

COSTA RICA

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DEAR ALL:

I would like to say thanks to all and at the same time to say that I am so happy to be part of the beginning of this year with Projects Abroad, Costa Rica.

Hoping that this year will be full of great things for all and completely sure that many special moments are coming soon for all who are part of this company including our volunteers and staff members around the world.

Thank you very much for making this possible, with love.....

Laura Estrada

Social Manager

Costa Rica

Ask the question, “Why did you choose to relocate in Costa Rica?” and you will receive almost as many different answers as there are expatriates living in Costa Rica. Typically, the process of choosing Costa Rica for a new beginning starts with a vacation visit. People are curious about this small Central American democracy. They’ve heard of lush rain forests, lofty mountains, marvelous wildlife and gorgeous beaches. Costa Rica’s welcoming expat community and friendly natives make tourists feel at home. Before the vacation is over, the possibility of living in Costa Rica on a permanent vacation begins to look very attractive.

Costa Rica’s unique selection of climates is a definite drawing card, with fugitives from bitter-cold winters or suffocating summer heat finding welcome relief from weather extremes.

Costa Rica has every type of restaurant you can think, from steak and lobster to chinese and McDonald’s hamburguer emporiums. But for really authentic Costa Rican food, you need to go to tico-style restaurants where they serve comida tipica (“ typical dishes”). Comida tipica is home-style cooking as found in tico homes throughout the country. This cuisine relies on simple ingredients such as rice and beans, free-range chicken and tasty, lean pork flavored with plenty of garlic.

One very common Costa Rican food-served eveywhere for breakfast, sometimes for every meal, is gallo pinto, which inexplicably translates as “spotted (or painted) rooster.” This is a mixture of cooked rice and black beans, sometimes mixed with cilandro and chopped onions fried together until the rice turns a purple color. Mixed with eggs and topped with salsa Lizano, it makes a filling breakfast nutritios.



Coffee in Costa Rica:

Some of the best coffee in the world grows on shaded mountain slopes in Costa Rica. These exceptionally rich-tasting beans are in demand by coffee wholesalers, particularly those who boast that their products are “mountain grown” to substantiate such a claim, at least 60 per cent of the coffee has to come from mountain farms in places like Guatemala, Colombia or Costa Rica. Curiously, Costa Rican coffee is exceptionally low in caffeine. Retailers blend it with high-caffeine (and less expensive) beans from Brazil and Africa to bring the jolt up to what we coffee drinkers expect. In Costa Rica you have the advantage of brewing coffee from 100 per cent Costa Rican beans. If you need more caffeine, drink another cup!

We sometimes purchase coffee beans directly from the roaster and take them home while they are still hot. The use of instant coffee (a barbarous practice) hasn't caught on here. A café con leche with just a dash of sugar makes a wonderful starter for breakfast and is great washing down savory *gallo pinto* and warm tortillas.

Climates in Costa Rica:

For such a small country, Costa Rica has an astonishing variety of climates. From the misty mountain tops of Talamanca and Monteverde to the dry northern Guanacaste province, from the permanent spring weather of the Arenal area to the jungle lushness of the Caribbean Coast, Costa Rica has every kind of climate one might desire. Well, except frozen snow and bitter cold; but you don't want that anyway. Yes there are seasons, but the differences between them are measured in differences in rainfall rather than in temperature variation. Therefore, unlike many other choice world vacation spots, Costa Rica isn't a one-season destination.

Almost any time of the year can be a perfect time to visit. September and October are probably the least popular months, because these are the rainiest.

Costa Rican people transpose the meanings of winter and summer. To them “summer” months are December, January and February - the dry seasons. This is when children take their “summer vacation” from school.

To Costa Ricans, winter is June, July and August! Conversation can become confusing when Costa Ricans and North Americans discuss the seasons, with summer and winter having opposite meanings for each. To avoid misunderstandings, “June, July and August ” instead of “ winter”, or better yet, “dry season” or “ rainy season”.



January Festivals in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica people have the blessing to enjoy a great summer from December to April of each year because of this there are many cultural activities like “Festivals” in different places of the country. It means that we have parties in the Central Valley, Guanacaste province and other places where

“Ticos” can chose the place where they feel most welcome.



Palmares is the county number 7 in the province of Alajuela, Costa Rica. Its capital is the city of Alajuela, located in the western Central Valley, born from the migration of peasants from surrounding areas.

Officially known as “Fiestas Civicas de Palmares”, is a great festival held in this district between the second and third week of January. It is the largest mass event in Costa Rica and it’s estimated that the total attendance amounts to one million people every year. The event is organized by the Asociacion Civica Palmareña, a partnership made to raise funds for community development.

The cap is a national tradition in Costa Rica and a recognized activity in the Fiestas de Palmares for its strong preference on the part of people attending every year. With a share of the best horses in the country and the best riders, the top of Palmares becomes a great example of collaboration, coordination and performance by the Civic Association Palmares.

The attractiveness of these parties, rather than by tradition, is the fact that they are carried out at the beginning of the year and top the list of popular festivities

in Costa Rica. Big concerts (some of them free) with major national and international artists, which vary every year, the Great Tope (horse parade in which races are rewarded and the air), the Festival Ranchero (ranchera music competition) and Carnival (held the second week of festivities) and many cultural and sports activities for all tastes, which can assist a broad audience.

Visiting the Beaches:

Since time immemorial we know that Costa Rica has the name not abound in gold, or hidden mineral wealth, but because such is the beauty of its shores and coastlines, that it should be considered the greatest treasure of the country.

The advantage of Costa Rica is that the distances between the capital San José, the main beaches and coastal strands, do not mean serious trouble or require expensive travel. A person who takes a car trip of 80 miles per hour, may well be consumed in the Atlantic Ocean at 8am, take a trip at 10, and be diving in the waters of the Pacific at 5pm, still with plenty of sun to tan a little longer. It should be noted, the Pacific side of Costa Rica offers the largest number of beaches for foreign tourists, with hotels and infrastructure in some cases, without being stuck exactly to the coast and in other parts of the world is close enough to be able to travel in a few minutes, from a comfortable hotel, large sunny beaches all year, bordering mangroves and rivers of immeasurable beauty, some of which are tropical sanctuaries of flora and fauna of the country.



One such place is called Cuajiniquil, incredible at the bottom of the bay where the waves hardly noticeable and more like the surface waters of a pond blue sea.

An idea for a great vacation is to choose a beach in Costa Rica, a good hotel and forget the world. The quality of its waters, landscapes and amenities will

make it a unique experience. But ... Which beach to choose? What are the best beaches in Costa Rica? Whatever beach is a guarantee of complete success.

News & Updates



Special Project, Garden for the Elderly Home

This year Projects Abroad Costa Rica has a special project to create a garden for our new special placement The Elderly Home, San Vicente de Paul, which is located at the ICE Building, 100 meters east and 100 meters north, here in Liberia, Guanacaste.

This placement is really lovely because, as everyone knows, older people are so special and working for them is really nice. For this reason I want to thank our volunteers who are now working on it.

Teaching and Sports Program, Special Project.

These programs are running a special project from January 2nd to January 13th. The Sports project has activities with many children of Bagaces, City, in one school called “El Arbolito”. The activities are: Football, Volleyball and recreational activities, from Monday to Friday, their schedule is from (8 am to 12pm.).



The Teaching program has started classes on the same dates as the sports program, but the classes are in the afternoons. There are two classes; one for

children and one for adults. The volunteers who are teaching are very good and this is a very nice project for our citizens.



A Coffee Time with our French Volunteers

On January 19 we had a great coffee time with our volunteers from France, we have here 7 of them and they sometimes don't have maybe the same interaction like the rest, because of the language.

With this meeting they felt so good, had time to make friendship, share each other and talk about different topics, I want to say thanks to those who were there and hope it was nice for them as well.



National Cross ,Country Championships



This year on January 14th was the youth championship with the guys from Bagaces, Guanacaste Siugey and Jorman. The girl was part of the Youth B and the boy part of the youth A, in this activity were chosen just them, and they will go to El Salvador to the big Centro American Event of cross country which will be make the days 10 and 11 of February, the delegation of Costa Rica will travel to El Salvador on February 9 in Ticabus.

The Costa Rican delegation shall be hosted at “Entrepinos” Hotel, which will be the place of the activity on its field. Projects Abroad, Costa Rica helped these guys in their first race in order to give them the opportunity to qualify at the National Cross Country Championships, good luck to them in this competition.



January Celebrants

This month we have lots of birthdays here in Costa Rica, and of course we want to congratulate them!!!!

Laetitia Chalandon

(01/01/1988)

Katharina Schulte

(21/01/1992)

Marcel Schmitz

(14/01/1993)

Letizia Tgetgel

(22/01/1992)

Markus Trat

(08/01/1974)

Laura Dalsgaard

(03/01/1991)

Carrie Brinkmeier

(01/01/1992)

Christopher Ullberg

(07/01/1991)

Marsha Jacobs

(06/01/1991)



Squash Arepas

The squash or pumpkin are very nutritious as they contain beta carotene and are certainly very special vegetables for their sweetness, even when cooked in soups or with meat. It is also used to make honey and crystallized.

Recipe:

2 cups pumpkin puree, seasoning, ½ cup sugar, ½ cup milk powder, 1 teaspoon vanilla 1 cup flour, 2 teaspoons baking powder and 1 egg (liquid not necessary moisture from the squash is enough).

Cook squash until smooth, remove the peel and mash, add sugar, vanilla, milk powder, egg and finally put in flour to make the desired consistency. Cook in a skillet over a medium heat to brown on both sides; like a pancake, when bubbles start to form, turn over. Drain on paper towels.

You can eat it alone with a coffee or drizzle with honey and enjoy as a dessert!



CLAUDIA PRKNA, ÖSTERREICH

Als ich mich auf den Weg nach Costa Rica machte, wusste ich nicht genau, was mich erwartet. Viele Fragen beschäftigten mich: Wie wird mich die Gastfamilie aufnehmen? Wie werden dir Schüler auf mich reagieren? Werde ich mit der fremden Kultur zurechtkommen? Werde ich Probleme mit der Sprache haben?

Kaum hatte ich mein neues Zuhause erreicht und mich meine Gastschwester mit einem freundlichen „Hola! Como estas?“ empfangen, schienen alle Ängste wie verfliegen. Ich hatte ein Einzelzimmer und lebte somit für drei Monate alleine bei meiner Gastfamilie. Sie haben mir wirklich das Gefühl gegeben, Teil ihrer Familie zu sein und so konnte ich sogar Weihnachten und Silvester mit ihnen feiern. Durch ihre Aufgeschlossenheit, habe ich einen sehr guten Einblick in die Kultur in Costa Rica erhalten.

Auch an meinem Arbeitsplatz wurde ich sehr nett von Roxana, der Englischlehrerin der Schule , empfangen. Ich unterstütze sie im Unterricht, wie zum Beispiel beim Korrigieren von Tests und Arbeitsblättern, und half den Kindern bei ihren Aufgaben. Auch bei Schulfesten konnte ich helfen, Spiele für die Kinder zu gestalten. Dies hat mir am meisten Freude bereitet, da die Kinder sehr offen, aufgeweckt und spielbegeistert sind. Leider machte diese Aufgewecktheit das Unterrichten jedoch ziemlich anstrengend, auch da viele Kinder oft sehr laut und ungeduldig waren..

Dennoch war es für mich eine sehr wertvolle Erfahrung, über die ich sehr froh bin. An den Wochenenden habe ich mit den anderen Freiwilligen viele Reisen unternommen und war immer wieder aufs Neue von dem diesem wunderschönen Land beeindruckt. Es gibt

atemberaubend schöne Strände, interessante Tiere und Pflanzen und einzigartige Landschaften. Die offenherzigen und hilfsbereiten Leute in Costa Rica haben das Reisen sehr angenehm gemacht. Oft habe ich in preiswerten Hostels geschlafen, in denen man interessante Reisende aus der ganzen Welt trifft. In einigen gibt es sogar die Möglichkeit, in Hängematten direkt am Strand zu schlafen!

Alles in allem wird es ein unvergesslicher Abschnitt meines Lebens bleiben, in dem ich viel über mich und andere Leute gelernt habe.

Danke Costa Rica, LA PURA VIDA

P.S.: unbedingt einen Salsa Kurs in “Merecumbé“ machen... ;)



As the year came to an end we have all been looking at what we have accomplished in 2011 and I think Barra Honda can honestly have its collective conscience wiped clean because we have accomplished A LOT!

The year saw major improvements in the investigation projects. With Eduardo's help we have really lifted the level of work and the importance of the work to new levels and heights that are helping us to present detailed reports and make informed, detailed evaluations and decisions on the future of the park.

With the Bat project we have moved the so far forward that placed them on the for conservation in identified new the maximum making bats that branch can hold long they would use expanded the about 50% with the by Macho and



for example, we study of this group the government has management plan this area! We have species, worked out number of tent one Panama tree and roughly how them and we have Herpetofauna list by amazing work done Coco.

We continued our long task of identification of the park's butterfly species and the photos we get from the Sensor cameras have been great. On top of all of this we had the maintenance work and all of the small investigations every couple of weeks! During the course of the whole year we worked an amazing 3405 hours!

Every year in Barra Honda we take a day, to get as many people together as possible to have our Christmas party. We always try to get all the people who are involved in Barra Honda to come down and visit for the day so we can tell them how things have gone in the year and what we have planned for the next. We say thank you to everyone for the work they have done and then we sit down and have huge amounts of food (most of which is donated by the various

shops and markets that we buy from all the time) and we dance and have a good time!

This year our new food providers gave us an amazing amount of food. The supermarket gave us an entire pig and the vegetable seller gave us kilos of tomatoes, potatoes and onions! Needless to say we were eating various types of pig for days after. I would be more than happy to not see pork chops, bacon or Chicharones for another 6 months!

One of the other big projects we have managed to get started this month is the renovation of another cabina! The cabins are the volunteer rooms, which have been around for many years and after such a long time they have started to look a little tired and worn. So we decided that a deep clean and fresh coat of paint and varnish was needed to improve the place. After starting to just clean the walls we quickly decided to wash the wooden ceiling as well and then move on to painting and varnishing everything. The other 2 rooms will get the same treatment in the next few months.



Another December job was taking part in the national bird count. Every year we try to take part in this mini census so that we can combine the work of many national parks to estimate the state of the bird population in Costa Rica. The reason why it is done during December is simple, the majority of bird species in Costa Rica (obviously depending where you are) are actually migratory birds, many of them are flying south from Canada, the United States and Mexico to find warmer temperatures for the winter. This is certainly what they manage to find around here!

The volunteers were split into 4 groups for this task and then we went on 3 hour walks around the area to view and identify as many species of bird as possible during this time. We saw hawks, flycatchers, vultures, hummingbirds, wrens and jays and even 1 new species for the list! A new species of hummingbird that we are hoping we can catch with a mist net for full

confirmation in the next couple of weeks...so I hope I can update you on this very soon!

I just want to mention the progress that has taken place with the football field. We have just been giving it maintenance for the last few months because there isn't really much more work to do on it. However we have managed to get a lot more people interested in using it. Currently every 2 weeks on Sundays we have 2 teams using it for official matches in the local league and we are also coordinating various activities with school groups, volunteers and the local forest fire fighting brigade so that all the work we have been putting into it over the last 3 years is actually paying off.

And finally, of course, I want to thank each and every one of you! I honestly can't stress this enough, the work we do here in Barra Honda is only possible thanks to the hard work of every single volunteer that comes to stay with us; from the summer groups to the hard core veterans that stay for 6 months or longer. We cannot thank you all enough for this help and we are very happy and very excited about the work we can do for next year as well. I hope you have an amazing start to 2012.

Richard Munday
Conservation Coordinator
Barra Honda National Park
December 2011

Official Facebook Group!

Check out our Facebook group! It is regularly updated with photos from Social events and news on the projects placements, special weeks and volunteers in their teaching, sports, care, journalism experiences, monthly dinners and more...

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=126469374056054>

Newsletters from Costa Rica!

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/costa-rica/newsletters-from-costa-rica/>