



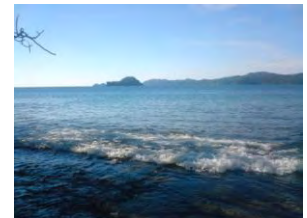
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Editor's letter

Hello everybody!!!

Summer time is the best season for Costa Rican people and especially in March we have the highest temperatures, it means that you can enjoy good trips around the country; you can choose from beaches to cloud forest around the region. If you choose beaches you should make a good plan to travel around. This is because around 90% of Costa Rican people are Catholic and families are travelling around the country during the "Holy week" and bus services stop working on Holy Thursday and Friday, then they work on a normal schedule. As a recommendation make good plans and have fun...



Marielos Arguello

Social Manager

Holy week celebrations in Costa Rica

During Holy Week, many people who live near the capital (San Jose city) prefer to go to the beach; because Holy Week is mostly a time to relax and have a good time. However, some people choose to stay at home and join religious celebrations that include masses and processions. Nearly everything shuts down from Thursday to Monday, so it's a good idea to stock up on goods before then and to avoid travelling, since some transportation services also stop completely.

Easter is a major Catholic holiday all over the world, and Costa Rica is no exception. In fact, Easter in Costa Rica is probably one the longest and most widely celebrated holidays in Costa Rica second only to Christmas of course. During the week of Easter and the weeks leading up to it, you can expect to see all kinds of festivals, celebrations, parades and more. This is true even for some of the smaller and more remote areas of Costa Rica as well.



WHAT TO EXPECT

In Costa Rica, Easter is a very big holiday for the locals. It is a Holy Week with religious masses, and processions. The actual holiday takes place on the Thursday and Friday before Easter Sunday. The streets are extremely crowded, with local Costa Ricans celebrating the Easter holiday. There are not a lot of visitors during the holidays in Costa Rica, but when there are, it is a time to relax on the beaches or join in the Costa Ricans holiday celebrations. In the Costa Rican Easter celebrations, they have processions and depict the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as most Costa Ricans are of Roman Catholic decent.

During the Thursday and Friday holiday, all transportation is cancelled and no one works. That is one of the reasons that there are not many visitors during the holiday, because there is no transportation to any attractions. Everyone celebrates together, and the streets are full of people attending processions. Many businesses are closed the whole week long, so they can celebrate the holiday without any interruption. There are street fairs with dancing, music, traditional food, and what is known as Toro a lo tica, which is basically bullfighting without any bloodshed. The Easter holiday is a time for the locals to put off work and relax.



New host families:

Teodora Cásares:

Mrs. Cásares is a principal in the J.F.K. Laboratorio School in Liberia. She is extremely friendly and professional and will quickly make you feel at home. She will encourage you to speak Spanish as she speaks very little English.

She has two children. Josué (1996) is studying in a Bilingual high school and Eduardo (1990) who studies Architecture at university. They will be pleased to encourage you with your Spanish and, at the same time, you could teach them a little English and share stories about your home country. Mr. Adolfo Cásares Mendoza lives at home. He is Mrs. Teodora's father who is now 82 years old. He is a very welcoming person.



Staff page

We have a new staff member and we want to share it with you Her name is Jessica Brenes and of course we want to say to her Welcome to Projects Abroad Costa Rica.



Die beste Entscheidung meines Lebens

Ich heiße Antje, lebe in Berlin und habe durch Projects Abroad eine einzigartige Erfahrung machen dürfen. Nach über zwanzig Jahren im Job wollte ich der alltäglichen Routine im Büroalltag entfliehen, eine neue Kultur kennenlernen und mich sozial engagieren. Nach Internetrecherche, Informationsveranstaltung und Gesprächen mit meinem Arbeitgeber habe ich mich im Januar 2011 in mein persönliches Abenteuer gestürzt. Für die Teilnahme am Projekt habe ich unbezahlten Urlaub genommen. Ich bin mit Projects Abroad für acht Wochen nach Costa Rica gereist, um an den Projekten Community Work und Englisch Unterrichten teilzunehmen.

Da in Costa Rica von Mitte Dezember bis Mitte Februar die großen Sommerferien sind, hat Projects Abroad in den Communities Freizeitaktivitäten in und um Liberia organisiert. Mit einer Gruppe von anfangs etwa zehn Freiwilligen haben wir auf den Plätzen in den verschiedenen Gemeinden mit den Kindern Sport und Spiele veranstaltet. Die Kids waren zwischen drei und zwölf Jahre alt, sehr aufgeweckt und freundlich. In den ersten Tagen habe ich mich über meine geringen Spanischkenntnisse geärgert. Aber die Kommunikation hat mit Händen und Füßen irgendwie funktioniert. Und die Kinder waren sehr geduldig. Nach meinem 14-stündigen Spanischkurs und den Gesprächen mit meiner Gastmutter Leticia über „Gott und die Welt“ wurde mein Spanisch immer alltagstauglicher.

Mit dem Ende der Ferien Mitte Februar startete endlich das Unterrichts-Projekt. Ich habe vier Wochen zusammen mit Hilda, der Haupt-Englischlehrerin an der Grundschule "La Escuela Barrio Guadalupe" unterrichtet. Der Frontal-Unterricht in den größeren Klassen war eher schwierig, da sich die Motivation und Aufmerksamkeit der Schüler sehr in Grenzen hielt. Ich habe dann in Einzelübungen Vokabeln wiederholt, kleinere Gesprächssituationen simuliert und Kommandos für den Unterricht geübt. In den Pausen kamen dann auch einige Schüler zu mir und haben das Erlernte gleich in die Praxis umgesetzt.

Das Land lernte ich während der Wochenendausflüge in die atemberaubende Natur Costa Ricas kennen, die ich fast immer mit zwei anderen Freiwilligen und einem einheimischen Tourguide unternommen habe. So richtig in die Kultur Costa Ricas eingetaucht bin ich jedoch auf den täglichen Busfahrten zur Schule. Hier konnte man hautnah erleben, was PURA VIDA ausmacht. Ich habe die Ticos als sehr freundlich, hilfsbereit, entspannt und unkompliziert erlebt.

Zurück in Deutschland vermisse ich „meine“ Kinder, meine Gastfamilie, insbesondere Mama Leticia, die uns sehr liebevoll umsorgt hat, und den interessanten kulturellen Erfahrungsaustausch mit den anderen Freiwilligen. Die Erfahrungen in Costa Rica und die positive Lebenseinstellung der Ticos haben mir die Kraft und Energie gegeben, hier in Deutschland beruflich nochmal neu durchzustarten. Meine persönliche Auszeit in Costa Rica war bislang die beste Entscheidung meines Lebens!



Costa Rica Conservation Update – March 2011

February has been so busy that by the time I sat down to write to you all I realised it was the middle of March! So we have combined the two months to give you a full information packed update this time round!

We have quite a few new activities going on around the park. We began February by commencing a weekly night walk around the park. The main aim of these walks is to give volunteers a new experience of the park, as an area of the park viewed by day is completely different at night. The forest comes alive with new sounds and because it's harder to get distracted by long distant views it's easy to begin to see the smaller things that are right in front of you! The tiny ants climbing all over branches next to you, hunting crickets, frogs and lizards blend in perfectly unless you're out looking for them.

So far we have done a walk each night of the week and have yet to come back without seeing something...frogs, lizards, snakes, opossums, coyote and even deer! Unfortunately night time photography is pretty tricky so no one has managed to get some decent night time shots of these animals but the most important thing is that we have experienced these amazing sights. Obviously all this information is also used in our general observation records which we use in conjunction with our other projects to determine which areas of the park are more active and why and how we can help protect them more.

During these months of the year there is a lot of work being done to help protect the park and its surrounding areas from forest fires. The generally accepted way of clearing farm land is to slash and burn and unfortunately these fires can spread from one piece of land to another and sometimes into the park itself. The way we can help to prevent this from happening is by clearing fire breaks and trails in and around the park. These trails and breaks are years old in some places and basically only require a quick clean to get rid of leaves and dry grass which are the main fuel for fires in this part of the country. The fire cannot spread from one side of the break to the other so it should stay contained and die out, hence not continuing to destroy the park or other areas of the country.

Continuing with our investigation and nature section of the update, we have also been discovering new species this month! We have another new species of bat in the park which has never been registered in the area before and has so far only been captured once in the course of our 1 year project.

We have also found 2 new species of butterfly in the area as well...one that is the most amazing colour of blue that it doesn't look real and another that looks very similar to a dead leaf on the outside but looks like the "Pink Pura Vida" (one of Costa Rica's most famous butterflies). These have yet to be formally identified but we are 100% sure that we don't have them already and we only have to look through our ID books to help us find the right species!

Our camera project has continued to bring in good results as well, as

I've told you in the past we have a young female ocelot in the park but we have now identified a 2nd ocelot. They both look completely different, one with almost completely black legs and the other with yellow legs. This isn't something uncommon with ocelots but it does help us to identify individuals and work out each range and territory within the park.

Finally on the investigation/nature side of things we have finally arranged our bird observation activity for the start of April and even set the dates when we are going to run the project. There are two different activities planned, one which is point to point observations, which involves going to certain points around the park (water holes, fruiting trees and mud baths) where birds come to feed and drink early in the morning. This activity will run from about 5am-8am before it gets too hot. When the temperature passes about 30C most wildlife begins to slow down to look for cooler spots around the park.



The second part of the project is going out with the mist nets and capturing species for close identification and photography. These individuals are measured, weighed and photographed in high detail so we can use the data to work out breeding habits, feeding habits and general health of the bird population and with the photos we can use

them to create a field guide of the park. We already have something similar for the bats and we are working on mammals and soon birds!

It hasn't all been investigation and discovery this month. We have been working very hard in improving the installations of the park so everyone is more comfortable. We spent a whole day pulling Meicel's kitchen apart, removing everything and placing new shelves and re-varnishing all of the wood whilst also adding a new electrical system for her new cooker! We have had the new cooker for about a month now and I think we have all put on a few extra pounds from the cake we have been eating every few days! Needless to say these small changes have made a huge difference to the appearance of the kitchen and have made Meicel's life a lot easier! Plus the food is more exciting!

We are close to finishing off the new volunteer bedroom which is looking amazing! We have spent a lot of time and energy in making this a very comfortable and bright room. Its design is very similar to the old ones but with small changes to create more space and make it easier to clean and maintain. The floor is a darker colour and we only need to paint and varnish the walls and wood which won't take a long time and we should be ready to let volunteers in there in a few weeks time!

We also have a new member of staff with us here in the park, Jose Ramon is a local builder



who will be with us for the next few months helping us to improve the installations we have here even more!

Of course this is only a small taste of all the work we have been doing this month. We have many other activities running day to day and many funny and exciting things happen all the time!

Richard Munday
Conservation Coordinator
Barra Honda National Park
March 2011

Projects Abroad Costa Rica

March Dairy



Volunteer 's name		
Isabell	Ohlenschlaeger	13-03
Simon	Marin	04-03
Shirley	Osborne	09-03
George	Guthrie	26-03
Johan	Jensen	23-03
Marie	Rømer	08-03
Eunice	Park	14-03
Janina	Zwerver	08-03
Maneo	Mohale	22-03

March weather: it will be a hot month due to the season and mainly because we are in a tropical country. It means that everybody moves to the beaches, swimming pools and mountains; hurry up and make your own plans too.

These are days of our lives

Volunteers were enjoying our monthly activity. Here we have some pictures for you. Check it out!!!



Palmito salad

INGREDIENTS:

Serving portion:

4-6 portions

- 2 (14 ounce) cans of hearts of palm
 - 4-6 lettuce leaves
 - 1 lime, juice of, fresh
 - salt
 - fresh ground black pepper
 - 1 large vine ripened tomato, chopped (optional)
 - 1 red bell peppers, chopped (optional) or 1 yellow bell pepper (optional)
 - mayonnaise (optional)
 - avocado slices (optional)
- Cut the heart of palm into small bite sized pieces and place on lettuce lined plates. Squeeze lime juice over the hearts of palm. Add a tiny dash of salt and fresh pepper.
- The optional ingredients can be added together or individually. Mayonnaise can be substituted for the lime, salt, and pepper as is common in restaurants.



Zapallitos rellenos

INGREDIENTS:

Serving portions: 4

- 4 zucchini
- 1 hard-boiled egg, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup cheese (Jack, mozzarella or your choice)
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated
- salt & pepper
- 1/4 cup whole wheat fresh breadcrumbs

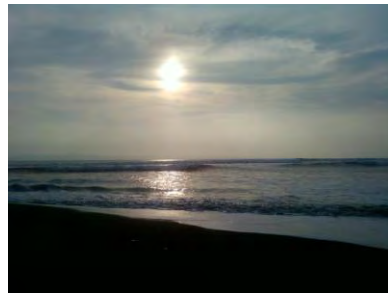
How to prepare it:

- Boil the zucchinis until tender (around 8-10 minutes).
- Allow to cool and cut in half lengthwise.
- Scoop out the inside and place in a strainer; force as much liquid out as possible.
- Combine the squash paste, egg, grated cheese & milk, mix well.
- Fill the zucchini shells.
- Sprinkle with the bread crumbs and parmesan cheese (get them ready up to this point and then just pop them in the oven 15 minutes before serving).
- Cook in a 350F oven for 10-15 minutes or until the parmesan is browned and they are heated through.



What to do on Weekends?

During Holy Week you can travel around the country to get to know and explore new places, during this time people used to travel around to share with their families as many people have this week off due to the Catholic celebrations that we have. 80% of Costa Rican people are Catholic and it is usual that they celebrate religious activities which mean a good time to share around the country too.



Check out our Facebook group newsletters from Costa Rica and mytripblog from Costa Rica: these are regularly updated with photos from Social Events and news from the projects, placements, special weeks and volunteers in their teaching 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/>

Mytripblog from Costa Rica

http://www.mytripblog.org/mod/blog/group_blogs.php?gl=true&group_guid=265