

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Ballena,
Costa Rica and Beyond

July 2013

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More Flight Options Into Costa Rica

Several airlines announced new direct flights into Costa Rica. Delta will be offering daily flights from both Los Angeles (LAX) and Atlanta (ATL) to Costa Rica and United Airlines will be adding flights from Newark, Houston, Washington and Chicago.

JetBlue Airways has also launched daily nonstop service between Fort Lauderdale (FLL) and Juan Santamaria International Airport in San Jose, Costa Rica (SJO).

Updates from the Osa

There are lots of good things going on in Costa Rica and in our area in particular and the weather's been terrific for busy mid-year school vacations.

El Sabor de Ojochal, held at Citrus, was a big hit again with lots of new faces in attendance (see below). The Roadhouse in Uvita closed and was replaced by the new RoadShack Deli offering great sandwiches at good prices. They've also recently opened a Backyard Bar open every Friday and Saturday night with live music.

A large new supermarket just opened at the San Isidro feria and a Goodwill clothing store has opened at the Rincon in Uvita. The center's profits feed local families in need. Zoe Boutique opened in the Dome Plaza selling designer women's clothing.

At the Ballena Bistro each Saturday, Sarah (The Chef's Table) becomes the guest chef and creates a fabulous fixed-price lunch menu for those on their way home from the Uvita Market (and everyone else, naturally). The bar and Pool Room (Ballena Billiards) are open Thurs to Sat evenings through the green season.

Shop Adorable is still offering craft classes every Saturday which are very popular and affordable. Also, every Sunday at Shop Adorable Molly is



hosting a tasting event where you can sample a vast variety of organic products.

Royal Palm Interiors in Uvita is celebrating Mother's Day (Aug. 15th) with many in-store specials and always has a great selection of unique furniture, home decor and hard to find floor & table lamps and bedding.

August 3rd is "Kids Movie Day" at the Hotel Whales & Dolphins in Uvita featuring the film "Hotel for Dogs", a chance to meet Buffy the talking parrot, and face painting. Cost is \$10 and includes movie, supervision, popcorn and a small treat bag. August 13th the Cristal Ballena is holding The Credomatic Music Festival, an evening of music and culture. In September the Whales and Dolphins Festival will be held at the Parque Nacional Marino Ballena celebrating humpback whales (and dolphins of course).

There's also a new chiropractor in our area, Dr. Robert Henderson. And, Baxter Bowling is rumored to be opening very soon. We can't wait! Pura Vida!

Kristina Welburn
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Another Glorious Food Festival in Ojochal

El Sabor de Ojochal, an organization designed to highlight the culinary excellence found in this growing community, recently held another successful food festival.

Several local restaurants participated in the event which was located at Citrus Restaurant. Included in the event were local favorites Exotica and Citrus, Azul offering Mediterranean cuisine, Ylang Ylang's Indonesian cuisine, French fusion from Diquis as well as Le Bistro, typical Costa Rican fare from Boca Coronado, pasta from Fabrizio, Italian food from Mamma y Papa, Latin infused food from Villas Gaia and baked goods from Pancito Cafe.



Chefs Magnifique!

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Costa Rica Tops Innovation Index

The United Nations recently released the *Global Innovation Index 2013* and Costa Rica found itself on top of all other Latin American and Caribbean countries. The Index, which measures the impact of innovation on economic progress ranked the country 39th overall, raising 21 places over 2012.

Minister of Science and Technology, Alejandro Cruz, said that a 17% increase in enrollments for higher education put Costa Rica in a better position in terms of human capital and research. "The improvement in the rate of innovation is a clear sign that Costa

Rica is moving to become a fully integrated knowledge-based economy with international markets," Cruz said. Chile and Barbados came in at 2nd and 3rd in the region.

Costa Rica ranks high in innovation but doing business in this small country is still a bit cumbersome although it is getting easier. The Economics Ministry recently reported that Costa Rica has advanced 12 places to 110 out of 185 countries on the World Bank Doing Business Index. The Ministry has plans in place to continue to improve.

Costa Rica Signs New Trade Agreements

This past June Anabel González, Costa Rica's Foreign Trade Minister, signed a treaty with the European Free Trade Association known as Efta. González stressed that the treaty will provide significant opportunities to increase and diversify exports from Costa Rica. The European Union is Costa Rica's 2nd largest trading partner. Exports to the E.U. reached over \$2 billion in 2012. The exports consist largely in medical devices, coffee and produce.

Costa Rica has also joined the Pacific Alliance as a full member. Currently the alliance consists of Columbia, Chile, Mexico and Peru. The trading bloc represents around 36% of Latin American GDP. The organization's goals include free trade and economic integration with a focus toward the Asian markets.

Additionally, this past May the Costa Rican government has ratified a Free Trade Agreement with Peru.

Costa Rica Cuts Tax on Hybrid Vehicles

On July 22 Laura Chinchilla, Costa Rica's President, signed a bill to cut import taxes on hybrid vehicles by 20% to a taxable rate of 10%. Other than electric vehicles, which are currently free of any import tax, this is the lowest tax rate on any class of vehicles being imported into Costa Rica. Presently the only hybrid being imported into Costa Rica is the Toyota Prius but I imagine more dealers will now seek out additional hybrids to import. With a number of full size SUV's now available in hybrid models it should not be long before many other hybrid models are available in Costa Rica. Nissan has already announced plans to import the Nissan Leaf.

The new law was brought forward by Costa Rica's Finance, Transportation and Environmental ministries

looking for new ways to cut emissions within the transportation sector. The law will also cover a variety of sedans, motorcycles and even some pickup trucks so long as they meet the requirements of being powered by both gasoline and electricity. With Costa Rica's goal to become carbon neutral by 2021, this new law is long overdue. Traffic in and around the capital city of San Jose at rush hour is oftentimes unbearable and any reduction of carbon fuel emissions will help clean the air in the central valley of San Jose. A 20% import tax reduction should make hybrid vehicle prices very competitive to all other vehicles, perhaps even cheaper than typical vehicle options. Currently traditional gasoline and diesel vehicles bear tax rates of 30% to as much as 53%.



Health Insurance in Costa Rica

As many of you know Costa Rica has some of the best health care in Latin America. The country has been a popular medical tourist destination for quite some time now. Despite this the cost of healthcare has remained low compared to "more advanced" countries and insurance is readily available for expats.

Costa Rica offers 2 paths for insurance; public and private. The public insurance is referred to as the Caja health system and private as INS insurance. Although a bit of a moving target currently the rates for the Caja are \$90 a month per couple for pensioners (retirees) and \$225 a month per couple for rentistas (not a retiree).

With health insurance through INS residents have access to additional resources, hospitals, labs, doctors etc.... The 3 private hospitals that are the most respected and frequented by expats are CIMA Hospital in Escazú, Clinica Biblica in San José (Steve's favorite) and Hospital La Católica also in San José.

A majority of Costa Rica's highly trained physicians work the mornings for the Caja and the afternoons and evenings in their own private practices.

Age Discrimination Eliminated within the Insurance Industry

The Superintendent of Insurance (SUG) in Costa Rica recently stated that insurance companies will no longer be able to discriminate based upon age. A citizen brought a complaint to the Constitutional Court after reaching the age of 65 and having their private insurance company terminate their policy. The new regulation states "No insurance beneficiary may be excluded from any kind of personal insurance coverage, by the mere fact that he or she has reached a certain age."

Best Beaches in Central America

According to "Traveler's Choice 2013" by TripAdvisor, 8 of the 10 best beaches in Central America are located in Costa Rica. The best beach in the country is Manuel Antonio located in the Central Pacific region. See all of the winners below:



1st Manuel Antonio



2nd Samara Beach



4th Playa Guiones



5th Playa Santa Teresa



6th Playa Avellanas



7th Playa Conchal



8th Playa Hermosa
Papagayo



9th Puerto Viejo

Don't Become a Drowning Victim While on Vacation : *Or Ever For That Matter*

The number one danger tourists face in our peaceful country is drowning and most Costa Rican beaches do not have life guards. It breaks our hearts but fatalities aren't uncommon. One minute a visitor is captivated by the stunning scenery, frolicking in the warm water and the next they're in trouble. Many coves along the coast have gentle safe water but some have strong rip currents sometimes called riptides. The locals are the ones who know which areas are safest and which can be dangerous. It's always wise to ask. If you see a glorious beach and nobody is swimming in the water be aware that there may be a reason.

Rip currents are long narrow bands of water that can pull objects caught in them away from the shore and out to sea. Strong surface flow tends to dampen incoming waves, which can mislead swimmers into the apparently calm part of the sea. The most dangerous time for rip currents is when the tide is low.

To avoid being caught in a rip current keep your feet on the bottom of the ocean floor as much as possible. If you do become caught in a rip current do not panic. Rip currents are dangerous but if you know what to do it's relatively easy to escape. Stay calm and relax as much as possible. The rip current

will not pull you underwater but rather away from the shore. Try to regain your footing if possible but if you can't **do not** struggle, conserve your energy, swim slowly and concentrate on staying afloat. If you're not a strong swimmer don't be embarrassed, call for help and wave your arms. Swim parallel to the shore in order to escape the current. Keep in mind that you will still be carried away from shore but you'll usually be free of the current 100-150 feet from where you entered the water.

If you do end up

exhausted float on your back or tread water. Rip currents generally subside 50-100 yards from shore. You'll eventually stop being pulled further out and can regain your strength. Then swim diagonally back to shore stopping to rest periodically if needed. It's best to aim for a place along the shore where waves are breaking. In those areas objects are generally transported to the shore.



Costa Rica's First Female President of the Supreme Court



Judge Zarela Villanueva has the honor of becoming the first female President of the highest legal body in Costa Rica. Villanueva, an attorney who specialized in agrarian rights and domestic violence, has spent 36 years in the judiciary. She was formerly the Vice President of the Court and replaces Luis Paulino Mora who passed away unexpectedly. The Supreme Court in Costa Rica is comprised of 23 judges.

The Status of Women in Costa Rica

As many are aware the current President of Costa Rica is a woman, President Laura Chinchilla Miranda. You may expect a certain degree of "machismo" in Costa Rica and I wouldn't say it's non-existent but it is more subdued than in other Latin American countries. Costa Rica has taken significant steps to ensure that women are represented, respected and treated as equals.

In 1986 Costa Rica ratified the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (the International Women's bill of Rights). In 2001 the country also

ratified the Optional Protocol which put in place a procedure which allows women to submit claims of violations of rights and created an inquiry procedure enabling the UN to look into situations of grave violence against women (the U.S. has yet to ratify the additional protocol).

In 2012 the Social Institutions and Gender Index ranked Costa Rica #2 overall among 86 developing countries; Argentina ranked #1.

At least in the public sector Costa Rican women earn 90% of what their male counterparts make. By 2002 the percentage of women in municipal

legislatures was higher than in any other democratically elected national legislature in the world. Women hold 39% of the seats in the national legislature compared to 18% in the U.S.

The government has enacted legislation guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and access to contraception is guaranteed. According to the CIA's World Factbook, Costa Rica's birthrate is 1.91, below the U.S. rate of 2.06. Also, according to UNICEF, attendance rates at both primary and secondary schools are higher for Costa Rican girls than boys.

The Virgin of the Angels "La Negrita": Patron Saint of Costa Rica

The story begins on the morning of August 2nd, 1635. In the province of Cartago a young girl named Juana Pereira lives. Little Juana is in the forest collecting firewood when she comes across a carved figurine of a woman with a child in her arms. Juana, delighted by her discovery, takes the figurine to her humble home.

The following day Juana returns to the forest to collect firewood and is shocked to find another identical figurine in the same spot. Believing it to be another "doll" she takes it home only to discover that the initial figurine is no longer where she left it.

The next day the very same thing happens which frightens Juana. She goes to the home of a local priest, Father Alonso de Sandoval, gives him the figurine and tells him what's happened. The Priest takes possession of the statuette and places it in a box. The next day when he goes to check on it it's gone!

Yet again, Juana is collecting her firewood and finds the small statue



back where she initially found it. At this point she brings it to the local church to be stored in the tabernacle. And, you guessed it, the following morning it's back in the forest again. The local people, realize that something supernatural is happening and that the figurine represents the Virgin Mary. She seems to be drawn to that exact spot so they set out to build a chapel to accommodate her; what is now known as the Basilica of Carthage.

The figurine measures around 20 inches tall and is composed of different materials such as rock, graphite and jade. It's black in color which is why it's affectionately called "La Negrita". On her left arm is the baby Jesus resting on her chest.

Today the figurine is in a golden shell on the altar of the Basilica of Carthage in Cartago and in 1824 the authorities of Costa Rica declared the Virgin of the Angels the official patron of Costa Rica.

Costa Ricans show their devotion to La Negrita in several ways with the most ambitious being the annual

pilgrimage which culminates in a solemn mass August 2nd. Devotees travel by foot from vast distances to give thanks for their blessings. It's estimated that almost a million people make the journey, 1/4 of the population of the entire country.



The Basilica in Cartago

Religion in Costa Rica

- Catholic: 76.3%
- Evangelical Christian: 13.7%
- Jehovah's Witness: 1.3%
- Protestant: 0.7%
- Atheist: 3.2%
- Other (Mormon, Judaism, Islam): 4.8%

Humpback Whales of Costa Ballena



it simply for fun or does it serve another purpose?

They weigh between 60,000 and 80,000 lbs. and grow to be about 52 feet long with the females being a bit larger than the males.

Our area of Costa Rica is commonly referred to as Costa Ballena or "Whale Coast" due in part to the fact that several types of whales gather from around the world to reproduce and give birth off our shores. Humpback whales migrate more than 16,000 miles a year from both the northern and southern hemispheres making them one of the farthest migrating animals on Earth. We see whales from both Alaska and Antarctica. They arrive from July to October and again from December through March giving Costa Rica the distinction of having the longest whale watching season in the world.

Whale watch tours are a popular activity in our area and it's easy to spot humpback whales since they live at the ocean's surface. Humpback whales are the most acrobatic of the large whales. Some of their common actions include popping their heads above the surface to look around, fin slapping, fluke flipping and breaching when they leap completely out of the water landing on their backs. Scientists are unclear on why whales display these behaviors. Is

These whales have a long lifespan of about 50 years and have been known to live to 100.

They can travel alone or in small pods of up to 15. Calves are born after a 11-12 month gestation period which explains why some years when the whales are visiting our tropical waters they're breeding and other times they're giving birth. Mothers and calves stay together for a year or longer and maintain strong bonds. The calves reach maturity at about 15 years old.

Humpbacks communicate with sophisticated vocalizations. They're the noisiest and most creative of the whales when it comes to their "songs" a sequence of squeaks, grunts and other sounds which can continue for hours on end.



The humpback captures prey (krill, plankton and fish) by circling the catch with a ring of bubbles. This causes the catch to gather and

rise toward the surface. Once surrounded by a net of bubbles the humpback opens its enormous mouth and swallows them.

Humpback whales are an endangered species with international protection status although some countries such as Japan, Norway and Iceland still hunt them. Due to whaling in the previous century their numbers were decimated by 90%. The spe-

cies is currently growing at about 3% a year.



Pre-Columbian Luxury Development Discovered in Southern Costa Rica

In what is referred to as Finca Grijalba in Ciudad Cortés de Osa, archaeologists have discovered a "luxury" housing complex in the Osa that was built at least 1,200 years ago. The archaeologists from the National Museum are currently restoring what they believe is a pre-Columbian housing complex for the wealthy and powerful.

The area consists of approximately 20 acres and includes cobblestone pavement and 11 stone structures that were covered by a type of limestone. They've also unearthed ceramics, vases, pots, grinding stones and various household utensils as well as a mysterious stone sphere.



Americans Relinquish Their U.S. Citizenship in Record Numbers

According to Fortune Magazine Americans are rescinding their citizenship and handing in their U.S. passports in record numbers. U.S. citizens are growing discontent with increasing taxes on their global wealth. In the first quarter of 2013 670 U.S. passport holders gave up their citizenship along with their U.S. tax liability, the most in any quarter since the IRS began publishing figures. This is almost 3/4 of the entire total of 2012.



The trend increased after a

widening crackdown by the U.S. Department of Justice on offshore private banking services sold to wealthy Americans resulting in more than a dozen Americans and foreign bankers being indicted or charged. Only a small fraction of Americans living abroad have disclosed their foreign bank accounts, now a requirement of the Foreign Bank Account Reporting (FBAR) law. In 2012 the IRS showed just over 2 million tax returns filed by overseas Americans with an estimated 6 million living abroad.

Storage Facility with House for Sale

Although not in our beautiful development, a friend would like us to pass along something that may be a good business opportunity for one of our readers. She has a 6.92 acre property in San Isidro that includes a 30 unit storage facility along with a 2 bedroom, 1500 sq ft house for \$249,000. The property also includes 320 Yellow Bark trees which are estimated upon maturity (20 years) to yield \$600,000 to \$1 million. The property needs to be sold before September 7th or will be repossessed by the lender. Please let us know asap if you or someone you know would like more information.

Well here it is August and we've been having our best sales ever this year. It must be a sign of improvements in the economy or more consumer confidence. Perhaps it's just the fact that more baby boomers are retiring each year and looking for better options abroad. It's also time for the Costa Rica lifestyle event by International Living being held in San Jose Costa Rica August 5 - 7. We're hosting the event again this year including offering two 4 day Discovery tours before the event and two tours after the event. The event sold out in record time indicating even greater interest in Costa Rica this year as more North Americans seek out warmer climates and better quality of life. Our project continues to grow at a record rate. This year we've got nearly 70 homes in various stages of design or construction. Add this to the hundreds already built and our community is finally taking shape. The first homes are nearing completion in our Vientos del Sur development and we've also got a large number of new homes popping up in our Chontales master

planned community. Chontales is the largest master planned community ever developed in Costa Rica and is really looking good these days. Just two years ago we were breaking ground on the first few homes. We also continue to develop new ocean and mountain view home sites within Chontales and still have a great selection. In other news we have a new restaurant in Ojochal, Verde, offering Oaxacan style Mexican food. It's located at the Hotel Alma. The new Baxter Bowling Alley and Sports Bar is almost open and there's a new bridge into phase 9, eliminating the last "drive across the river" in all phases of our developments. I'll miss the old river crossings, it always amused perspective clients who'd never driven through a river before.



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Welcome to the Neighborhood

Joe and Vickie are from The Woodlands, Texas, 30 miles north of Houston. They own a small industrial wholesale distribution business and are looking to build as soon as possible.



Photo Unavailable

Mark and Tracy are from Susanville, California. Mark has practiced law for over 30 years and is looking to start a new phase of life with wife Tracy and daughters Brooke and Isabella in the Osa Peninsula. As well as practicing law, including a stint as the elected District Attorney of Lassen County in California, Mark was also a college basketball coach taking his team to the California State Championships on multiple occasions.

Mark and Tracy have traveled all over the world and have finally found the ideal location to begin the next phase of their life. Mark states "Pacific Lots has everything we could have hoped for in a development. Beautiful location, great infrastructure, safe, peaceful, and one of the most incredible places to live in the world. Everything about Pacific Lots gives me great confidence in purchasing a property outside the U.S.. We can't wait to start our new life in beautiful Costa Rica".

