

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Ballena,
Costa Rica and Beyond

October 2013



Inside this issue:

Cell Phones in CR	1
Increasing Arrivals	1
World Energy Council Results	2
Costa Rica Sells Forestry Credits	2
Businesswomen in CR	2
Meet New Neighbors	3
Costa Rica: A Top Honeymoon Destination	3
The Bats of Costa Rica	4
Costa Rica Closing Zoos	4
More Species Identified	4
Election Season Starts	5
Drivers of Exports	5
FDI Increases	5
Human Capital Report	5
News from Pacific Lots	6
Gary & Sabra Visit Ojochal	6

More Cell Phones Than People

Since the telecommunications market opened up to competition 2 years ago the mobile market in Costa Rica has grown almost 50%. In 2010 60% of Costa Rican residents had a cell phone.

Today 116% have them, 11 out of every 10 people. The rate is actually higher in Costa Rica than it is in the United States where there are the same number of cell phones as residents.



Updates from the Osa

It appears that preparation for the paving in Ojochal has actually begun. There's been a hydrant installed and the initial steps toward construction are underway which may explain why the roads in the village were so rough this year.

There will be an ARCR (The Association of Residents of Costa Rica) meeting at the Whales & Dolphins Eco Lodge on November 15th and they will discuss residency, insurance and more. For more information contact pz@arcr.net.

Due to increasing popularity, November 24th will be next El Sabor de Ojochal. Sit back and enjoy a 12 course, 12 chef dinner where the finest restaurants in Ojochal come together for a magical night of food, music and wine. For a Thanksgiving celebration,

November 28th, Osa Mountain Village Resort will offer 2 hours of music with Amanda Rodríguez, Gustavo Hernández and Lorenzo Vargas. December 1st Dominical will be holding their 16th Arts, Crafts and Garage Sale event at the Roca Verde Restaurant and Bar. For a special treat there will be a lighted boat parade December 21st at 6:00pm along in Sierpe de Osa.

Be sure to swing by and say hello to Shelagh at Royal Palm Interiors in Uvita. They're now offering Hunter Douglas window coverings and Selther Mattresses and will match any competitor's price.

Pura Vida!
Kristina Welburn
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Increasing Arrivals into Costa Rica Leads to Airport Expansion

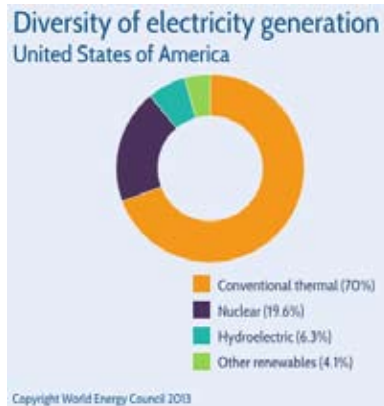
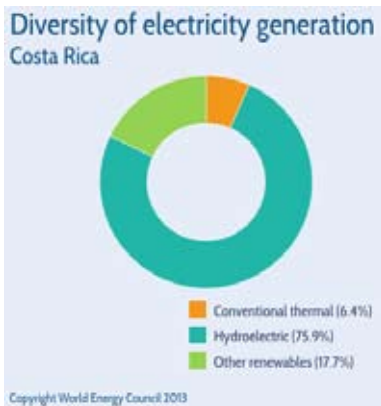
The Costa Rican Tourism board recently released their latest figures. The country received 1.3 million tourists in the first half of this year, 2.7% higher than the same period in 2012. Most tourists arrived through Juan Santamaría International Airport in San Jose. Arrivals into this airport rose by 3.5% while arrivals to the Daniel Oduber International Airport in Northern Costa Rica decreased by 0.5%.

Due to the increasing demand, Juan Santamaría Airport is opening a new terminal which will include commercial space and a supermarket. Airlines have recently added 7 new routes, primarily from the United States, to Costa Rica's capital and it's expected that the expansion will offer adequate service for the vast number of passengers arriving into the country. Construction should start this year to be completed by December 2014. Although Juan Santamaría Airport is relatively small it's one of the most efficient worldwide.



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Costa Rica Ranks High on World Energy Council Studies



As part of the World Energy Council Trilemma study the WEC developed an Energy Sustainability Index which provides a comparative ranking of countries' ability to

affordability of energy supply across the population. Environmental sustainability refers to the development of energy supply from renewable and other low-carbon sources.

Most of Costa Rica's electricity is generated from renewable resources such as hydroelectric and wind and within the report their Environmental Sustainability ranking placed Costa Rica second behind Switzerland. In the region Nicaragua place lowest at number 87 and the United States ranked poorly at 86.

The World Energy Council's (WEC) recently released their 2013 World Energy Trilemma and ranked Costa Rica first in Latin America overall and 2nd worldwide for environmental sustainability.

The World Energy Trilemma study assessed how well countries are addressing the triple challenge of finding solutions to support secure, affordable, and environmentally sensitive energy. The Energy Sustainability Index within the report is a comprehensive ranking of countries' energy policies, showing areas of success and room for improvement.

provide stable, affordable and environmentally sensitive energy systems. In this index Costa Rica ranks 21st with an ABB score, first in Latin America. What's also encouraging is that over the past 3 years Costa Rica has steadily improved. The country ranks 2nd worldwide in the Environmental Sustainability score achieving an 'A'.

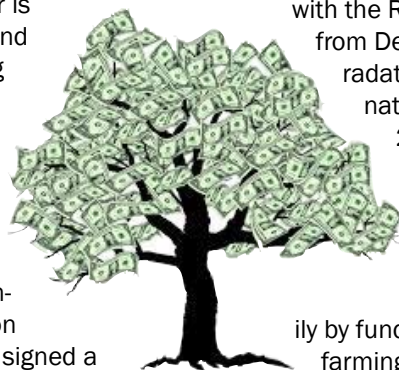
Energy security refers to the reliability of the energy infrastructure and the ability of energy companies to meet current and future demand. Energy equity refers to the accessibility and

The World Energy Council, founded in 1923, is the UN-accredited global energy body, representing the entire energy spectrum, with more than 3000 member organizations located in over 90 countries and drawn from governments, private and state corporations, academia, NGOs and energy-related stakeholders.

Costa Rica Sells Forestry Carbon Credits

Costa Rica's forest cover is continuing to expand and the small country is forging ahead to meet its 2021 carbon neutrality goal. According to the World Bank, Costa Rica is the first country to negotiate the sale of forestry carbon credits. The government and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) signed a contract to negotiate an Emission Reductions Payment Agreement worth up to \$63 million. The FCPF Carbon Fund would help meet demand for additional landowners to participate in the Payments for Environmental Service program that will protect and regenerate an additional 340,000 hectares (840,000 acres) of privately owned land as well as in Indigenous People's territories.

Costa Rica has been an affiliate



with the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) international strategy since 2007 which has been fundamental to Costa Rica's reforestation success. REDD+ encourages reforestation primarily by funding sustainable tree farming projects for the timber industry. Costa Rica

is building on a 10 year program which compensates landowners for planting protected trees on their property and for enhancing biodiversity conservation.

Worldwide we lose about 13 million hectares (more than 32 million acres) annually. Costa Rica is the only Latin American country to reverse this trend.

Woman Owned Businesses Thrive in Costa Rica

According to the Index Business Environment for Entrepreneurs put together by The Economist, Costa Rica is the best country in the isthmus to be a woman entrepreneur. Although the country is not on top regarding funding for women owned businesses it is a country where these businesses prosper. The study evaluated small and medium enterprises headed by women in 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, taking into account factors such as operational risks of the business, access to financing, capacity and skills, and social services. The rankings are:

1. Costa Rica,
2. Panama,
3. Honduras,
4. Nicaragua,
5. Guatemala,
6. El Salvador.



Welcome to the Neighborhood



Barb and Randy from Alberta

Randy and Barb did not have any children so they've spent all of their adult life working in their respective careers. Barb will be retiring the end of this year after spending 35+ years working as a nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of one of the major hospitals in Edmonton, Canada. Randy has worked as an accountant for the same length

of time for a number of companies and non-profit organizations and will be retiring in April of next year. The last 9 years he's worked for a company that provides 24 hour support for Persons with Developmental Disabilities.

Like a lot of Canadians they are looking for warmer climates and a more reasonable place to live. They visited Panama and Ecuador earlier this year, thought they had made their decision, and then, on a whim, decided to check out Costa Rica and Pacific Lots. They liked what they saw and ended up with a nice ocean/mountain view lot in Suenos del Tropico.

They are looking forward to moving to Costa Rica next year and building their home and meeting new people.



Patty and Carmine from Tucson

Patty and Carmine are both energy professionals working for local electric utility in Tucson, Arizona. Patty is a Claims Analyst and Carmine is the Director over Wholesale & Renewable Energy. Carmine expects to retire in 9 years, and they're looking to build their retirement home over the next few years. While they expect to keep a place in the states near their kids and grandkids, they expect to spend most of the year in Costa Rica.

Marv and Debbie have lived in a small town, Scottsville, VA-near Charlottesville, for the past 12 years. Previously they lived in Bucks County, PA and Monterey CA. Marv is in the process of retiring from the sales consulting and recruiting firm that he formed in 1993. Debbie, a very well know dog breeder and dog show judge, (breeds Newfoundland's and Portuguese Water dogs) is winding down her breeding program but continues to judge dog shows worldwide.

Their first visit to CR sold them. Three days at the IL conference in San Jose followed by travel to Arenal and Ojochal convinced them that CR would be a great place to retire and a wonderful adventure as well. They found Pacific

Lots—Suenos del Tropico specifically, to be the exact spot they were looking for and they purchased a "10" ocean/mountain view lot.

The time spent at the Guest House, a continuous flow of valuable information from Steve, Patrick and Marcel, and the very low key-no pressure tours all led to the conclusion that Pacific Lots was the "real deal". The fact Pacific Lots can handle all of their planning and construction needs is a big bonus. They have rented a home for the month of February in Ojochal and will start the design process with construction to begin after their Virginia house sells.

Kathi and Jan currently live just outside of Washington, DC in Fairfax, VA. Kathi has retired after 30 years as a Nurse Practitioner and Jan manages the US environmental consulting business for a large global engineering company.

Having first visited Costa Rica in 2008, they were so impressed with everything the country has to offer that they began to investigate the possibilities of retiring there. Kathi discovered the Pacific Lots website and after extensive research they participated in the Pacific Lots/Ventana del Pacifico Discovery Property Tour in August 2013. And...that's all it took, they were convinced the Southern Pacific region would be the perfect place for their next adventure. They intend to build their new home as soon as possible, using it for vacations until they can permanently relocate to Ojochal in the next 5 years.

Top Honeymoon Destinations

Costa Rica has long been a desirable location for destination weddings. It's beautiful, affordable, has something to offer everyone and close to the U.S. Perfect Honeymoons & Holidays Travel <http://perfecthoneymoons.com> recently listed Costa Rica as the 3rd most romantic destination behind Hawaii and Italy. The full list follows: 1. Hawaii, 2. Italy, 3. Costa Rica, 4. Greece, 5. Tahiti, 6. Caribbean, 7. Australia, 8. Fiji, 9. Belize, 10. The Maldives.



The Bats of Costa Rica

Interested in learning about “Phylogeny, Evolution, and the Origin of Biological Diversity in Noctilionoid Bats” or “Various Machine Learning Techniques for Acoustic Classification of Neotropical Bat Species Based on the Complete Echolocation Call Repertoire”, maybe “Do Bats Talk Funny in Helium? A Test of Echolocation Flexibility” is more your speed. This past summer Costa Rica held the largest bat conference ever welcoming more than 650 worldwide delegates.

Bats, like bees, are considered a “keystone species” in many environments. A keystone species has a disproportionately large effect on its environment and plays a critical role in maintaining the structure of an ecological community. Keystone species may pollinate flowers, disperse seeds and consume insect pests. It’s estimated that one bat is able to eat 1/3 of its body weight in insects each night. A group of 1000 bats can eat 4 tons of insects each year. If they were to become extinct the insect population would explode.

Bats are actually the only mammals capable of natural sustained flight unlike other “flying mammals” that glide. They represent about 20% of all classified mammal species worldwide with about 1,240 species. About 70% are insectivores and almost all of the remainder are fruit eaters. There are also bats that eat fish and the one we don’t want to think about, vampire bats, that are hematophagous (blood drinkers). The vampires have strong familial ties and are the only species of bats that will adopt another young bat if something happens to its mother, how sweet. I guess you have to stick together when you’re so creepy.

Hunting only at night, bats “see” via echolocation. It’s a bit complicated to explain but essentially ultrasonic sounds are emitted to produce echoes and by



comparing outgoing pulses with returning echoes the bats can produce detailed images of their surroundings. They rarely fly in rain because it interferes with their echolocation. Bats also seem to communicate

with each other with particular sounds and scientists at the conference have actually discovered distinct regional dialects acquired through vocal learning.

The Spanish word for bat is Murciélago (“blind mouse”) and apart from the Arctic, Antarctic and a few isolated islands bats exist all over the world. The US is home to around 45 species while there are around 110 species in Costa Rica.

White nose syndrome has killed more than 1 million bats in the US and bats are attracted to wind turbines and mysteriously have higher death rates than birds around them. It’s hypothesized that the change in pressure may rupture their lungs.

Costa Rica’s Battle to Close Its Zoos



Costa Rican officials are planning on closing the country’s public zoos and freeing the animals from their cages by May of 2014. Environment Minister, Rene Castro, announced that the zoos together hold more than 400 animals scheduled for either release or relocation to rescue centers. Castro’s plan is to turn the zoos into botanical gardens. He stated, “We don’t want animals in captivity or enclosed in any way unless it is to save them.”

The foundation (FUNDAZOO) that runs the zoos has argued that they hold a contract to run the zoos through 2024. They’ve filed an appeal in the court system and were granted a temporary injunction against the closures. FUNDAZOO has stated that its contract automatically renews every 10 years unless they are given notice within the first 3 months of the 9th year of the contract which they received 5 days too late.

Costa Rica has banned circuses with animals and recently banned hunting for sport, the first country in the Americas to do so.

Thousands of New Species Documented in Costa Rica

The last time the National Biodiversity Strategy of Costa Rica catalogued the vast species in the country the total amounted to 87,000. This was in 2009. This year the country updated it’s count which rose to 92,000.

The country of only 4.5 million people accounts for almost 5% of the world’s biodiversity and has set aside nearly 30% of its territory for national parks and nature reserves.

Steven Tyler, of Aerosmith, recently posted “Costa Rica is my second favorite place in the world after Maui. I love to go and hear the howler monkeys, I love the canopy, volcanoes and of course the fans.” We say “Rock On Steven!”



Election Season Kicks Off in Costa Rica

Let's talk politics; Costa Rican politics. 2014 is an election year and things are starting to heat up as they do basically everywhere in election years. Laura Chinchilla, having served her 4 year term leaves office in May. Costa Rican laws requires presidents to serve for one term only but they are allowed to run again after sitting out a term.

There are 2 main parties in Costa Rica, the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC) and the ruling party, the National Liberation Party (PLN). The PUSC and PLN have governed since the 1980's. There has been a new party gaining traction over the past couple of years, the Citizen's Action Party (PAC) and there is also a Libertarian Movement Party (PML).

The Social Christian Unity Party was founded in 1977 and is a member of the Centrist Democrat International organization. Rodolfo Hernández was this party's candidate but has recently resigned (twice). He accused party

leaders of sabotaging his campaign and agreed to reconsider if the entire Executive Committee of the party resigned. Most remained in their posts so he resigned again on October 9th. The party replaced him with a new candidate, Rodolfo Piza, former chief executive of the Social Security Fund.

The National Libertarian Party was founded in 1951 and is a member of the Social International, a worldwide association which seeks to establish Democratic socialism. Johnny Araya, mayor of San José for more than a decade, is the party's candidate and is currently the frontrunner.

The Citizen's Action Party, founded in 2000 is a left-leaning political party in Costa Rica. Its platform is based on encouraging citizen participation and involvement in politics. The party is fighting against corruption arguing that it is the main cause for sub-development and voter apathy. Luis Guillermo Solis is this party's candidate.

Luis Guillermo Solis is currently a Professor and Dean of Faculty at the University of Costa Rica.

The Libertarian Movement Party (PML), was founded in 1994 and is based on classical liberalism. They believe in the principles of moderate intervention of the State and more economic freedom is the best way to improve the country. Otto Guevara, the founder of the party, is the party's candidate. He's run for president in 2002, 2006 and last ran in 2010 losing with 20% of the vote.

Only Costa Rican citizens 18 and over, not permanent residents, are allowed to vote. Within Ojochal, expats with a passport can vote on community and municipal issues.

Elections will be held February 2nd. Ballots will be cast for the president, 2 vice presidents and 57 lawmakers in the Legislative Assembly. The president elect must garnish over 40% of the vote or there will be a run-off election in April.



Rodolpho Piza



Johnny Araya



Luis Guillermo Solis



Otto Guevara

Computer and Business Services; the Drivers of Exports

During the first half of 2013 Costa Rica's services exports increased by 7.7% over last year to a total of \$2.9 billion. The Foreign Trade Ministry (COMEX) reported that exports of computer services (\$892 million) and business services (\$414 million) are driving the export numbers. These 2 sectors generated almost half of the total service sector exports and services as a whole accounted for 33.7% of Costa Rica's total exports for the first 6 months.

FDI grows by More Than 15%

The Central Bank shows that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the first half of 2013 grew to \$2.03 billion, 15.4% over the same period in the previous year. The figures were boosted by a 97% growth in real estate investment and a 5% growth in manufacturing. Overall FDI throughout Latin American has been having strong increases averaging 6% overall.

Costa Rica Leads in Human Capital

According to the World Economic Forum's 2013 Human Capital Report, Costa Rica ranked 1st in the region. The index stated that what sets the country apart and gives it a competitive advantage is the heavy investment into education, currently at 7% of GDP. Their highly educated workforce has attracted more than 250 foreign high-tech companies to have operations in the country.



Wow, 2014 is just around the corner and another busy tour season approaches. Business continues for us at a record pace. We have 4 discovery tours in November with nearly all sold out already. We are anticipating having more tours this year than any year in the past, simply to keep up with demand. If you plan to tour with us this winter, I suggest you book early, we already have a sold out tour in February. We've been prepping some great ocean and mountain view home sites in anticipation of lots of visitors.

More and more owners are moving into town full time and more purchasers are going right into construction. Must be those Baby Boomers finally starting the exodus we've been predicting. I've also had a busy show schedule having just completed both the Costa Rica event with International Living as well as the Las Vegas "Live and Invest Overseas" event, both of which we sponsored. Just yesterday I returned from Chicago from a meeting with Prudential

Rubloff, the oldest brokerage firm in the Chicago market, with 850 brokers. We are partnering with Prudential Rubloff in changing the MLS to finally allow listings outside the US. Exciting stuff. I head to Phoenix next week for the "Fund Your Life Overseas" event hosted by International Living that we are sponsoring. Then I head straight from Phoenix to Costa Rica where I will be leading 3 back to back sold out Discovery tours. We've got a RETA only tour scheduled for December 5 - 8 that we also expect to sell out.

We continue to sign long term advertising agreements with a host of new media markets and expect 2014 to be both fun and busy. HGTV recently filmed an episode of House Hunters International in Ojochal and there's been a lot of press about the area in publications like Travel and Leisure magazine, the American Way magazine and more. Hope to see you soon in Ojochal.



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Stephen Linder

A Visit in the Rainy Season; by Sabra Rounds

It had been too long. You see, my husband and I purchased some land through Pacific Lots back in early 2011, with plans to start building our new home there in early 2016. Since purchasing our lot, we have tried to come back to Costa Rica about twice a year on vacation. But this time, it had been 15 months since our last trip, which is just too long! We were finally able to squeeze in a trip during July, and since we have been talking about Costa Rica non-stop, we actually had another couple join us on our trip—they wanted to see what we kept talking about!

Although July is part of the rainy season, we did not see much rain during the first half of our trip. That allowed us to have some beach time, go on a boat tour of the Sierpe River, and host a lunch at the house we rented for all the people we have come to know as friends in our future town. It truly is starting to feel like "coming home" when we make our trips to Costa Rica. We like to joke we have more friends in Costa Rica than we do in the States, but I think soon it will be true!

Since we also had our teen-aged daughter and her friend along, we HAD to include some zip lining in the vacation. We also stopped at an animal rescue center where we had baby monkeys, birds, agouti, and even a kinkajou climbing on us. It certainly was the highlight of the trip for the girls!

For the adults, one of our highlights would have been all the interaction we had with nature. We loved waking up to the sounds of howler monkeys, parrots, and toucans. Every day we saw new animals and marveled in the beauty of our surroundings. You just can't beat watching the monkeys and toucans make their way through the jungle while you are just yards away from them!

Unfortunately we did have to go back home, but as we were getting ready to leave, the husband of the couple we brought with us turned to us and said, "You definitely undersold this place!" I couldn't agree with him more! How do you describe to people the feeling of being in sync with nature, the joy of new discoveries every day, and the Pura Vida that is lived out day-to-day in Costa

Rica? It's a magical place that has to be experienced to be understood.

We also vowed we wouldn't wait so long to return to Costa Rica, and immediately booked another trip for December. In fact, we will be helping out with the Discovery Tour which takes place December 5-8, and we'd love to have you join us!

You can see some videos of our latest trip, including my daughter holding a kinkajou and monkeys, on our YouTube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/gsgrounds>



Sabra and Gary