

# Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica  
and Beyond

July 2010



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## Updates from the Osa

Things are continuing to improve in many ways throughout the country. The new highway, which had some initial problems, has been reopened. The economy is gradually improving. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has increase it's projection for output growth in 2010 to 3.8%. Mr. Murilo Portugal, Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair, stated "Costa Rica's economic recovery is picking up speed, supported by rising consumer and business confidence." Property sales, at least in our area, are strong and

tourism is on the upswing with a 4% increase for the first ½ of the year over last year's figures. Tourists from the US actually rose 10% over last year. The Juan Santamaria international airport in San Jose has completed a major phase in their expansion and ... drum roll please.... The bridge over our beloved Tortuga River is up and in use (see Jan Dwire's article on page 4).

Kristina Welburn  
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## San Jose to Get Street Numbering

"Go straight past the Coca Cola plant [which was torn down years ago], take a right at the big pink Hotel de Jardin [it was painted white 2 years ago], take a left at the Rosti Pollo [there's one on every 3<sup>rd</sup> block], go 300 meters and take a right at the pharmacy [really 150 meters], bear left when you see the old gumbo limbo tree [what's a gumbo limbo tree?], another left at the corner where Jose Martinez's son Pedro is selling cell phone covers [there's a guy selling strawberries. Is that him?], past Doña Maria's place. You can't miss it."

When Costa Ricans give directions they will often treat even the most awkward and out of place tourist as a local, familiar with the country's intricate history and its popular landmarks.

It's certainly charming but not very practical when you're lost. Currently there are a couple

of ways to deal with the situation. You can hire a taxi and follow the driver or you can ask someone, follow the first step or two and then ask someone else, continuing asking a progression of people until you arrive (probably late) to

your destination.

Things may be heading toward more simplification. The mayor of San Jose, Johnny Araya, announced a plan to place street names and numbers on all buildings and homes starting later this year.

The plan is to be funded by the state banks, Banco Nacional and Banco de Costa Rica, which in return will be able to place their logos on the street signs.

*"In the 21st century, it is not acceptable that Costa Ricans give directions the way they do," Araya told the daily La Nación.*



Getting over the river then



Getting over the river now

# The Ease of Foreigners Starting a Business

According to the Latin Business Chronicle's analysis of the World Bank's new report investing Across Borders 2010 <http://iab.worldbank.org> Costa Rica has Latin America's best regulations for opening a foreign business.

The report includes data on 87 countries across the world including 14 in Latin America. It looked at policies that impact direct foreign business including investing across sectors, starting a foreign business, accessing industrial land and arbitrating commercial disputes.

The report is based on a survey taken between April and December of 2009 of a variety of experts; lawyers, accounting and consulting firms, investment promotion institutions, chambers of commerce and law professors.

Costa Rica scored 73.7 out of 100 on the ease of establishment index. The index measures the regulatory regime for establishing a foreign owned subsidiary. The score was almost as high as the high-income countries of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) which

is 77.8 and Eastern Europe and Central Asia at 76.8.

Peru had the second best score of 72.5 and Venezuela's score of 42.5 was the lowest and 8<sup>th</sup> worst worldwide.

The World Bank looked at two other factors when analyzing the procedural burden that foreign companies face when entering a new market; number of procedures and days needed to go through procedural steps.

In Costa Rica it takes 14 procedure and 63 days to establish a foreign-owned Limited Liability Company (LLC). Full foreign ownership is allowed in Costa Rica and the LLC needs a minimum of 2 shareholders. A foreign company establishing a subsidiary in Costa Rica must provide an authenticated copy of the parent company's documents. If wishing to engage in international trade, it will also need to register with the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Foreign Trade in order to receive an import and export ID number. Foreign companies do not need an investment approval and are free to open and maintain a bank account in foreign currency.

## Business Opportunities

by Steve Linder

I met last week with our attorney to discuss the requirements of business registration, hiring employees and paying taxes on business income. My attorney explained that Laura Chinchilla has recently announced that they are making it easier than ever to open a business in Costa Rica, to offset any effects of the global economic downturn. The atmosphere right now is pro foreign investment and there is talk about further streamlining the process, one of the easiest in Latin America. Now may be a great time for you to open that dog walking business you have always dreamed of owning. To start a business, you need to register in the Canton that you intend to do business in. You will have to register with social security to get a number to hire employees. You also have to have an inspection by the health ministry to ensure your place of business is handicap accessible. The entire process will take a few weeks so be patient. Any expenses associated with the creation of income will be deducted from your earnings to lower your net income. Expenses include things like entertaining clients, advertising, rents, utilities, etc.... If you plan on having employees, be prepared to pay them for 13 months per year. You will be expected to give them a month's salary at Christmas time, as is customary in Costa Rica. You will also have to contribute to social security (the caja) for your employees. Many employers in Costa Rica pay their employees via a debit card and pay is usually every 15 days. The opportunities are great in Costa Rica and the competition is less than in the states. Here's to your success.



Starting a foreign business	IAB Country Score	IAB Regional Average	IAB Global Average
Procedures (number)	14	14	10
Time (days)	63	74	42
Ease of Establishment Index	73.7	62.8	64.5
Accessing industrial land	IAB Country Score	IAB Regional Average	IAB Global Average
Strength of lease rights	100.0	78.3	82.1
Strength of ownership rights	100.0	98.2	92.2
Access to land information	74.0	40.4	41.4
Availability of land information	60.0	73.0	70.6
Time to lease private land	23	62	60
Time to lease public land	136	156	140
Arbitrating commercial disputes	IAB Country Score	IAB Regional Average	IAB Global Average
Strength of laws index	92.0	87.5	85.2
Ease of process index	59.0	66.8	70.6
Extent of judicial assistance index	21.0	51.7	57.9

## Welcome to the Neighborhood

Steve and Karen are from Charlottesville, Virginia. Steve's a sales rep of 25 years, for Emerson Electric. Karen is a Spanish teacher at her Alma mater, Charlottesville High School.

Karen and Steve met at the University of Virginia. Steve is from Chicago and came to the University on a scholarship to play football. Karen was a manager of the football team.

They have three children, Katie- Spanish teacher, Charlotte(Charly)- English and math teacher (maybe in Costa Rica one day!) and Joe- beginning his second year at the University of Virginia. The family has four dogs: Max, Hercules, Walter, and Tommy Q! They love to be outside, relaxing, reading, cooking, eating, exploring, swimming and kayaking, to mention a few!

Karen and Steve have been married for 30 years this July. They love to travel- especially in Spanish speaking countries where the people are relaxed, happy, and genuine. They are looking forward to building, living *la vida pura*, and vacationing with family and friends in Tropicos del Sueño!



Karen and Steve



Karen and Don

Don and Karen reside in Concord, New Hampshire, where Don manages a state environmental agency and Karen is a bookkeeper/accountant. About two years ago, they began looking for retirement locations they could use as a base to support their love to travel. Don and Karen wanted someplace near an international airport that would allow them to hike, snorkel, kayak, watch wildlife, and dine at interesting restaurants. Dissuaded by the high cost of living in their favorite U.S. locations, they began investigating international opportunities.

Costa Rica was an early favorite, but the price was less attractive than other destinations. That changed when Don and Karen met Steve Linder of Pacific Lots at an International Living event in 2009. For a reasonable price, they could purchase a lot where the towering Talamanca Mountains met the magnificent Brunca Coast. The Costa Rican government had just completed a highway to the area, and an international airport would be completed within several years. A visit to Pacific Lots in June afforded Don and Karen the opportunity to verify the beauty of the area and the quality of the Pacific Lots product. As importantly, the Pacific Lots staff, local Ticos, and others purchasing property were a delight. Don and Karen purchased a half-acre lot in Tropicos Verdes with a view of the mountains and green space on three sides.

Since returning from Costa Rica, Don and Karen started IdeasDMK, a company that helps organizations with strategy, research, and writing ([ideasdmk.com/home.html](http://ideasdmk.com/home.html)). IdeasDMK provides them with an opportunity to hasten their relocation, while doing something they enjoy.

Jo Ann and Chris spent 6 years building and landscaping their dream stone house in the Shenandoah Valley, of Virginia in the United States. Prior to that, they each spent over 27 years working for Philip Morris in Richmond, Virginia. During that time Chris went to over 50 countries on business and pleasure, and Jo Ann has done her share of travel, too. Now, they spend their days maintaining their flower and vegetable gardens, ornamental trees and the rest of their property in the country. All of Jo Ann's family lives within a half hour drive, so they are able to see them frequently. They also have 3 dogs, and take them with them when the weather permits. Chris visited San Jose a number of times but never had the opportunity to venture further until this June. They loved the area around Ojochal and purchased an ocean view lot. All the locals they met were very friendly. More than anything the professional, low key approach of all the people they met at the development made their decision to buy easy. It didn't hurt either that so many of the employees had decided to buy and live in the development. They felt at home and welcome everywhere they went and look forward to making Ojochal their home away from home.



Chris and Jo Ann with Jee Jee

# Grand Opening of the New Bridge

## *La Amistad in Ojochal*

By Jan Dwire

A real change in life has occurred in Ojochal with the “official” opening of the long awaited bridge spanning the Tortuga River. I’m sure the discussion about the need for a bridge goes back fifteen years and now it is a reality.

I remember crossing the river on our first visit to Costa Rica. We were bumping through the little village of Ojochal along a beautiful stream when we veer off to cross the river. Yikes! What kind of country is this? I then thought, wow, what an adventure, isn’t this cool? And it was..... for the first few times. After that it became a bumpy, jaw rattling, car repair pain in the bum. There are times during a heavy rain when the river is not passable. But no longer is that an issue. A few dedicated people, without much support tackled the project. Through heroic persistence the bridge was finally finished and dedicated as Puente La Amistad (Friendship Bridge).

The dedication ceremony as is generally the case in Costa Rica started about 2 hours late. The mayor made an impassioned plea for further unification and mutual cooperation between the Tico and Gringo community. He also emphasized the need to pay your garbage collection fees. (Leave it to a politician to take advantage of a microphone.)

There was a great meal prepared by Johnny Morales, one of the leaders of the Tico community. Beer sales were brisk. The weather held out until most of the planned activities were completed. However, there was a snag. The float was really late and almost didn’t make it. It was carrying the beauty queen of Ojochal, a young girl, some ragged plants and flags from many different countries including the Mexican flag being displayed upside down. The plan was that the float would first cross the bridge then the beauty queen would come down from her flatbed perch, and then walk across the new bridge.

The truck driver had a different idea. She was going through the river to show the OLD way and then turn around and come back the NEW way. Ah, the best laid plans.... Unfortunately the truck got stuck in the middle of the river. A gallant young man waded out to rescue the princess and her young companion, ropes were attached to the truck and with relative ease the truck got unjammed. On the other side, it made a Uturn. The queen got back on board and the truck drove across the bridge to the cheers of the crowd. Speeches were made, thanks were given to all involved and the ribbon was cut.

Our lives (and cars) have an easier life and the tales of crossing the river are relegated to a “Remember when...” category. A sincere thanks to all of the people that worked hard and made this happen.



The “Float”



Miss Ojochal cuts the ribbon



Our new bridge

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## Citrus Opens New Feria

Citrus Restaurant and Lounge, a favorite local spot, has opened a market. The Citrus Feria offers organic vegetables, eggs, homemade cheeses, French bread and patisserie, homemade delicacies as well as handicrafts and jewelry. This is a welcome addition to the farmer’s market in Uvita which is only open on Saturdays.

A portion of the funds raised will go to the beautification of the entrance to Ojochal including improved signage and landscaping. It’s also an opportunity for local artisans to showcase their talents.

The Feria is open every Tuesday from 9am to 1pm.



# The Butterflies of Costa Rica

Costa Rica's butterfly species make up approximately 90% of all Central American butterflies, 66% of neo-tropical butterflies and 18% of the world's total butterfly species.



Glasswing Butterfly

Butterflies are members of the insect class (and you thought you didn't like insects). They use their antennae for balance and smell, and though they flit through the air almost effortlessly, their four-part wings are very delicate and easily damaged. Their large eyes provide them with only basic sight. The images they see are blurry, and butterflies essentially see only motion, light and color.



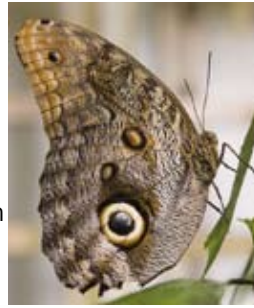
Zebra Longwing

The lifecycle of a butterfly goes through many stages. Only 2-5% of eggs mature into adult butterflies. Most succumb to predators, the weather, disease or other natural disasters.

As most second graders will tell you, after emerging from the egg the butterfly starts its journey as a caterpillar. Caterpillars will eat their way through all kinds of vegetable matter of the next few weeks. Some can wreak havoc on landscaping. Between emerging from its egg and entering the pupa stage, a caterpillar increases to over 27000 times its original size. Many of Costa Rica's caterpillars have a natural defense system that will leave welts or painful bumps on your skin if

touched.

Then the caterpillars will hang upside down from a leaf or branch and spin its chrysalis or cocoon. When it's fully developed the butterfly emerges.



Owl Butterfly

Most butterflies have a relatively short life span of a week or so but some species can live for nearly a year.

Butterflies play the important ecological role of pollinator. They feed on flower nectar, helping to cross-pollinate by delivering precious pollen among the colorful blooms. In addition to sweet nectar, butterflies also

feast on tree sap and rotting fruit. Butterflies taste food by standing on it. This is because

their taste sensors are found in their feet.

The most recognizable and, I think, beautiful butterfly in Costa Rica is the Blue Morpho. The topsides of its wings are iridescent, electric blue while the undersides are a dull brown. Believe me, they are really difficult to photograph in the wild. Just when you think you have the perfect picture lined up they close their wings and laugh at you (at least I think that's what they're doing).

Some other common Costa Rican butterflies include the Hecale Longwing, the Owl Butterfly, the Glasswing and the Zebra Longwing. Ancient Greeks believed that butterflies represented the human soul. In China and Japan butterflies represented the presence of loved ones. There were also some cultures that believed butterflies were carriers of bad luck and were foreboding omens.



Blue Morpho

In Costa Rica moths are sometimes referred to as "night butterflies".



Produced by photographer Roy Toft and author Trond Larsen, *Osa: Where the Rainforest Meets the Sea* offers an inspirational journey through the most biodiverse area in one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, the Osa Peninsula. The book is the result of 20 years of travel to this magnificent area and documents the Osa's changes and the challenges, some for the worst and some for the better.

Roy Toft's work has been featured in National Geographic, Audubon and Discover Magazines. Trond Larsen is a biologist and research fellow with the World Wildlife Fund, Princeton University and the Smithsonian Institute.

You can purchase the book on their website [www.osabook.com](http://www.osabook.com)

## New Species

You know that Costa Rica is rich in biodiversity and has 5% of the known species on earth but did you know that in Costa Rica a new species is discovered every 2 days. Over the past 18 months scientists have discovered two new species of transparent shrimp, new ferns and corals and new frogs and salamanders.

Not as celebrated but just as important has been the recent discovery of new insects, fungi and bacteria.

The current count in Costa Rica is approximately 95,000 different species of living beings with the vast majority of them being insects and plants. Experts estimate that the number of species living in Costa Rica at about half a million, leaving around 400,000 to be registered.

Despite its small size Costa Rica is the most biodiverse country in the region and ranks within the top 20 of the most biodiverse countries in the world.

[www.PacificLots.com](http://www.PacificLots.com)

## Our Woodshop:

### *Craftsmen and Artisans at work*



People always ask where we get such beautiful cabinets and woodwork. We operate a workshop located on our property where we custom design and produce all the windows, doors, cabinets, counters and wrought iron work used in the custom homes we build for our clients. The workshop employs about 30 skilled craftsmen full time and is located in San Buenas, across from

the new golf course and just down the road from our largest development in Chontales. Tools on site include a 40 foot long kiln for drying wood, a fusion welding system for making vinyl windows, an 8' by 20' panel saw, 48 inch wide belt sander, multiple planers and joiners, huge table saws using besemeyer fences, a spray finishing booth big enough to fit two school buses, a variety of lathes and routers, welding equipment for iron work and diamond cutting and grinding equipment for making granite counters. The entire shop sits on multiple acres and has close to 10,000 square feet of covered space. Work stations are supplied with compressed air and a huge dust collection system keeps the area free from dust. Our tours include a visit to the workshop to show perspective clients how we maintain such a high level of quality in our custom homes.



## El Paraiso Offering Property and Rental Management Services

El Paraiso is a full service property management and rental company located in beautiful Ojochal. Owned and operated by two couples, full time residents with extensive experience in both property management and general contracting, they are able to provide their clients with high quality service with a personal touch. They offer clients long and short-term vacation home rentals as well as a wide range of property management services.

Their rental portfolio offers an extensive selection of privately owned and fully furnished homes for all budgets – a comfortable home base from which to explore the area. They will meet you and escort you to your casa and are available to assist you during your stay.

Property management services offered to homeowners include: property inspections, arranging cleaning and landscaping services, pool maintenance, local bill payments and more. Visit their website at [www.ojochalvacationrentals.com](http://www.ojochalvacationrentals.com) for further details or contact them at [info@ojochalvacationrentals.com](mailto:info@ojochalvacationrentals.com).



Here we are half way through 2010 and business has really heated up. Since the opening of the new Caldera highway and the completion of the Costanera highway, we have had a record number of visitors coming to tour our properties. In April we had 39 people on Discovery tours, we had 40 in May and 41 in June. We now have 61 visitors scheduled to tour in August as a result of the International Living conference taking place in San Jose at that time. On local happenings, we now have a farmer's market at Citrus Restaurant on Tuesdays and there is also a new French bakery opening in town. This bakery will specialize in pastries and croissants', since the other French bakery features bread and baguettes. The new bridge is also now open across the Tortuga river and there is also a new Pentacostal Church being built by locals in the village.

*Stephen Linder*

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We're very sad to report that an owner in Phase 9 who was a good friend and inspiration passed away unexpectedly earlier this month. Lucinda Chandler was a brave and amazing woman who lived life to the fullest and often ordered her desert first. We will miss her.