which was put in the hands of the people also contributed to the high rankings.

The results, from best to worst: Costa Rica, Chile, Uruguay, Panama, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Honduras, El Salvador, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.



Photo by Peter Masse

According to the annual World Economic Forum report Costa Rica advanced 4 positions in the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) moving from 63rd to 59th. This leaves only Chile (28th), Puerto Rico (41st) and Panama (58th) above Costa Rica in Latin America.

Welcome to the Neighborhood

Deb and Terry consider themselves in the “prime of life”. Deb is a R.N. and has worked in all areas of nursing including ICU, coronary care, cardiac cath and on and on. She has been on “sabbatical” since 1996. She has numerous interests including gardening, horseback riding, reading, socializing with friends and being outdoors. She has been doing very well since having back surgery in Dec. '07 (she did, after all, ride in the Toyota Land Crusher when they were at the guest house and did the zip line). She's originally from New Jersey but moved to Florida as a teenager and after pursuing her wanderlust in her 20's, returned to Florida 25 years ago.

Terry has been living in

Boca Raton and practicing as an emergency physician for the past 27 years. He's not looking to retire for another 10 years or so (he says “hopefully less”). His hobbies have been varied. Most recently his obsession is with car racing, but he's also found other holes to throw his money into. He does love automobiles, but is realizing that perhaps he should find another hobby less tied up with fossil fuel. He's a golfer, skier, home handyman and raconteur of modest proportion. Deb and Terry have been married since 1994 and have a daughter Emily, age 20, currently in school.

They look forward to spending more time in Ojochal and getting to know the community and people better. They say that perhaps their single greatest claim to fame

is that they own the lot across the road from Steve and Kristina. Lucky them.



Bob hails from Connecticut where he works as a doctor in the insurance industry. He lived in Europe for three years as a teenager and has traveled extensively abroad, including most

European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Nicaragua, and many spots in the Caribbean. He is an A level racquetball player, has enjoyed alpine skiing and skydiving (he owns a t-shirt that reads “if at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you”), and claims to have invented the game of frisbee golf, though he has had trouble collecting the appropriate royalties. He recently toured our properties with his girlfriend Michelle, also in the insurance industry. Bob, in his continuous pursuit of thrill-seeking activities, set a record for the number of falls for a tour participant, received a record low score from the judges for his effort at the waterfall rope swing in Dominicalito, and bodysurfed through the caves at

Playa Ventana, an experience he will not soon repeat or recommend to others. Bob and Michelle have this to say about the area: “Utterly charming. Love the country focus on ecology and the practice of setting aside land for nondevelopment, saving threatened species, etc. The monkey shows at Costa Verde were great. The people seemed very friendly. The food was almost uniformly great and was without exception quite inexpensive.”

*Live in the sunshine, swim
the sea, drink the wild air.
~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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.

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Bringing Your Pets to Costa Rica

One consideration that many people make when deciding to move to a foreign country is whether or not they can bring their pets. Pets have become beloved family members and the thought of moving to paradise without them is painful for some and unthinkable for others. Fortunately, Costa Rica makes it easy to bring along Spot and Fluffy. It's a little more difficult to have Slither and Polly accompany you. If you haven't guessed Slither is a snake and Polly a parrot. It's particularly difficult to bring them in if they're on the endangered species list. So let's stick to the familiar dogs and cats.

There have been numerous instances of incoming passengers with pets being basically waived through customs but we believe it's better to go through the hoops and be safe even if nobody asks for your paperwork. For dogs and cats you'll need to prove to Costa Rican customs officers that your animal is healthy. You must have an International Health Certificate signed and sealed by the government of your country. If you're coming from the US you need an APHIS form 7001 issued by a USDA approved veterinarian and signed and sealed by the closest USDA office in your state. The completed form must not be over 10 days old when you enter Costa Rica. The pet needs to have been examined within 2 weeks before entering the country and have been vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis and parvovirus within the previous 30 days and have had a rabies shot (for animals 4 months or older) over 30 days but less than 1 year old. The Health Certificate does NOT need to be signed by a Notary Public or be authenticated by the Consulate of Costa Rica.

When you arrive in Costa Rica, the customs officer will do a visual inspection of your pet (for which you will be charged US\$1), and look over paperwork. If all is in order, you're through. If you're missing any documents or the officer decides your pet looks ill, the animal will either be temporarily released to your care or kept in a state kennel for up to 30 days, until you



work out what to do next—arrange for the necessary paperwork, or contact a local vet if your animal needs care.

Animals leaving Costa Rica require exit permits. You'll need a local vet to fill out a health certificate; often she or he will accept the original health certificate from your country of origin as proof that the animal is in good health.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not require general certificates of health for pets to enter into the US. However, health certificates may be required for entry into some states, or may be required by airlines for pets. You should check with officials in your state of destination and with your airline prior to your travel date. All cats and dogs are subject to inspection at ports of entry for evidence of infectious diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

To return to Canada a current health certificate completed by a licensed veterinarian in either English or French and dated within 10 days prior to departure is required. The certificate must accompany the pet stating that the veterinarian has examined the animal and is satisfied that the pet was not less than eight (8) weeks of age at the time of examination, is free of any clinical evidence of disease and was vaccinated not earlier than at 6 weeks of age for distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and parainfluenza virus. Dogs must have a valid rabies vaccination.



Centro Veterinario Costa Ballena

Located in the village of Uvita is a small shop dedicated to your pet's needs. The shop offers a vast variety of pet foods, toys and necessities. Also onsite is veterinarian Dr. Fernando Riera Silesky offering immunizations, check ups and other services. They can be reached at 2742-8282 or for emergencies at 8349-1995.

Jungle Pet Lodge

Many pet owners opt not to stress their pooches with stressful travel conditions via car or plane. An option in our area is the Jungle Pet Lodge, a hotel for dogs. Charming Nathalie from Canada offers private cages and a large play area for 6 dogs at a time. Natalie will make sure that all dogs are regularly exercised, well fed and secure for only \$7 per day. Located on a bumpy road off the Costanera in a beautiful area of the jungle it's a comforting option when your pet may not be too keen on a lengthy trip to visit your relatives. For more information you can contact Nathalie Lapierre at vergelca@yahoo.com

Cacao - Food of the Gods

by Tricia Stapleton



Chocolate lovers take heart! Recent findings reveal that dark chocolate is packed with high-quality polyphenol antioxidants that may promote overall cardiovascular health. Cocoa beans also contain flavonoids (like those found in tea and red wine), which promote healthy cholesterol levels and act as antioxidants. Great news!

Chocolate is also full of phenylethylamine, a naturally occurring substance in the body believed to help ward off the blues, as well as stearic acid, a unique saturated fat thought to help lower cholesterol. How's that for proof positive that eating chocolate may make you happy and healthy?

A sweet side note: As if that wasn't enough to convince you to dig in, chocolate also provides a slew of daily nutrients. A 1.4-ounce milk chocolate bar contains about 3 grams of protein, 7% of the adult daily value (DV) of riboflavin, 8% of the DV for calcium and 5% of the DV for iron.

In addition to being good for you, the cacao tree is also a good crop for our local ecosystem. This tree - which has been extensively cultivated in Mexico, Central and South America for many years, indeed long before the discovery of America, and at one time formed the currency of the natives - requires a humid climate with regular

rainfall and good soil. In addition it is an understory tree, growing best with some overhead shade, helping to ensure that taller trees are not cut down to assist its cultivation. Furthermore over 90% of Costa Rica's cacao is grown by smallholder farmers, who make little or no use of fertilizers and agro-chemicals. Whether you buy the whole fruit from our growers and process the beans yourself or take advantage of the wonderful gourmet chocolates we have on offer at the farmer's market, you'll be getting a product that is good for you and the planet and utterly delicious and decadent to boot. Disfrute!

Be sure to stop by the Uvita Farmers Market each Saturday from 8 -1 for all of your food needs.

Cosecha Casera ...connecting conscious consumers and sustainable producers
Cell 2770 2705
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Marino Ballena National Park

Marino Ballena National Park is one of Costa Rica's newest parks, established in 1990 to conserve marine species in the Southern Pacific. Encompassing 270 acres of land and over 13,000 acres of ocean it contains the largest coral reef on the Pacific side of Central America. The park also consists of important habitats such as 8 miles of beaches, mangroves (all 6 of Costa Rica's species), river mouths as well as Ballena and Las Tres Hermanas islands.

The park consists of 2 relatively unvisited stretches of grey and golden sand beach (Hermosa and Piñuela) separated by mangroves. Both are nesting grounds for Olive Ridley and Hawksbill sea turtles. Bottle Nose, Spinner and Spotted dolphins can be sighted year round. Humpback whales from as far away as Alaska and Hawaii migrate through the area from December through March to breed and bear their young. It's suggested that the new calves are protected by the shallow, calm, warm water. Once the young are strong enough the mother with her calf

returns to the northern cold water where their main food staple, krill, is abundant. The whales can sometimes be seen in small groups with their young. Crabs, lobster, sponges, mollusks and several species of fish are common in the waters. You can also easily sight iguanas and sea birds including pelicans, frigates and ibis which use the islands as nesting grounds.

The Olive Ridley and Hawksbill turtles can sometimes be seen laying their eggs during the night between May and November. They waddle onto shore, dig holes with their back feet and lay hundreds of eggs before returning to the sea. Most arrive on the waning moon, typically in September. If you happen to be fortunate enough to be there during the nesting do not expose them to light (flashlights or cameras) or disturb them in any way.

The park is great for beachcombing on its long, wide beaches. Scuba diving is also popular and good snorkeling is accessible from the shore, particularly at low tide.

The park gets its name from a land formation which has the striking resemblance of a whale's tail when viewed from the air. "Ballena" translates to "whale" in Spanish.

The beach is relatively undeveloped and showers and restrooms are typically not in working condition. There is a ranger station at the entrance. The entrance fee is \$7 US.



The Hawksbill - A Critically Endangered Turtle

The Hawksbill turtle is considered to be critically endangered. It has worldwide distribution and can be found on both the Caribbean and the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

The Hawksbill has a 6 month nesting season which is longer than any other sea turtle, occurring between July and October. The nesting behavior follows the general sequence of other sea turtles; emerging from the sea, selecting a site, constructing a pit and egg chamber, laying the eggs, filling and disguising the nest site and returning to the sea. The process takes from 1 to 3 hours. The turtles nest, on average, 4.5 times a season at intervals of about 14 days. The nests are commonly robbed by terrestrial predators such as dogs, raccoons, rats and humans. The eggs take about 60 days to hatch and the newborns make a perilous dash for the water in hopes to mature. The baby turtles are drawn to the sea by reflections of the moon on the water which can be disrupted by other light

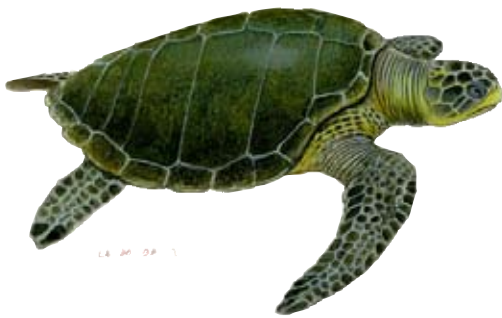
sources such as flashlights. Although the scramble only lasts a few minutes countless hatchlings are preyed upon by flocks of gulls and large crabs.

Hawksbills feed primarily on sponges, some of which are toxic to other animals. They've also been known to eat peanut butter and jelly fish (ok, maybe not the peanut butter) and other prey items. They close their eyes when feeding on stinging jellies since the jelly fish cannot penetrate their armored heads.

Hawksbill turtles have a hard shell discouraging predators from trying to eat them however they're still consumed by humans, sharks, crocodiles, large fish and octopi. They're distinguished from other sea turtles by a sharp curving beak and a saw like appearance of their shell margins. Adults have been known to grow to over 3 feet and weigh over 170 lbs. The lifespan of the Hawksbill turtle is thought to be between 30 and 50 years. Once thought

to be homebodies they are now known to be highly migratory.

Primarily due to human fishing practices the population is threatened with extinction and it has been classified as critically endangered by the World Conservation Union. Several countries such as China and Japan have valued hunting Hawksbill turtles for their flesh. Also, Hawksbill turtle shells are the primary source of tortoise shell material used for decorative purposes. In many nations it is illegal to capture and trade in Hawksbill turtles and products derived from them.



The Olive Ridley, named for the olive color of its heart shaped shell, is one of the smallest species of sea turtle. Although they are experiencing population loss this turtle is the most abundant of the sea turtles. It has a large range within the tropical and subtropical regions in the Pacific and Indian Oceans as well as the Southern Atlantic Ocean. This species is the most abundant off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and nesting takes place along the whole length of the country.

Nesting occurs at night with females riding in on the high tide, usually during the first or last quarter of the moon. The Olive Ridley is known for mass nesting with 300 or more females

The Olive Ridley – A Vulnerable Turtle

at a time coming ashore. Females will deposit over 100 eggs and return to the sea in less than 1 hour. The eggs hatch within 50 days and follow the same perilous journey of the Hawksbill. However, in Guanacaste on Playa Ostional turtle egg harvesting became legal in 1987. Local villagers can harvest eggs laid only during the first 36 hours of a nesting period since turtles nesting after this period would destroy the previously laid eggs. They've been able to harvest nearly 3 million eggs each season and in exchange the villagers protect the 27 million unharvested eggs from predators such as snakes and birds.

The Olive Ridley prefers shallow waters and spends most of its time within a few miles of shore. The turtle is carnivorous feeding on jellyfish, snails, shrimp, lobsters and crabs. They've also been known to ingest trash such as plastic bags and Styrofoam which can be deadly. The Olive Ridley is considered by some commercial fishermen as a

pest due to the fact that they often are caught in nets. When the turtles are caught in nets they tend to drown since they are unable to surface. The US has passed a law requiring that all shrimp sold in the United States must be harvested by companies with "Turtle Excluder Devices" that allow sea turtles to safely escape capture in shrimping nets.

Not much is known about the behavior of this turtle. The turtle feeds during the morning and unless it's in shallow and warm waters will sun at the surface of the ocean in the afternoon. It is believed that Olive Ridley turtles return to nest on the same beach they are hatched.



We've had a busy three months, having exhibited in a variety of shows including the AARP National Convention in Washington DC. We were entertained by the staff of the Costa Rican consulate in Washington DC, complete with food, drink and salsa lessons. We also participated in International Living's "Live & Invest Overseas" Conference in Long Beach, CA. We had a terrific group of people tour Costa Rica with us in September and everyone had a great time. Locally, the road improvements are still progressing nicely and on another note, we've recently seen nine local real estate projects in the southern region get shut down by the Costa Rican government for not complying with permitting and environmental regulations. Fortunately we are in compliance on all fronts.

Boy, things have changed a lot since our last newsletter as the

global financial markets continue to melt down. Thankfully, many emerging international real estate markets have hardly been affected since many of these countries have few mortgages on property and there is very little speculation in real estate. The good news is that we've seen an increase in inquiries about our projects as people's savings continues to shrink and folks are looking for ways to live for less.

A great way to move your money offshore is to create a "self directed retirement plan" through a qualified intermediary and get your money out of the US. You can legally use your IRA's, 401k, simple, SEP or Keogh money to "invest" in real estate in Costa Rica. You need not be of retirement age and you don't pay any penalty to do so. You are simply choosing to invest your money in assets other than the stock market. For more information on the subject, google

"self directed retirement plan". I can recommend a great company that will facilitate your plan for you, though now may not prove to be a good time to get out of the market.



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The September Tour Group



The exceptional knowledge you have about Costa Rica is priceless. Thanks for everything.



Thank you Steve and Kristina for the well organized tour of Costa Rica. We were made to feel very comfortable and enjoyed mixing it up with the new people we met. Everyone's special needs seemed to be taken care of. Your choice of restaurants was very well planned as was the places we stopped and stayed. You brought out a lot of good energy in the group. Also our stay and tour of the development was done in an excellent manner.



What a wonderful experience!!! Such great planning. We enjoyed all phases of the trip. It was a wonderful educational, informative, adventurous and fun trip. The most stressless vacation we have ever had.

