

# Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica  
and Beyond

July 2021



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## Updates from the Osa

2020 was a year that many would like to forget. Covid19 and economic and political turmoil permeated a good portion of the world. Costa Rica wasn't immune to these effects but fared okay. One thing that was unexpected was the increase in sales of homes to foreigners, sales of home sites and other direct investment in property. Many realtors are reporting record sales numbers, a fact that is counter intuitive when you look at the decrease in tourism from the pandemic.

We have stepped up our tour offerings now that Costa Rica has waived the requirement of a health insurance policy for all foreigners entering Costa Rica. Anyone who is not vaccinated must still purchase a health

travel insurance policy that guarantees payment of at least \$2,000 for lodging, in the event you need to quarantine, \$50,000 in healthcare coverage, in the event you are hospitalized with Covid and even an amount to repatriate your remains, in the event you die from Covid19. Vaccinations are now available in nearly every canton, to all Costa Ricans over the age of 20.

We are now offering a 10 day tour from Panama to Costa Rica, September 20 - 29. Click here for more information and to sign up.

*Steve Linder*

Come See the Largest and Oldest Development

for Ex-Pats in all of Costa Rica. Our Tours are running again

As many of you are aware, our project is the largest Ex-Pat development in Costa Rica. Now in our 32nd year in operation, we've developed 20 phases of home sites, the largest with over 325 lots. We are also the largest builder of Custom Homes in the country.. With a 10,000 square foot woodshop, we'll custom build your kitchen and bathroom cabinets without using a spec of plywood or particle board. We even build our own custom doors and windows, granite, quartz and other solid surface counters, wrought iron gates, fencing, and even custom furniture. Come see our homes and imagine living here.

Our 4 day Property tour Schedule,  
why not come see for yourself  
4 Day tours are \$299 - All inclusive  
August 11 - 14  
August 25 - 28  
September 8 - 11  
September 22 - 25  
October 6 - 9  
November 10 - 13  
November 17 - 20  
November 24 - 27  
December 8 - 11  
Sign up for a tour here

## No More Junk Food in Schools

The ministries of Education and Health recently signed a decree prohibiting the sale of all junk food in public schools starting this month. The decree bans the sale of food too high in sugar, calories and fat. In conjunction, the State will promote recreational and sports activities at all schools and colleges in order to decrease childhood obesity.

## The Great Green Macaw Release Part 1!

Great Green macaws are the second largest parrot species in the world; native to Costa Rica some people are predicting they will become extinct in the country within 20 years. The Ara Project aims to do something about this.

Due to poaching and deforestation, in particular the cutting of the protected Mountain Almond tree (*Dipteryx panamensis*), their preferred food source and nest tree, numbers of Great Green Macaws worldwide have dropped alarmingly. With less than 2500 mature individuals worldwide, they were classified "endangered" by the IUCN in 2008 and are a CITES I species. Once prevalent throughout the entire Caribbean half of Costa Rica their range has declined by as much as 90%. Since 1994 a conservation project in the current range of the macaws in the north of the country has been aiming to preserve habitat and nest trees and reduce the impacts of poaching on the Great Greens in Costa Rica. The great news is that the decline has stopped and numbers have stabilised. However there are still less than 300 mature individuals with only 25-35 breeding pairs.

The Ara Project has been breeding Great Green macaws in captivity for several years now it was with relief and excitement in 2009 we finally found a suitable site to release these magnificent birds into the wild. The new site on the south Caribbean coast of Costa Rica was perfect, formerly home to a thriving population of macaws they are now all but extinct in the area but the habitat remains intact with large numbers of mountain almonds and other food sources for the macaws.

Over a year was spent raising the money to fund the site which allowed us to build a new release aviary and accommodation for the on-site biologist. On March 27<sup>th</sup> 2011 the first day had finally arrived and the macaws were transported from Alajuela to their new home in the jungle. The project has previously done 10 releases of Scarlet macaws but we have never released the Great Greens, in fact this was to be the first official release in the world.

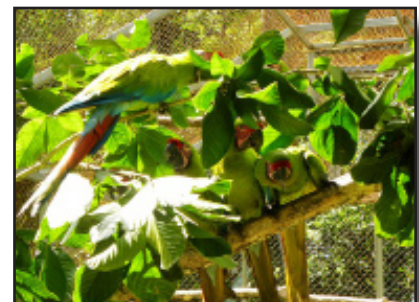
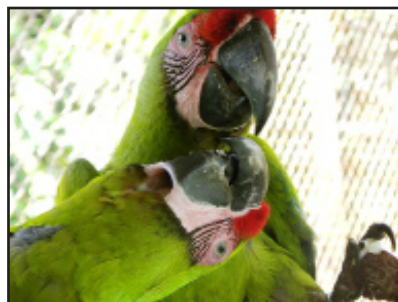
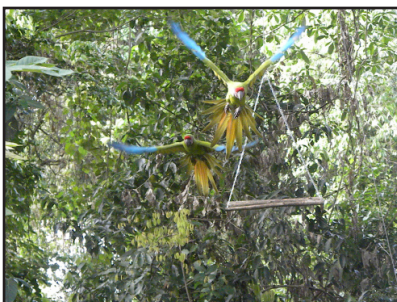
The birds were then held in the release aviary for over 4 months which gives them time to adapt to many of the challenges which await them as wild birds. This was the first time they had seen the sea, monkeys, sloths, toucans and so much more and is the period used by the biologist to teach them the foodstuffs they would need to eat in order to survive in the wild. Used to eating a lot of softer fruits at the breeding centre the diet was slowly changed to contain primarily nuts and seeds in particular the seed of the incredible mountain almond. These seeds are only obtained by cracking the nut which surrounds them; they are incredibly hard and take several hefty blows with a hammer or machete to open. It took a while but soon the birds were opening these delicious nuts and eating the food which will hopefully be the main constituent of their diet for many years to come.

By July a visible change had occurred to the birds, they were over most of their worries and wanted to get out of the aviary. Groups of parrots flying by and feeding in the trees would make them call with frustration; it was time to start releasing them. The release methodology used by the project is a 'soft' methodology being slow and intensively managed but the results from our previous Scarlet macaw sites, with a survival rate of the macaws of 85%, gave us the encouragement required to continue the techniques with the greens.

This is a continuation of the story of the first ever Great Green release by The ARA Project. This story will continue in the next edition of the newsletter...

If you would like to help The ARA Project continue its ground breaking work with the Great Green Macaws in Costa Rica or get more information please visit our website [www.thearaproject.org](http://www.thearaproject.org) and click donate.

Jenny Pettigrew  
Assistant Breeding Centre Manager/Veterinary Technician/Volunteer Coordinator  
The ARA Project



# Costa Rica Rises in The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy 2020

World ranking by democracy, developed by Economist Intelligence Unit's [www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com) Democracy index was recently released. The index provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide, covering almost the entire world population. The index is based on 5 categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture.

Democracy, as a whole, was dealt a major blow in 2020. The report states "Free and fair elections and civil liberties are necessary conditions for democracy, but they are unlikely to be sufficient for a full and consolidated democracy if unaccompanied by transparent and at least minimally efficient government, sufficient political participation and a supportive democratic political culture. It is not easy to build a sturdy democracy. Even in long-established ones, democracy can

corrode if not nurtured and protected."

2020 was a particularly tumultuous year, due to Covid 19, politically within the US, civil war in Syria, dramatic change in the Middle East and North Africa and rising social unrest worldwide. Some of the most important developments noted by the organization are:

- Popular confidence in political institutions continued to decline in many countries
- Inequitable distribution of Covid19 vaccines
- Democracy in the US has been adversely affected by a deepening of polarization of the political scene and political brinkmanship and paralysis.
- In the US and UK there has been a rise in protest movement. Problems in the functioning of government are more prominent.
- In Europe extremist political

forces may not have profited from economic dislocation yet but populism and anti-immigrant sentiment are on the rise.

- Democracy in Eastern Europe has again waned with 12 countries' scores declining in 2020
- Increasing crime in some Latin American countries has had a negative impact on democracy.

Costa Rica fared very well compared with the rest of the world. While the US fell to 25th position (as a flawed democracy), Costa Rica tied for 18th position with Austria, as a full democracy and well above any other country in Central America, other than Chile, at 17th. Panama finished in the 40th position, the Dominican Republic 63rd, Ecuador 69th, Mexico 72nd, Cuba 140th and Venezuela at 143rd. Norway, Iceland and Sweden took the top three spots, with Canada in the 5th position.

Country	Rank	Overall Score	Electoral Process and Pluralism	Functioning of Government	Political Participation	Political Culture	Civil Liberties
Norway	1	9.80	10.00	9.64	10.00	9.38	10.00
Iceland	2	9.65	10.00	9.64	8.89	10.00	9.71
Denmark	3	9.52	10.00	9.64	8.89	9.38	9.71
Sweden	4	9.50	9.58	9.64	8.89	9.38	10.00
New Zealand	5	9.26	10.00	9.29	8.89	8.13	10.00
Australia	6	9.22	10.00	8.93	7.78	9.38	10.00
Switzerland	7	9.09	9.58	9.29	7.78	9.38	9.41
Canada	8	9.08	9.58	9.29	7.78	8.75	10.00
Finland	7	9.06	10.00	9.64	7.22	8.75	9.71
Netherlands	10	8.99	9.58	8.93	8.89	8.13	9.41
Luxembourg	11	8.88	10.00	6.67	6.67	8.75	9.71
Ireland	12	8.56	9.58	7.86	7.22	8.13	10.00
Austria	13	8.49	9.58	7.86	7.78	8.13	9.12
Germany	14	8.34	9.58	8.21	6.67	8.13	9.12
Malta	15	8.28	9.17	8.21	5.56	8.75	9.71
Czech Republic	16	8.19	9.58	7.14	6.67	8.13	9.41
Uruguay	17	8.17	10.00	8.93	4.44	7.50	10.00
United Kingdom	18	8.16	9.58	7.86	6.11	8.13	9.12
United States	19	8.11	9.17	7.50	7.22	8.13	8.53
Costa Rica	20	8.10	9.58	8.21	6.11	6.88	9.71
Japan	21	8.08	9.17	8.21	6.11	7.50	9.41
South Korea	22	8.06	9.17	7.86	7.22	7.50	8.53
Belgium	23	8.05	9.58	8.21	5.56	7.50	9.41
Mauritius	24	8.04	9.17	8.21	5.00	8.13	9.71
Spain	25	8.02	9.58	7.5	6.11	7.50	9.41



## Costa Rica is Least Corrupt Country in Central America.

Transparency International, in their fight against corruption, recently published their yearly Corruption Perceptions Index which is composed of 17 different surveys and assessments.

Worldwide, Costa Rica is ranked 42nd worldwide, while in Latin America it's ranked as the 3rd least corrupt country. The most corrupt countries in Latin America are Nicaragua, Venezuela and Paraguay.

The index scores 183 countries and territories from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (least corrupt). The surveys and assessments include questions related to bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds, and the effectiveness of public sector anti-corruptions efforts.

When ranking popular ex-pat destinations, with 100 being a perfect score, Costa Rica scored 57, Panama 35, Mexico 31, Ecuador 39, and Nicaragua 22.

The least corrupt countries in the world are New Zealand, Finland and Denmark and the worst were Somalia and North Korea. You can find more info here <https://www.transparency.org/en/>

## The 2020 Global Peace Index

The Global Peace Index ranks countries according to their peacefulness. The 172 countries ranked cover 99.7% of the world's population. The 2020 GPI ranked Iceland, New Zealand, Portugal, Austria and Denmark as the top five most peaceful nations. Costa Rica is rated as the most peaceful country in Central America and is ranked in 2nd place in all of the Americas, including the US and Canada.

The Global Peace Index measures internal and external factors relating to peace and security and countries are scored based on these factors. The lower the score, the more peaceful the nation. Costa Rica ranked 39 worldwide, Chile was 49, Panama was 64, The Dominican Republic was 82, Ecuador was 88, and the United States was 122,

Their 2021 key findings are discouraging:

- The world is less peaceful for the third straight year
- Due to an increased threat of terrorist attacks in 29 nations
- A greater likelihood of violent demonstrations in 33 countries
- Peace building activities produce 16 times the cost of intervention.

You can find more information here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_Peace\\_Index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Peace_Index)

### Costa Rica and Global Warming

In 2020, Costa Rica ran entirely on renewable energy for over 300 days. They have now banned the use of single use plastic by the end of 2021. Almost 99% of Costa Rica's energy already comes renewable sources, such as rivers, volcanoes, geothermal, wind and solar power. <http://www.nature.com/nclimate/index.html>

The Ministry of the Environment is pushing for more use of electric vehicles, lifting all import duties on electric vehicles, and the country intends to become completely carbon neutral by 2050. Costa Rica has been experiencing the effects of Global Warming with hotter/dryer conditions in the Northwest part of the country, Remember that Jeff Bezos only flew 62 miles high to be in space, our atmosphere takes up a pretty small space.

## Costa Rica: The Best Brand in Latin America



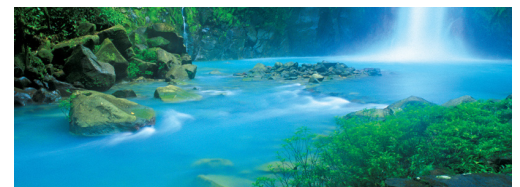
In a recent study Costa Rica has been recognized as having the strongest country brand in Latin America. Future Brand has recently released their 7th annual edition of the Country Brand Index (CBI) which evaluates 113 countries around the world. FutureBrand assesses the strength of a country brand by measuring awareness, familiarity, preference, consideration, advocacy and active decisions to visit or interact with a place. The most important factors

that differentiate a country's brand are: Value System, Quality of Life, Good for Business, Heritage and Culture and Tourism. A country that's focused on its people and their needs will always score highly.

In the report FutureBrand writes that's it's been a challenging year for the US which fell 3 places in the index to #6. The downward trend is partially due to troubled socio-political and economic fortunes. However, the US has shown some improvement in perceptions relating to business opportunities (their research was undertaken before the decline in the US credit rating). Tourism also improved in the US due to significant worldwide perception of value due to the weakening of the dollar.

Costa Rica moved up 3 points

from its 2010 ranking to #24 overall and #1 in Latin America. Latin America in general has gained significantly due to many years of relative political stability. Costa Rica was also acknowledged in the category of Natural Beauty reaching 5th place worldwide falling behind New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the Maldives. You can find the full article here: <http://www.futurebrand.com/think/reports-studies/cbi/2011/overview/>



# Danza de los Diablitos: Dance of the Little Devils



Each new year is marked by a celebration by the Boruca people of Southern Costa Rica. The Boruca, indigenous people of Costa Rica are a pre-Columbian tribe formerly called The Brunka and currently have only approximately 2000 members. Danza de los Diablitos (Dance of the Little Devils) is a 3 day festival which runs from December 31st through January 2nd.

The males of the tribe perform a re-enactment of the Spanish conquest wearing costumes of burlap and banana leaves with elaborate masks carved out of balsa wood. The masked men are the Diablitos (The Spanish colonists called the tribe evil and little devils) and they are given the task of fighting to dispel

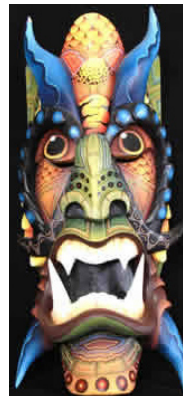
the Spanish intruders which are represented by a man dressed as a mock bull.

After each battle the Diablitos gather at the nearest house and ask to be rewarded with Chicha (a corn beer). After the men have enough to drink the masks are put back on and another "battle" ensues with a new bull. Needless to

say as the day progresses the Diablitos become increasingly tipsy and the event culminates with a all night dance party.

In the re-enactment the mock bull is destroyed and Borucans are always triumphant.

The masks are an important source of income for the tribe. New ones are available throughout the country but if it's the used ones that are said to possess magical powers.



53 new species were discovered in Costa Rica recently.

The new discoveries consisted of 26 new insects, 8 fungi and 19 plants. Currently Costa Rica's biodiversity includes around 500,000 species.

## Stingless Bees

If you've been fortunate to visit our area and dine outdoors you've no doubt have had uninvited company. Small stingless bees cannot resist a delicious jam or fresh squeezed juice. They are a bit larger than flies and although can be bothersome, they're harmless and an integral part of our ecology.

Although the bee has no stinger it can create a unique problem. Its attack pheromone is citronella so if you use a shampoo with a citronella base the bees may become tangled in your hair.

## Tourism Figures for 2021 Encouraging

The Costa Rican Tourism Board (ICT) recently released their figures for the last 6 months. over 497,000 tourists visited Costa Rica in the first half of the year. This figure is less than half of the pre-pandemic numbers but have been slowly increasing. Costa Rica waived the need to carry a health insurance policy for all tourists entering the country, beginning August 1, 2021, in an attempt to save jobs in tourism, hospitality and transportation. To qualify, you must show proof of vaccination at least 14 days prior to entering Costa Rica.

Costa Rica has become an attractive destination for wellness tourism since

the start of the pandemic. Air service from Europe is now increasing as are flights scheduled from the US and Canada. 2020 was on track to show the highest tourism numbers ever, before the pandemic hit in March. Arrivals tumbled as Costa Rica locked down their borders to slow the introduction of Covid19. The cost to economic activity in the country was devastating. In 2019, tourism directly employed about 167,000 individuals and was

growing by roughly 8% per year. Hopefully these gains will remain on track to revitalize the tourism industry, shaken by Covid19. In Most of Costa Rica, vaccines are now available to anyone over the age of 20, according to Roman Macaya, head of CCSS, the Social Security Administration of Costa Rica .





**Featured Properties:** Lot 158 in Phase 11 is a super nice lot. First of all, phase 11 is one of my favorite phases, located a short drive above the center of Ojochal. Drive time from the center of town to this lot is just a few minutes. The lot has a nice ocean and mountain view. Much of phase 11 is perched on a ridge and the views are stunning. This lot is very large at 2.93 acres. There's plenty of room to build a nice home, guest cottage, pool, extensive gardens, fruit trees and landscape. This is one of the nicer lots available and lots like this aren't cheap; ocean view, mountain view, large lot, priced at \$180,000. It would be perfect for a discriminating buyer looking to build a high end custom home.



Lot 5 in Phase 2: Phase 2 is located just south of Ojochal in the hamlet of Tres Rios de Coronado. (Three Rivers of Coronado). Lot 5 fronts the main road, while the back of the lot fronts the river. It's more like a large mountain stream but the river view is stunning and attracts many animals coming to get a drink. The lot is large, at 3.13 acres.



It has plenty of room to build a dream home or even a small lodge or camp site. Zoned mixed use, you could build a hotel or jungle lodge and earn an income. There's a nice flat plantell of over an acre, if you want to plant fruit trees, grow tropical fruits or an orchid garden, priced at \$65,000.

So what are you waiting for. Costa Rica is a great option to escape to, If you are tired of the political discourse in the US, come visit the safest democracy in Central America and see why International Living consistently ranks Costa Rica as one of the best retirement options in the Americas. See more information about our tours and how to visit at [www.PacificLots.com](http://www.PacificLots.com)

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