

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica
and Beyond



January 2010

Inside this issue:

Updates from the Osa	1
Elections 2010	1
Top 4 Real Estate Picks	1
New Neighbor	2
New School in Uvita	2
Surf Lounge Report	2
Shipping to Costa Rica	3
All About Mold and Mold Control	3
The Past 20 Years	4
The Hummingbird	5
News from Pacific Lots	6
The Caldera Highway	6

Updates from the Osa

We're very excited "El Fuego" in Ojochal just opened. In addition to fresh seafood they grill New York steak, t-bone and ribs and are open for lunch and dinner every day other than Wednesday. A new international school will open in February in Uvita. Escuela Costa Ballena will provide a bilingual education to grades pre-k - 6th eventually offering schooling through grade 12 (see page 2). Several clients recently provided supplies for our local schools which were greatly appreciated. Rhonda and Jan also appreciated the funds for the girls' orphanage in San Isidro. They were able to provide all of the children with Christmas gifts.

On the national front, tourism's 2009 decline was lower than expected. Years of rapid growth followed by the stagnant world wide economy caused the country to forecast a decrease of 12% but the

figures showed tourism was down only 10%. It's estimated that the industry will grow 5% in 2010. According to Transparency International, Costa Rica, is one of the highest scoring countries in Latin America in the fight against corruption jumping ahead 5 additional countries from 2008 to 2009. The Legatum Prosperity Index of 2009 rated Costa Rica the highest in Latin America for quality of life. Also, according to the Gallup World Poll, the country ranks 12th world wide for personal freedom. They state "Costa Ricans enjoy excellent freedom of movement, religion and speech, and 91% were satisfied with the freedom to choose in their daily lives".

Kristina Welburn

Kristina@PacificLots.com
305-295-0136

Presidential Elections 2010

Recent polls show Laura Chinchilla, a moderate from the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN) party, is maintaining her lead in the upcoming presidential elections. She's followed by Otto Guevara of the Libertarian Movement (ML) party.

Ms. Chinchilla resigned as First Vice President in the current administration to run for presidency and is being backed by the current President Oscar Arias. She's expected to continue the policies of Arias opening up the country to international trade and private sector competition. Costa Rica is hoping to complete trade pacts with China and Singapore before the change in administration. She's currently

avored by 40% of the voters.

Otto Guevara has been closing the gap in the polls and has risen from 13% in September to 30%. Guevara wants to scrap Costa Rica's currency for the US dollar. Both candidates support more free trade and are tough on crime.

The elections will be held on February 7th. For a candidate to win they need to garnish 40% or more of the vote. Anything less will lead to a run-off vote between the top 2 candidates.

All political parties and candidates cannot hold public meetings and rallies after February 2. And February 3 is the last day to release polls, public opinion results and any political advertisements.

www.PacificLots.com

.....
● Ronan McMahon in a recent article in "The Daily Reckoning" wrote that Costa Rica's Southern zone is in his top 4 picks for the best real estate investments for 2010. He states "With improved accessibility, property prices here will increase, just as they have elsewhere in the country when better roads have gone in." For the complete article click here: <http://dailyreckoning.com/the-4-best-real-estate-investments-for-2010-part-ii/>
.....

Welcome to the Neighborhood

Escuela Verde Costa Ballena



Carolyn with her son Cameron

Life and Texas Highways, she's now moving into writing non-fiction for middle grade children. She says "when my home on my gorgeous lot in Costa Rica is completed, it will be a perfect location to work on my writing projects." Her plan is to split her time between Ojochal and Houston. Carolyn added "I'm looking forward to having friends and family visit as well, and turning my three-year-old granddaughter into a "Tica." Over the years, I've taken trips to several Latin America countries to recharge my batteries; when the opportunity came to buy my own property, I chose Costa Rica because of its perfect blend of attributes."

In addition to travel, flora, and fauna, her other passions are history, genealogy, reading biographies, and classic films. Food ranks very high on the list as well, and she's looking forward to working her way through the 40-plus restaurants in the Ojochal area!

Carolyn grew up in the oil camps of Venezuela, so the Latin culture is something she knows and loves. She taught elementary school in Texas until retirement, and recently put that experience to use teaching ESL classes to adults. A second career of hers and a great interest along the way has been writing. From magazine articles in such publications as *Caribbean Travel and*

On Feb 1st, preschool Puerto Nuevo will re-open with a new name, Escuela Verde Costa Ballena, in the heart of Uvita. This year they're offering pre-school classes for children from 2 to 4 years of age, kindergarten and primary grades 1st through 3rd; through 6th grade next year and eventually through high school. The mission of the school is to prepare children to be resourceful and independent while inspiring them to give back to their multi-cultural community and the natural environment. They aim to foster critical and creative thinking skills and an enjoyment of learning through life-related experiences with an ecological focus. The school will be bilingual – with approx 60% of the classes for 1st-3rd grades being taught in Spanish, and 40% being taught in English. The pre-school and kindergarten classes will also have English, to prepare children to enter the bilingual primary school. They aim to educate children to become fluent in both languages. Children of all nationalities and languages are welcomed – being bilingual is not a pre-requisite. The school will adhere to Costa Rican curriculum standards and, at a minimum, achieve US grade level expectations. The school is in the accreditation process. They will also offer after-school care and clubs such as dance and karate that will be open to the public (you do not have to be a student to attend).

Thanks to Kim Gilliom who started the Ojochal library and many others who have donated children's books, the school will also house a small children's library for its students. If you have any books to donate, please let them know. Also please let them know if you are interested in helping the school in any way - they are in need of Spanish books, CD-Roms, building materials, and all types of school supplies. They are excited to announce that Cata-pult, an IT company based in TX donated 6 computers. Their greatest need right now is scholarships. In addition, they would love to have volunteers for extracurricular activities and to provide additional tutorial help in both languages. For further information about the school, please contact Naomi or Cheryl at 8-879-8386 or cheryl.margoluis@aya.yale.edu or crngsh@yahoo.com. (originally printed in Dominical Days)

The Surf Lounge Report

Steve had to be pried out of the San Clemente again, his favorite bar in Dominical. We are not sure if he is mesmerized by the shrine to Elvis, Spicy Mike's home made Hot Sauce store or the grotto dedicated to Duke Kahanamoka, (1890-1968) the "father of surfing". Each time he goes there, Steve heads straight for the mini school bus "ala hippy van" and starts humming old Led Zeppelin tunes.

San Clemente will give you a free taco and a beer if you bring them a broken surf board. You sign the board and they will hang it on the ceiling of the bar. There's not much room for more boards on the ceiling and now they've even started putting boards on the walls. The wide screen TV plays endless loops of surfers hanging ten and death defying gnarly wipe outs. The bar, located on the main road to the beach in Dominical, is a locals' hangout after sunset. During surf times the preferred hang out is Tortilla Flats, located beachside.

The recent addition of a new sign, a VW WestFalia Camper on a ten foot high pedestal, elicits stories from Steve that sound like the adventures of a Moroccan Nomad. Seems Steve had the same VW pop top camper and spent nearly a year tooling around the country in his youth. The food is Mexican American, typical youth hostel, burgers, tacos, sea food, rice and beans, guacamole and salsa but the atmosphere is right out of Elvis's Beach Blanket Bingo. Prices are low with most food at less than \$10. They serve breakfast, lunch and you can pretty much get a beer all day.



Shipping Goods to Costa Rica



Many expats express confusion over shipping possessions from their home countries into Costa Rica. Alvaro Loria from ABC Mudanzas, S.S. was kind enough to give us a brief rundown on the logistics. His company provides door to door service from the US and Canada to Costa Rica including:

- Complete pack and wrap at your residence.
- Loading of container/Liftvan.
- Transport to port of exit.
- Export documentation.
- Ocean/Air freight to port of entry Costa Rica.
- Inland to bonded warehouse in San Jose.
- Normal customs clearance.
- Destination services in Costa Rica: Delivery, unpacking, placing of items, reassembly of normal furniture and removal of debris.

There are 3 ways to bring household goods into Costa Rica; with your luggage on an airplane, as a small shipment as air cargo or as consolidated freight or

full container.

If you bring merchandise with you on the plane that is not for personal use while on vacation you will have to pay duty. There is a duty free exemption for up to \$500 worth of goods. Customs will stamp your passport in order to restrict you from benefiting from the exemption for an additional 6 months.

Air cargo will be transferred to a bonded warehouse which is a private customs facility. In order to clear your shipment you will need to provide a passport which proves you have not been in the country for more than a continuous 90 days. You will also need to provide the original air way bill and a packing list. Any goods less than 6 months old are considered to be new.

Consolidated freight or full container shipments are the most common transportation methods. There are 3 options; 1x20 container, 1x40 container, or 1/4th of a container. In a container you may even ship your vehicle. In order to clear your shipment

you will again need your passport (copy of the main page and last entrance into Costa Rica will suffice). Again you cannot have been in the country for more than 90 continuous days. You will also need the original ocean bill of lading and the packing list.

Some folks may also be interested in importing a boat or yacht. For this precise and exact characteristics of the vessel, measurements, brand, type, motors, casing..... are required. You will also need a bill of lading and exportation statement. Once the vessel is nationalized it has to be registered in the Public Registry and then registered with the correspondent port Captain office where the vessel will be anchored.

Duties average 38% for used household goods. Typically a 1x20' container pays approx \$850 on duties and a 1x40' container pays approx \$1500.

You can track your shipment online and reach ABC Mudanzas at www.abc-movers.com or 877-750-0237.

All About Mold

Living in the tropics is certainly paradise for most of us but does hold its challenges. One being the control of mold and mildew.

Prevention is ideal. Typically mold needs 3 conditions to grow:

Moisture – generated by excess indoor humidity, leaks or flooding
Food – organic, porous materials such as drywall, wood, grout and wallpaper
Optimal Temperatures – 70°-90° is the sweet spot for mold growth.

To reproduce, colonized mold releases tiny mold spores which soar through the air until they attach to a moist indoor surface and multiply. That's where the health effects enter the picture. Moldy homes can cause a range of health issues including:

- Watery or itchy eyes
- Sore throat
- Coughing
- Skin irritation
- Asthma
- Respiratory ailments

Most at risk are infants and young children, pregnant women, individuals who have lowered immunities, the elderly and asthma sufferers.



Concrobium Mold Control

Concrobium Mold Control is an environmental friendly formula which eliminates, cleans up, inhibits and prevents mold growth without harsh chemicals. It is cleaning and prevention all in one! You can use it in bathrooms, kitchens, bodegas, water-damaged areas and anywhere else mold is a problem. The odorless, colorless liquid physically encapsulates mold and fungi to inhibit growth. Ready-to-use formula eliminates musty odors and leaves surfaces with an invisible antimicrobial shield that prevents new mold growth. Use it on finished and unfinished surfaces; no rinsing or isolation time is required. It's guaranteed safe for use around plants, pets and people and is available exclusively from Royal Palm Interiors at Playa Ballena. For more information contact Shelagh at royalpalminteriors@gmail.com.



American Clay Earth Plaster

American Clay Earth Plaster is a new environmentally friendly product recently introduced to our area. It's a unique combo of clays, aggregates and natural pigments which offer builders a natural and beautiful option for interior walls and ceilings. American Clay Earth Plasters are non-toxic, mold resistant, absorb odors and are nonflammable. The plasters have no VOC's and are easy to clean up. They naturally control the interior climate by absorbing & releasing moisture and heat. Application is easy and there are a variety of beautiful pigments including "Loma" which conveys an essence of matte suede. For more information go to www.claymasters.ca or contact Gerry Monte at gmonty55@gmail.com.

Costa Rica: From 1990 – 2010

20 years in the path of “progress”

By Kristina Welburn

Our first trip to Costa Rica; the year was 1990, the only cassette tape owned by the resort was the single “Father Figure” by George Michael which they played over... and over... and over.... Perhaps that’s why we rolled up our baggy jeans, loaded our fanny packs and left to explore other parts of the country. Thus began our love affair with Costa Rica and its people.

We spent what seemed like weeks driving along pot holed dirt roads from one small village to another. Evenings were spent in cozy villas playing cards by candlelight and laughing about our excursion (the time I ran screaming from the howler monkeys that sounded as if they were 12 ft tall, the time we hid in the bushes from the bull returning from the beach, the time our car got stuck in the river, and this is only the first 3 days).

Steve and I are continuously asked questions like; when will the new airport be finished, when will the bridge be complete, when will the road be paved, what about shopping opportunities, how fast is your internet, etc.... While these things are important and are here or coming, in order to acclimate to Costa Rica it’s crucial to find charming the small inevitable inconveniences. As Steve always says, “it’s more about the journey than the destination”.

Flash forward to the present. While leading a not too distant tour of Ojochal I found myself with a friend watching the sun set over the ocean from our guest house. The toucans and parrots were returning to their roosts and the sky was magnificent. The setting was peaceful, rejuvenating and just perfect. Our friends however were checking email and watching CNN (you know who you are). I love them but it broke my heart. Honestly, I preferred it when contact with the outside world wasn’t so accessible.

I appreciate infrastructure improvement as much as the next guy or gal. I like comfort. I like choices but in 1990 it was easy to appreciate all that Costa Rica had to offer. Along with the accelerating advancements come distractions. In order to appreciate the world we live in we need to make a conscious choice to step away sometimes. The emails aren’t really that time sensitive and the news usually isn’t all that important. Taking a break from modern conveniences is not always easy but in our complex world it cannot be more important.



Highway then



Highway now



Gas station then



Gas station now



To Nicoya Peninsula then



To Nicoya Peninsula now



Grocery shopping then



Grocery shopping now



Rural traffic jam then.



Rural traffic jam now.
It hasn’t changed much.



Crossing the Tortuga river then



Crossing the Tortuga river now.
But the bridge is almost done.

The Hummingbirds of Costa Rica.

Courtesy of La Paz Waterfall Gardens and embellished by Kristina Welburn

Facts about Hummingbirds

- Hummingbirds are the smallest birds in the world.
- For their size, hummingbirds have the largest heart and brain of all animals.
- Hummingbirds have no sense of smell.
- Hummingbird wings beat around 60 times per second.
- Hummingbird hearts beat from 500 to 1,200 times per minute.
- Hummingbirds are only found in North, Central & South America.
- Hummingbirds visit 2,000 to 5,000 flowers a day.
- Hummingbirds can consume twice their weight daily.
- Their color is produced by refraction of light, not pigment.
- Their average speed is 45 miles per hour.
- Their tongues are twice the length of their bills.
- In addition to nectar, hummingbirds eat insects as protein.
- Hummingbirds cannot walk, only perch.
- Hummingbirds fly only 20% of the time.
- Hummingbirds hum because they don't know the words ☺

Because hummingbirds have no sense of smell, they must find their food by sight. Their bills are custom designed to match the shape and length of the blossoms from which they draw nectar. Bill shapes and lengths vary widely, but tend to be long and narrow, some being curved.

The flowers hummingbirds use for nectar sources have evolved with them. To attract a hummingbird, a flower must be red, bloom in the daytime, be rich in nectar and lack any sort of landing pad thereby eliminating competition from other birds. Flowers without landing pads are accessible only by hummingbirds, which can hover and feed while hanging in the air. Other flowers such as trumpet or tubular shaped blossoms provide selective

feeding for the hummingbirds since only the long, narrow bill of the hummingbird is able to access the succulent nectar.

To survive, a hummingbird must consume more than its weight in food each day, which equates to between 6,000 and 12,000 calories per day (sounds like my husband on a cruise ship). About 70% of this food comes in the form of liquefied sugar and the rest from insect protein (his is mostly from the chocolate buffet).

If insects are available, a hummingbird may eat hundreds of them in one day, they may even raid a spider's web to eat a captured insect or the spider himself.

The nectar mixture in the hummingbird feeders at La Paz Waterfall Gardens is comprised of one part sugar, four parts water. A higher sugar content could cause cavities in their bills and obesity. Most days the entire contents of their feeders will be consumed by late afternoon. Their birds consume 50 pounds of sugar a week.

Territoriality among hummingbirds can become a crucial, even violent issue. The birds will stake out an area of nectar-rich flowering plants and defend it vehemently by dive-bombing and occasionally stabbing rivals with their beaks.

Predators include hawks, orioles, roadrunners, crows, jay and other large birds. Mice and cats can also represent a danger to baby hummingbirds. History shows that humans were its largest predators in the late 19th century when we killed millions of hummingbirds to use their feathers and bodies as adornment on hats

Males migrate about 3 weeks earlier than females. This may be that the males are protecting the females and their young from starvation by exploring unknown territories in advance. My husband would probably guess it's to get out of the house for some peace and quiet and go fishing.

Because hummingbirds have very little down and body fat, they must rely on their metabolisms to keep them warm. To protect themselves from lower temperatures at night, they go into a

torpid state, meaning their normal body temperature of 86° can drop to as low as 70° often matching the outside air. This ability allows them to conserve energy as their heartbeat slows from a daytime high of 1,000 beats a minute to 159 beats a minute.

The hummingbird's ability to disappear in the blink of an eye makes their fleeting appearances seem like hallucinations, and gives these birds a special, magical quality few other flying creatures possess.

In several Native American cultures, their speedy flight figures in important religious myths, associating them with the wind, the rain and other unstoppable natural forces of mysterious origin. One Mayan legend holds that the hummingbird is actually the sun in disguise, appearing in birdlike form to seduce the moon. The most powerful Aztec god was associated with the hummingbird. His helmet fastened to the back of his head was the head of a hummingbird making him appear half man, half bird.

To this day, two popular but untrue legends and superstitions continue to surround these tiny birds. One, that the hummingbirds die each autumn, only to resurrect in the spring, and that hummingbirds migrate across great bodies of water by hitching rides on the backs of geese.

The 341 species in the hummingbird family are all confined to the Western Hemisphere. Their territory reaches all the way from South Alaska to the tip of South America but most live along the equator in the rain forests of Columbia and Ecuador where flower nectar and insects are plentiful. Only 15 species of hummingbirds breed within the United States.

Out of the 341 species of hummingbirds, 57 exist in Costa Rica and 18 are found at La Paz Waterfall Gardens.



I was fortunate this year to be in Costa Rica for New Year's, through the first two weeks of January. Each time I return to the states, I question why I am not living in Costa Rica full-time. Unfortunately I can't yet. I have too many obligations, shows, working with our sales team, International Living events, a daughter in college and of course teaching English as a second language in Key West. But we're getting closer. As the US economy continues to slow and our government prints more money, I am thankful that Kristina and I have already purchased our pieces of paradise. As the dollar loses value, offshore investments in hard assets or currency are a good hedge against a loss of value of the dollar.

The trips were fantastic. The weather was great though San Jose was a bit cold on our last day in Costa Rica. We had a great visit to the National Park in Manuel Antonio with the second group and I watched a monkey share food with two other monkeys. I was able to get

my teeth deep scaled and have another consultation at the Clinica Biblica about my cholesterol levels. Costa Rica's Hospital Clínica Bíblica and Hospital de Alajuela ranked in the top 20 medical centers in Latin America, according to [América Economía](#). Clinica Biblica ranked number 5 in all of Latin America.

I'm getting ready for International Living's Ultimate Event, being held in Quito, Ecuador this year. We are sponsoring the event and I'll be speaking twice during the conference, once about Costa Rica in general and once specifically about our developments. You can learn more about the event at www.internationalliving.com.

The new toll road continues to improve, with the last section between San Jose and Orotina expected to open in early March. The coastal highway is basically complete except a short section by Hacienda Baru where they are installing animal migration tunnels.

Although 3G is now in Costa



Rica, the new 3G tower being built in Ojochal won't be done until March. I watched our workers huddle by a high point near the guest house since that was the only spot where 3G would work, for the moment. I'm not so sure I need 3G but progress marches on....

Stephen Linder

Steve@PacificLots.com

305-295-0137

877-481-0300

Caldera Highway Project Nears Completion



What was once a dream in the eyes of the administration of Rodrigo Carazo Odio, President of Costa Rica back in 1979 when the first plans for the Caldera Highway were conceived, is soon to become reality. Over 30 years ago the Caldera Highway project was initially planned. Work did not begin on the project for many more years, grinding to a halt about 10 years ago after it was discovered that the government had not yet expropriated the land the road would be built on. About 3 years ago, President Oscar Arias got the project back on track.

The 77 Kilometers, built at an

estimated \$238 million dollars, was financed by Autopistas Del Sol, a consortium based in Spain. The company agreed to complete the road in exchange of a 25 year, 6 month concession. This agreement allows the company to collect tolls on the road equivalent to 1120 colones (about \$2 dollars) for the entire route.

The first section to open was from San Jose to Ciudad Colon. When the first 310 colon toll collection started in Escazu, the opening resulted in traffic jams. Now frequent drivers on the road will be able to purchase a transponder pass, much like have been available in the US (Sunpass, EZpass, TollPass) to speed toll collection and limit traffic tie-ups.

The second completed section was from Orotina to Punteranas. This section will eventually reduce traffic headed north on the Inter American highway since the new route from San Jose north will be faster than the old one.

Upon completion in March, the highway will go all the way from San Jose

to Caldera on the Pacific coast. The road was designed to open San Jose to the port of Puntarenas. For drivers headed south, the road will cut roughly an hour off the current mountain route known as the Aguacate pass. This will bring the drive time from San Jose to Jaco to about an hour

In building the highway, a variety of mishaps have transpired. The Barva Aquifer was pierced at one point, a major water supply of the central valley. This stopped construction while a solution was worked out. There was also an issue involving the negotiation of toll booths by police, fire and ambulance vehicles. Seems there was no lane designed for emergency vehicles, a necessity during rush hour.

This 25-year concession will be the first highway concession in Costa Rica to successfully reach financial closing and begin operations. Credits to Vanessa Loaiza N. and the Costa Rica news daily, [La Nación](#) - Costa Rica's largest Spanish circulation newspaper, for some of the information used in this article.