

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Ballena,
Costa Rica and Beyond

April 2014

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Updates from the Osa

The annual Spheres Festival was recently held in Palmar Norte and was a great opportunity for visitors and locals to learn more about these mysterious orbs as well as visit the new Finca 6 museum in Sierpe. This past Easter weekend there was a Fiestas Civicas which included a horse parade of over 100 horses and riders trotting through the area. As part of this celebration there was also the traditional bull riding craziness.

Local resident, Brian Nice is spearheading an effort to put lifeguards on our beautiful beach Playa Hermosa. He's raising funds by collection donations and selling t-shirts in many places around town.

There will be a SUP (Stand up Paddle Board) competition on May 24th in Uvita. Something Steve enjoys quite often. Anja from Adorable Boutique has continued to offer craft classes in jewelry making, macramé etc....



Le Bistro has moved to a larger location down the road where the Bavaria restaurant used to be. Crepe-Nuestra Casa is a new eatery in Ojochal that offers wonderful home-made crepes.

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Steve Linder on Paddleboard in the Adirondacks

It's with great sadness to report that Patrick Langille, the smart, funny Ventana's sales manager who has greeted every Pacific Lots client visiting the guest house from the very beginning of our history passed away suddenly this past March.

Patrick, originally from Toronto, had traveled the world settling in Ojochal, Costa Rica more than 10 years ago.

He was always full of the most entertaining stories. Once, he adopted an abandoned baby howler monkey and built him a little house in the back yard of the guest house. When his monkey grew up it broke his heart to let him free into the wild but he did what he had to do. He told the story of bringing several jars of peanut butter to the guest house,

something Costa Rican's were unfamiliar with. These jars continually went missing and the mystery was solved when he discovered one of the housekeepers polishing wood with it. He spoke about the hummingbird that was dazed after flying into a wall recuperating on his shoulder to the delight of the guest house visitors.

He also said that meeting every client through the guest house program could sometimes be a curse. Once he had terrible food poisoning and wanted to be sick in peace. For days every neighbor stopped by out of concern, many actually bringing him casseroles. He loved the community support but shortly thereafter built a fence.

Patrick had a Masters Unlimited Tonnage Captain's license and was also licensed as a commercial airline pilot.

He lived in the Caribbean for several years captaining mega-yachts. He became a land developer building a 1200 unit housing project in St. Maartin and also built and ran his own marina.

He was a friend and neighbor to many Pacific Lots clients and will be missed. He's leaving behind his new wife, Noelia in Costa Rica, and an adult son, Zachary, in Toronto.



Patrick on Playa Tortuga

www.PacificLots.com

School Books Donated by Developer

Recently the developer that Pacific Lots represents, donated text books for the children of the Tortuga School in Ojochal. Over 100 children from grades 1 to 6 were delighted to receive text books in Spanish, Math, Sciences and Social Studies. This is the second time they've done this and they're hoping it will be a yearly occurrence.



Jean Marc with happy local student



Teacher thanking Jean Marc



Future leaders of Costa Rica

New Neighbors

Peter and Ursula live in Boulder, Colorado. Ursula retired after 15 years as a office manager in a Periodontal Practice. Peter still works in his Dental Lab

Peter and Ursula first met Steve Linder in Panama City, Panama at the International Living Conference. There they heard about Costa Rica

and all it had to offer. This year in March they attended the Pacific Lots/ Ventana del Pacifico Discovery Tour. They liked the Southern Pacific region, the people and the style of living. They intend to build their new German style Chateau with ocean/mountain view lot in Eternal Life.



Ursula and Peter having fun at the Poas Volcano

New Phase Just Released!

Many people who have visited the development that we represent in Costa Rica have told us that they preferred either larger lots than were available, lots within the town of Ojochal and/or bigger ocean views. We're happy to announce that the developer has opened up the first 45 lots for sale in Phase 11. Phase 11 is up the mountain directly through town (less than one mile) with lots ranging from 1.24 acres (5000 sq meters) to 3.88 acres (15698 sq meters) with prices starting at \$80k.

There's a mix of spectacular ocean views as well as beautiful mountain views and everything in between. Some examples are: 1.55 acres with a 10 mountain view for \$90k, 2.87 acres, rainforest view lot for \$90K and a 1.36 acre lot with a 10 ocean and 8 mountain view for \$115K. The site work is complete but the electric and water systems won't be complete until the end of 2015 therefore you won't be able to occupy a home there until early 2016. If you'd like to see a complete price sheet, phase map or schedule a tour please let us know.



Overview of Location



View

Costa Rica has a New President Elect

Costa Rica has a new President elect, Luis Guillermo Solis. This is the 4th attempt by Solis to win the presidency. He is a member of the Citizen Action Party and this is the first time in 50 years that a candidate for neither of the two leading parties, the National Liberation Party and the Social Christian Party, has held the position of President.

Solis has never before held elected office. He's a published author, has been the ambassador to Panama and is an expert in international relations and global trade. His campaign focused on reducing the poverty rate and stamping out government corruption. Although Costa Rica is the least corrupt country in Central America and one of the least corrupt in Latin America it's an issue

that strikes a chord with voters.

He faces challenges in the National Assembly since his party holds only 13 of the 57 seats.

Solis was virtually tied in the poles with Johnny Araya, former mayor of San Jose, when Araya unexpectedly announced his withdrawal from the race earlier this year. Solis will take office May 8th.



Luis Guillermo Solis

Stable and Safe in Costa Rica

According to the 2014 Latin American Regional Security Index by Forensic & Litigation Consulting, Costa Rica is one of the most stable and safe countries within the region. The index evaluates how each country is working toward reducing levels of public insecurity particularly focusing on the business community.

The categories studied include homicides, felonies, organized crime and drug trafficking, as well as analyses of the effectiveness of government programs intended to address these problems.

Over the past 10 years Latin America has shown strong economic growth and more stable democratic governments but has not made significant advances in the elimination of public insecurity. The report states that the Costa Rican government has continued with its plan to professionalize the security forces and invest in public safety prevention programs. The country is continuing to maintain lower crime rates than other neighboring countries, although it has not been completely isolated from their problems.

Costa Rica Tops Social Progress Index

According to the 2014 Social Progress Imperative report Costa Rica tops the list of Latin American countries in several aspects.

Costa Rica excels in areas including Nutrition and Basic Medical Care and has the greatest opportunity to improve human wellbeing by focusing more on Personal Safety. Of issues covered by the Foundations of Wellbeing Dimension, Costa Rica excels at providing building blocks for people's lives such as Access to Basic Knowledge but would benefit from greater investment in Ecosystem Sustainability. Of issues covered by the Opportunity Dimension, Costa Rica outperforms in providing opportunities for people to improve their position in society and scores highly in Personal Rights yet falls short in Access to Advanced Education.

You can see more here: <http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/> and can find a comparison chart with between Costa Rica the U.S. and the country's closest neighbors below.

Basic Human Needs	Costa Rica	United States	Panama	Nicaragua
Nutrition and Basic Medical Care	95.16	97.82	90.08	84.21
Water and Sanitation	91.03	95.77	80.84	54.40
Shelter	78.83	87.99	78.97	53.99
Personal Safety	65.63	77.70	59.69	60.62
Foundations to Basic Knowledge	Costa Rica	United States	Panama	Nicaragua
Access to Basic Knowledge	93.52	95.10	90.42	81.16
Health and Wellness	81.71	73.61	80.28	77.21
Access to Info. and Communications	78.12	81.33	66.25	51.49
Ecosystem Sustainability	68.79	53.78	74.47	73.80
Opportunity	Costa Rica	United States	Panama	Nicaragua
Personal Rights	82.83	82.28	70.15	46.78
Personal Freedom and Choice	82.71	84.29	71.85	72.00
Tolerance and Inclusion	71.19	74.22	60.79	63.56
Access to Advanced Education	43.41	89.37	47.14	28.74

Country	Danger Level
Venezuela	5
Honduras	5
Guatemala	5
Haiti	5
Mexico	5
El Salvador	4
Brazil	4
Columbia	4
Bolivia	4
Nicaragua	4
Argentina	3
Paraguay	3
Peru	3
Dominican Rep.	3
Ecuador	3
Panama	3
Uruguay	2
Chile	2
Costa Rica	2

Costa Rica to Join Pacific Alliance

Costa Rica's current President, Laura Chinchilla, recently signed a declaration of intent to join the Pacific Alliance which is a trade bloc composed of Chile, Columbia, Mexico and Peru. The goals of the alliance include free trade with economic integration among members as well as visa free travel, a common stock exchange and joint embassies. Costa Rica's the first country to seek to join the Alliance since its inception.

The four founding members, Peru, Chile, Columbia and Mexico, formed the alliance back in 2011. In just three years these founding members have yielded significant and envious results. These four founders represent 36% of Latin America's GDP. The Alliance collectively boasts a projected growth rate of 5%, surpassing even Brazil. If one looked at the group as a whole they'd represent the 6th largest economy in the world.

The Pacific Alliance also represents growing autonomy from U.S.

economic influence. However it's not bad news for the U.S. According to the CSIS (Center for Strategic & International Studies) given the close bilateral relationships the U.S. enjoys with all of the current members the Alliance does represent a new source of economic opportunities for the U.S.

During the recent Alliance meeting in Columbia several countries showed up as observers attracted to the positive business climate among members, not all of these countries resided in Latin America. Canada for instance is in the process of determining whether or not to become a member. The country already has free trade agreements with the founding members.

The procedure to absorb Costa Rica into the group is estimated to last approximately one year. If the country is accepted member countries will sign a Protocol of Accession that must be ratified by the Presidents of member countries.

Costa Rica Tough on Drug Crimes

Sandwiched in a region rife with ties to the drug trade Costa Rica is a major player in the interception of narcotics headed toward North America, primarily to the US. In 2013 Costa Rican police confiscated more than 19 tons of cocaine making it a leader in the region of drug seizures.

The Public Security Ministry received a hefty investment to improve police training and strengthen the country's border patrol and surveillance activities. The Ministry bought 326 police cars, 2 high-speed drug interdiction boats and built new coast guard stations.

In addition the Costa Rican police confiscated 2.8 tons of marijuana, 70,000 crack rocks and more than 11,000 doses of ecstasy.

Intel Cuts Back and BofA Leaves

It was a disappointing day for Costa Rica; Intel and Bank of America, two of this small country's largest employers, announced plans to cut back operations in the country. The microchip giant Intel arrived in Costa Rica more than 15 years ago and has helped put the country on the map as a high-tech manufacturing destination.

Intel, struggling with a shrinking personal computer market, announced recently that they will consolidate manufacturing to existing facilities in Asia resulting in the loss of 1500 jobs in Costa Rica. The company will continue to employ over 1000 employees in finance, human resources, research and development in Costa Rica. They've also announced that they will add another 200 "high-value" positions in the country later this year. Intel dominates the PC chip industry but has been slow to adapt its processors for tablets and smartphones. Intel announced in January that they were planning on reducing its global workforce by 5%. Costa Rica's cuts account for 1% of the imminent cuts. Jose Rose, CINDE's Board President said that "Costa Rica today is not the country it

was when Intel arrived. The country is going to move forward, this is not an economy that revolves around Intel".

Bank of America's story is a bit different. The company is shutting down operations in Costa Rica leading to the layoff of 1400 people. Several media outlets wrote that the bank stated that the closing was due to constant reviews of their technology and operations however we were unable to verify that statement. Dan Frahm, Bank of America's spokesperson, did say that the shutdowns are part of the bank's ongoing reviews to make the best use of resources and balance capacity across their sites as well as to simplify the company for their customers and clients. The bank also shuttered operations in the Philippines and Mexico. The bank has shed around 16% of its workforce since 2010.

CINDE (Costa Rican Investment Promotion Agency) President Llobet remained confident on Costa Rica's ability to continue to attract foreign direct investment which has grown on average 15% per year since 2002 reaching \$2.68 billion in 2013.

Russian Citizens No Longer Need Visas to Visit

Pacific Lots actually has a few delightful Russian clients. In the past, visitors from the largest country in the world were required to attain tourist visas to enter our tiny country. Allen Flores, the Minister of Tourism, recently announced an easing of the visa requirements as a strategy to attract additional tourists. Russians will receive the same treatment as those from the U.S. and Canada with visitors being allowed to stay in Costa Rica for 30 days which is extendable to 90 days.

Costa Rica received more than 4,000 Russian tourists in 2013, the 5th largest source of visitors which grew exponentially during the 4th quarter of the year. This segment of tourists is typically young and well educated and spends between \$2500 and \$5000 per person, per visit.

Bringing Pets into Costa Rica

One consideration that many people make when deciding to move to a foreign country is whether or not they can bring their pets. Our animal companions are beloved family members and the thought of moving to paradise without them is painful for some and unthinkable for others. Fortunately, Costa Rica makes it easy to bring along pets although it's more difficult to bring animals other than cats and dogs into the country. If they're on the endangered species list it's even more difficult. So let's stick to the familiar dogs and cats.

There have been numerous instances of incoming visitors with pets being basically waived through customs but we believe it's better to go through the hoops and be safe. For dogs and cats you'll need to prove to Costa Rican customs officers that your animal is healthy. You must have an International Health Certificate signed and sealed by the government of your country. If you're coming from the US you need an APHIS form 7001 issued by a USDA approved veterinarian and signed and sealed by a USDA office in your state. The pet needs to have been examined within 2 weeks before entering the country and dogs must have been vaccinated against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis and



parvovirus within the previous 30 days. Dogs and cats also must have had a rabies shot (for animals 3 months or older) that is valid for 1 to 3 years and it must have been applied a minimum of 30 days before arrival. The Health Certificate does NOT need to be signed by a Notary Public or be authenticated by the Consulate of Costa Rica.

When you arrive in Costa Rica, the customs officer will do a visual inspection of your pet (for which you will be charged a small fee), and look over paperwork. If all is in order, you're through. If you're missing any documents or the officer decides your pet looks ill the animal will either be temporarily released to your care or kept in a state kennel for up to 30 days, until you work out what to do next (ie. arrange for the necessary paperwork, or contact a local vet if your animal needs care).

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

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not require general certificates of health for pets to enter into the US. However, health certificates may be required for entry into some states, or may be required

by airlines for pets. You should check with officials in your state of destination and with your airline prior to your travel date. All cats and dogs are subject to inspection at ports of entry for evidence of infectious diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

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

Please remember that rules change and before making the plans to bring your pet into Costa Rica double check the rules with the Costa Rican embassy.



Ceviche - A Costa Rican Staple

If you've never had Costa Rican ceviche you're in for a treat. Locals use only the freshest seafood, marinate it in lime juice and serve it at most local restaurants and roadside stands. Shrimp, corvina (sea bass), cooked squid and conch are some of the choices available. Citric acid from the fruit causes the seafood to "cook" without heat. The result tastes more like a cooked dish than sushi. There are many variations of ceviche and in Costa Rica the preparations in addition to the seafood typically include; minced onions, cilantro, finely minced peppers with Tabasco sauce on the side. Oftentimes served with crackers, ceviche is low in calories and high

in flavor. As an extra bonus it's typically only a dollar or two per cup. You can find some of the tastiest ceviche along the Costanera just before Ojochal.



Costa Rican Ceviche Recipe

- 1 lb firm white fish
- 1 small onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 4 or 5 sprigs of cilantro
- 1 small (¾", 2 cm) hot chili
- about 8 limes (enough for at least ¾ cup of juice)
- ¼ teaspoon salt, and pepper to taste

Cut fish into ½" cubes. Mince the onion, garlic, and chili coarsely. Chop the cilantro very finely. Juice the limes and strain to remove the pulp and seeds. Shrimp can be substituted for the fish. Mix all of the ingredients and refrigerate tightly covered for at least 3 hours. Serve with corn tortillas, tortilla chips, or crackers.

Spring is here in the US and our summer Costa Rica season is booking quickly. This is Easter week, an important holiday in Costa Rica where nearly everyone takes a vacation. All the hotels are full and our tour April 23 – 26 was an early sell out. 2013 was our best year ever with sales of over 50 properties. The release of phase 11 as well as the continued emigration of baby boomers from North America continues to sell out our tours. We sponsored the International Living event in Panama in early April as the “Costa Rica bonus session” and that event is already generating sales for us. We are sponsoring the International Living “Ultimate Event” in Puerto Vallarta in June and will be the largest project represented from Costa Rica. We’re also sponsoring the International Living event in San Jose Costa Rica July 21 – 23 and have two tours scheduled before the event and two after. If you are coming to the event and want to join

one of these tours, be sure to book early as these always sell out. The elections have ended in Costa Rica so we’ll have to wait and see how interested Guillermo Solis (the president elect) is in the new international airport slated for the southern region. Only time will tell. In the meantime we continue to build more homes than ever. With the nice article by Travel and Leisure Magazine late last year about the Bahia Ballena coast area in Costa Rica, we expect to continue to see a sizeable increase in visitors and sales activity.



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Stephen Linder

New Traffic Fines as of January 2014	
Offense	Fines in Colones/Dollars
Driving under the influence of alcohol	293,000/\$533
Traveling at a speed exceeding 120km/h, 75mph	293,000/\$533
Driving with a suspended license	293,000/\$533
Overtaking on curves, at intersections, railroad crossings, bridges, tunnels or overpasses on the shoulder of the road way or on the inside	293,000/\$533
Overtaking on a solid line	293,000/\$533
Violating the prohibition of a u-turn and left turn in places where there are vertical and horizontal signs	293,000/\$533
Driving with minors less than 1.45m (4’2”) without a safety device	198,000/\$360
Driving a motorcycle or moped with a child under 5 years old	198,000/\$360
Disregarding a stop sign at an intersection	198,000/\$360
Driving heavy load vehicles unauthorized by MOPT in urban and suburban areas.	99,000/\$180
Driving a vehicle without regulation lights from 6:00 PM until 6:00 AM or when there is reduced visibility	99,000/\$180
Driving a motor vehicle on sidewalks	99,000/\$180
Overtaking a vehicle that has stopped at a pedestrian crossing	99,000/\$180
Talking or texting on a cell phone unless device is hands-free	99,000/\$180
Driving without using a seat belt and allowing passengers not to use seat belts	99,000/\$180
A vehicle owner who has a device to circumvent or to cancel vigilance apparatus of the traffic police	49,000/\$89
Disregarding permanent vertical or horizontal traffic signs	49,000/\$89
The law requires that each vehicle has at least 2 safety triangles or similar devices and a vest or other reflective wear. It also requires a vehicle to have a fire extinguisher as provided by the regulation according to the nature and size of the vehicle.	