

Paradise Post

News From Ojochal, Costa Rica
and Beyond

April 2021



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Updates from the Osa

The last 12 months in Costa Rica were not the best of times. With much of the economy shut down, tourism restricted and a pandemic slowly gaining strength, many were uncertain about what the future would bring. As of April 15, 2021, Costa Rica has now vaccinated about 10% of the population but Covid 19 cases continue to climb, reaching new daily heights. Vaccination availability continues to be scarce. Costa Rica has asked the US to help secure additional vaccine supplies.

Fortunately, Osa country has been largely spared from the pandemic, with roughly 1,265 cases of the virus since inception and only 35 deaths. Being in a rural area has been a blessing.

The new plaza in Ojochal

continues to prosper. Along with the Doctor's office, pharmacy, spa, Stam Cafe, and gourmet grocery store in Citrus Plaza, there are more businesses moving into Ojochal. There is a dentist office, legal office, another pharmacy, a place to purchase home finishings and most importantly the gas station is now open in Ojochal! With all of the business that is coming in, Ojochal is quickly becoming a seller's market.

Property Tour Schedule

May 12 - 15

May 26 - 29

June 9 - 12

June 23 - 26

July 4 - 7

July 14 - 17

4 Days All Inclusive \$299 pp

[Click Here to Sign Up for Tour](#)

10 day Costa Rica Panama Tour

September 10 - 19 [Details HERE](#)

Costa Rica is the First Country in the Americas to become Measles and Rubella Free

Health authorities are seeking certification from The Pan American Health Organization as well as the World Health Organization for the historic achievement of being free of measles and rubella for over 10 years.

In 1999 Costa Rica had a large rubella outbreak and in response the Ministry of Health adopted the goal of its elimination. In 2001 a nationwide vaccination campaign for rubella and measles reached approx. 95% of persons aged 15-39 with the goal of leading to complete measles and rubella elimination. Along with an aggressive campaign by both the Ministry of Health

and the Social Security System that goal has been reached.

Measles primarily affects children and can cause serious complications including blindness, encephalitis and pneumonia. Rubella can cause severe birth defects and both illnesses can be prevented by vaccination.

In Europe many countries do not have outbreaks under control. According to the CDC, In France alone, 1,629 cases of measles were reported from February 2019 through January of 2020.

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.

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

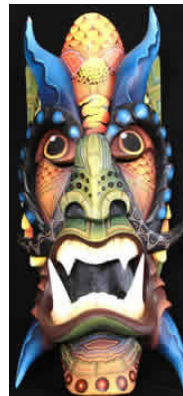
the Spanish intruders which are represented by a man dressed as a mock bull.

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 last year. 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. Many people confuse them with flies but they are basically pollinators

Tourism Figures for 2021 are Flat So Far

The Costa Rican Tourism Board (ICT) recently released figures for early 2021. Nearly 100,000 tourists visited the country in January, which was a decrease of over 75% compared to January 2020, just before the arrival of Covid19. The ICT's goal is to increase tourism by 5% per month, through 2021, however rising Covid19 cases could hamper that effort.

The tourism sector produced 9.3% of GDP prior to the pandemic but is currently only at 3.2%. Employment in the sector has also suffered. Costa Rica closed it's borders to tourists on

March 18, 2020, in response to the Corona Virus outbreak. They reopened to tourists in November of 2020. As flights were cancelled, carriers pulled planes and seat capacity, with very few carriers offering any service to Costa Rica. In the past few months, seat capacity has increased and carriers that had been serving the market have either already resumed or announced plans to resume

service. Seat capacity will increase as the number of flights increases. Costa Rica is still requiring that all tourists purchase a travel insurance policy to cover the cost of lodging and/or hospitalization, in the event they contract Covid19 while in Costa Rica.



Corona Virus Update - Costa Rica

All Borders are open - Tico Times

Costa Rica's infection rate from the Corona virus continues to increase at an increasing rate. Roman Macaya, head of Costa Rica's Social Security system reported that Costa Rica may soon run out of beds to house Covid19 patients. Monday, a new floor at Hospital Mexico added 25 beds to the country's ICU capacity, but Macaya warned that the facilities are "insufficient given the growing panorama in terms of the number of new cases diagnosed and the growing number of hospitalizations."

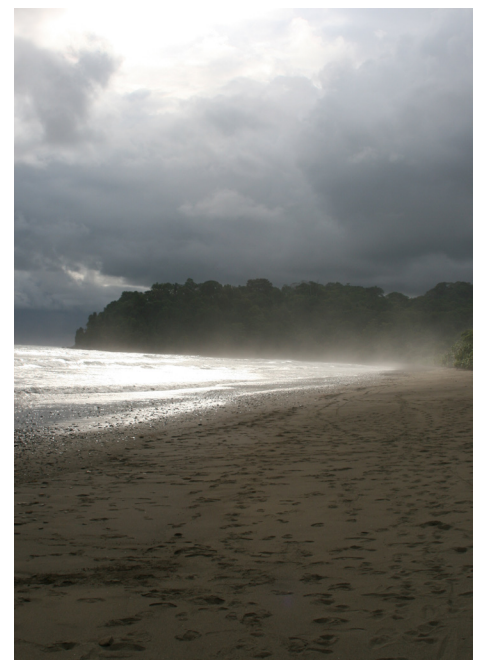
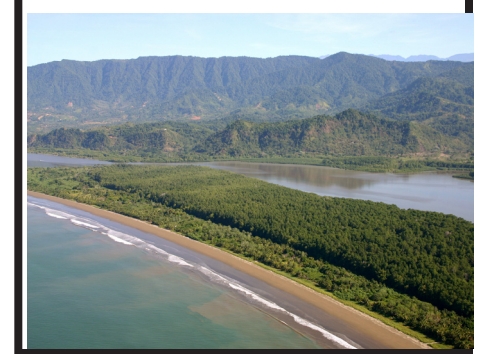
Costa Rica has added 82 new deaths related to Covid-19 since last

Wednesday. For context, respiratory viruses killed 23 people in Costa Rica in all of 2018. The country reached a total of 3,186 deaths related to Covid-19. They comprise 1,204 women and 1,982 men, with an age range of two to 103 years. By age: 999 adults, 2,183 older adults and four minors.

Costa Rica is open for business, there are few restrictions in place limiting hours or access to tourism activities. National parks are open normal hours. There are some driving restrictions but rental cars are exempt from the restrictions. The CDC is currently advising US Citizens to avoid Costa Rica.

Changes in Ojochal

Having visited over 35 countries in the past 10 years, I'm still amazed when looking through my photos, how pictureque Ojochal is. With the clouds draping the mountain, the sun peaking over the ridge and the mist reflecting like a rainbow, it never looks the same way twice.



Ojochal is one of the most photographic places I've been

www.PacificLots.com

Dinosaurs Invade Ojochal

A new hotspot has recently re-emerged in town, the Ventanas Plaza. The gas station, which had been closed for years, recently reopened with new inground tanks and a fancy new facade. Simple services are also available, tire repair, oil changes and other basic service.



furnishings store joins the mix along with a new restaurant. On a recent visit, I was asked the following: "Do you know how long dinosaurs lived?" My answer; The same as short ones.

Jurassic times call for Jurassic measures.

But the big news has been the dinosaurs. These giant reptiles now roam the parking area, breathing hot breath down the necks of unsuspecting visitors. Locals had to put a cage around the Tricerotops to keep her from crushing cars in the parking lot, apparently her favorite passtime. Tourists flock in to take photos with these gentle giants, only to discover at departure that any food in their vehicles has been snatched up by these pesky critters.

The plaza has quickly filled with new businesses. A new gourmet food store has joined the culinary scene, to the delight of locals in town. A second pharmacy, another real estate office, a doctor's office, and even a spa. A new home



The Great Green Macaw Release Part 10

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 Macaw Recovery Network had been doing something about this and 2020 saw the successful breeding and release of 13 green macaws and 4 scarlet Macaws back into the wild.

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 1000 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 stabilized. However there are still less than 300 mature individuals with only 25-35 breeding pairs in Costa Rica.

The Macaw Recovery Network has been breeding Great Green macaws in captivity for over 10 years now. it was with relief and excitement in 2009 when they finally found a suitable site to release these magnificent birds into the wild. The 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 27th 2011 the day had finally arrived and the first 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. Fast forward to 2020 and they released 13 green macaws this year. Each year the numbers of breeding pairs continues to grow.

The birds are held in a 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.

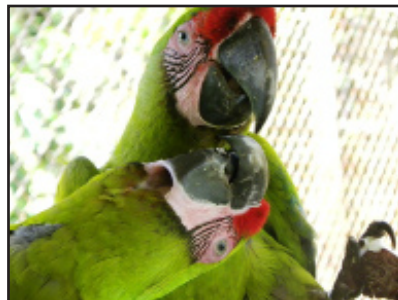
The story of a history now of 10 years of Great Green releases by the macaw Recovery Network will continue...

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 donation link at <https://macawrecoverynetwork.org/support-our-cause/donate/>

Jenny Pettigrew

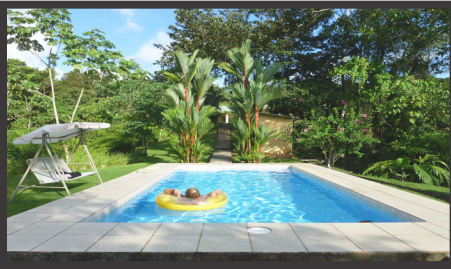
Assistant Breeding Centre Manager/Veterinary Technician/Volunteer Coordinator

The Macaw Recovery Network



Real Estate Listings of Interest - Our market is hot

Home sitting on three separate lots totalling nearly 4 acres. 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, inground pool, bodega, backup water tank, private drive, bordered by a stream & river w/ small waterfalls, balcony, separate entrances to all bedrooms, AC in all bedrooms, cul-de-sac right in Ojochal, private. \$475k firm, email for more photos and information, will sell fast.



3.5 acre River Front Lot - Camp? Tres Rios de Coronado, just a few miles south of Ojochal. <https://www.pacificlots.com/tres-rios-lot-5-in-phase-2-resale-lot> Zoned mixed use residential/commercial Owner says sell, would make nice lodge site. Unique, 2 wheel drive, easy build. \$60,000 with owner finance available.



Lot 31 in Phase 11, Amazing Mountain Views, 1.24 acres in great phase, large flat rectangular lot, easy to build, priced to sell at \$88k. More photos available.



Great 2.36 acre Ocean View lot in phase 11 - with Amazing ocean and mountain views, 2 wheel access, large building site Priced at \$185,000



Modern House in Chontales 3 bed 3 .5 bath Furnished, .25 Acres



Nice ocean and mountain views, landscaped, carport, AC, new construction, furnished, open concept floor plan, move in ready. \$449,000



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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 56th while in Latin America it's ranked as the 4th least corrupt country. The most corrupt countries in Latin America are Venezuela, Nicaragua, 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.

Costa Rica scored a 4.8 while Nicaragua scored 2.5, Panama 3.3, El Salvador 3.4, Honduras 2.6 and Guatemala 2.7 (Belize was not included in the ranking).

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 information here: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/>

The 2020 Global Peace Index

Due to the ongoing civil war in Nicaragua as well as a perception that crime is on the rise, the Global Peace Index dropped Costa Rica's rating by 1 place last year to 32nd out of 163 countries evaluated. Costa Rica is still rated as the most peaceful country in Central America and is ranked in 2nd place in all of the Americas, only behind Canada, which is in 6th place.

The Global Peace Index measures internal and external factors relating to peace and security and countries are scored based on these factors. In the region, Panama fell behind Costa Rica in 56th place, falling 7 spots in the last 7 years, Nicaragua at 135th place, dropping from 72nd in just a few short years (due to the civil war), El Salvador at 113th, Guatemala at 115th and Honduras at 119th.

Their 2020 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
- Arab Spring unrest heralds biggest ever change in rankings, Libya, Syria, Afganastan and Turkey all fell in the

index.

The Index also noted that there are more than 400,000 Maritime workers who are stranded at sea, some for more than 17 months, due to Covid19.

You can find more information here: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/>

A new study, published in *Nature Climate Change*, shows that countries with high incomes and high carbon emissions, such as the US and Denmark, do not achieve higher life expectancies than those with moderate incomes and lower carbon emissions, such as Costa Rica and Chile. This finding challenges the assumption that human wellbeing requires growth in both economic activity and carbon emissions. You can find the article here: <http://www.nature.com/nclimate/index.html>

Costa Rica: The Best Brand in Latin America



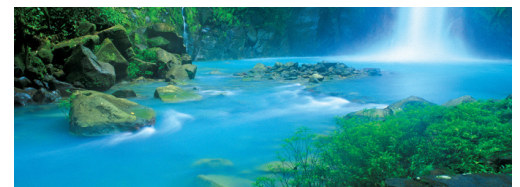
In a recent study Costa Rica has been recognized as having the strongest country brand in Latin America. Future Brand has recently released their 7th annual edition of the Country Brand Index (CBI) which evaluates 113 countries around the world. FutureBrand assesses the strength of a country brand by 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 2017 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/>



Here we are in 2021, wishing we could forget most of 2020. I've restarted our 4 day discovery property tours but had to postpone our 10 day Costa Rica/Panama tour until September 10 - 19. Panama is still requiring a negative Covid test within 2 days of crossing their land border and Costa Rica is requiring all visitors to carry an insurance travel policy for each day in the country. The US is still requiring Americans to have a negative Covid test within 3 days of return to the US. That's kept many Americans from leaving the country, concerned that if they were out and contracted Covid19, they would not be able to return. Presently Costa Rica has only vaccinated about 10% of their population, versus 46% of Americans. I encourage anyone

not yet vaccinated to get the shots. The sooner we are all covered, the less likely a mutant variety will get past our current vaccine immunity.

Despite the pandemic, real estate sales in our area remain strong. Many US urban dwellers are seeking smaller towns, warmer climates and more room to move. Though Covid19 continues to spread in Costa Rica, they did better at controlling the pandemic than most other countries.

What next? As a serial traveler, I'm hoping the world gets this pandemic under control soon. I haven't been to Costa Rica in over a year and my new Mercedes van hasn't had much use in the past 14 months. I'm looking forward to starting up our long tours again and smelling the orchids and bromeliads



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Costa Rica just initiated a new tax on Costa Rican corporations (SA's). The tax is specifically aimed at Costa Rican corporations or Sociedad Anonimas (S.A.) as they are called. The new law places a tax of roughly \$175 per year on passive corporations (Sociedad Anonimas) those typically just set up to own land. They are taxing active corporations roughly \$350 once per year on those that are active, for example a business or a house with reportable rental income. My thoughts? The property taxes in Costa Rica are ridiculously low and insufficient for the progress they want to make as a nation and the tax is necessary. The total increase is at most an additional \$350 per year added to the incredibly low tax rate of \$1.95 per \$1,000 in value (less than \$400 on a home valued at \$200k), bringing the total tax bill to less than \$750 per year on a \$200k home being rented out and the tax bill would be less than \$600 per year if the house were not rented..

Why the tax?

At issue was the fact that those who own property in a corporate form, which is the majority of home owners in Costa Rica as well as raw land owners were basically paying nothing for the corporations except set-up costs and yet reaping the benefits of the corporate veil of protection every year. When such a property was sold again there was no tax due since one would merely sell the shares of the corporation, no property transfer was needed since the property was owned by the corporation. So each time a property was sold, Costa Rica was getting no income, no transfer tax, no doc stamps, no fees. That's the main reason why the new tax has been put in place. It was so inexpensive, people were doing things like owning their cars in a corporation set up merely to own the car, allowing you to sell the car complete with license plates, insurance and inspection. The new tax is due each year

by January 1st but this year is not due until the 30th of April. Owners within our developments will be contacted about payment this year since our bills had already gone out prior to the new tax. In the US most states have a similar tax called a corporate minimum tax. It is \$350 in Florida whether you have an active or passive corporation and make any money or not.