

## HOW TO READ ATENAS TODAY

Many of the pages in Atenas Today are in two column format, and the default “view” in the *Adobe Reader* will present these pages in a large size that requires you to scroll up and down to read the whole page.

By changing the “view” to “**Full Screen**” you can fit the page to your screen and avoid the scrolling.

When in “Full Screen” view, left click to advance to the next page, or right click to go back a page.

If the text is too small for your taste, push the “escape” key to exit the “Full Screen” mode, and change the “zoom” level to get the size you want.

### **THE NEW YELLOW PAGES**

**Don't forget to download and save the latest version of the Yellow Pages. Many new businesses have been listed. This section will help you find the goods and services you need.**

# ATENAS TODAY

Issue No. 91

July 23, 2012



COSTA RICA CELEBRATES MOTHER'S DAY AUGUST 15, 2012

*ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 470 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Marietta Arce at [atenastoday@gmail.com](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com).*

*Compositions from back issues are archived on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, [www.atenascatuca.com](http://www.atenascatuca.com). Click on the English version and then Atenas Today on the business page.*



## DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

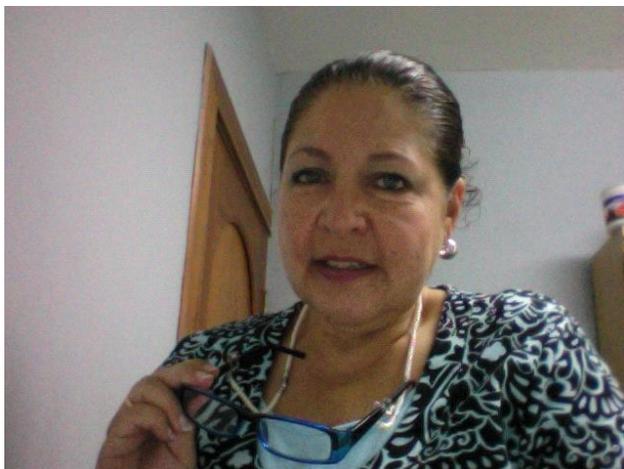
New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to [atenastoday@gmail.com](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com)

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## Publisher's Note



I am often asked how I became editor/publisher of Atenas Today. I find myself enumerating the many reasons why I carve out large chunks of time to solicit, read and edit the contributions that reach you each month.

The words I use when I answer the question vary but the theme is always the same: I have always been a 'small town' gal, despite the fact that I lived most of my life in New York! The kind of town I want to live in is vibrant because it comprises a dynamic community whose members want to a part of 'somewhere'. I consider myself a pretty average person so I reason everyone who lives here must feel the same way.

When Fred Macdonald turned Atenas Today over to me, I felt at once responsible and committed to bringing you the best of the diverse items I receive from our writers and artists. To my enormous

satisfaction, all the contributors take great pride in the material they submit on time for publication each month. To them I convey my heartfelt thanks.

In each issue of "Atenas Today" I include a Community Bulletin Board that I hope is useful. Due to the changes that are constantly taking place in our town, I cannot guarantee that this guide is as up-to-date as it should be. I hope, however, that you will be patient as I improve the frequency with which Atenas Life ([atenaslife.com](http://atenaslife.com)) is updated so there is always a current version of the calendar there. If you have an activity that you would like included, please drop me a line.

Last weekend there was a county-wide clean-up of "Quebrada Matias." The clean-up involved volunteers from the local universities, the high school, and other environmental groups. I felt immensely proud to witness the spirit of cooperation of the volunteers who are living in Atenas today and every day.

Happy reading!

Marietta Arce  
[marietta.arce@gmail.com](mailto:marietta.arce@gmail.com)





## COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

This space is available for posting community activities for the following weeks. Please provide information about your activity or event to [atenastoday@gmail.com](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com) by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. ART CLASSES with Mary Park. Please call or email August 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> to: [mandgpark@shaw.ca](mailto:mandgpark@shaw.ca); 8330-3274

July 25<sup>th</sup> – Guanacaste Annexation Celebrations – Holiday in Costa Rica, banks closed.

July 24<sup>th</sup>, - Atenas Bridge Club meets at the new, renovated Don Yayo's Restaurant.  
August 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> 1 – 4 p.m. No partner required.

July 25<sup>th</sup> (Please confirm with Sara or Kay 2446-0664) and  
August 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>

*Atenas Wednesday Women*  
informal get together at Kay's Gringo Postres  
every Wednesday afternoon at 12:30 PM

July 27<sup>th</sup> – Women's Fair from 8-noon in the Sports Plaza across from Central School.  
Organized by the Ministry of Salud's Office for Women.

August 1<sup>st</sup>, (to be confirmed) Recycling in Atenas from 7 a.m. to Noon at the Plaza in front of the Central School, near the volleyball court.– Recycling of aluminum, metal, plastic, paper, cardboard NO ELECTRONICS, STYROFOAM or EGG CARTONS Please rinse and separate your recyclables before dropping them off. Thank you.

August 2<sup>nd</sup>, Celebration of Feast of the Virgin of Los Angeles, patron saint of Costa Rica. Activities nationally and locally. Pilgrimage to Cartago.

August 7<sup>th</sup> – Atenas Celebrates It's Birthday! If budget permits, Municipality will celebrate in the park.

August 14<sup>th</sup> - Writer's Club meets at Colinas del Sol, at Noon. Contact L. Michael Rusin @ [crcaseyboy@gmail.com](mailto:crcaseyboy@gmail.com) (2451-8063) for more information.

August 14<sup>th</sup> 3 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting at Kay's Gringo Postres. Please contact Virginia 2446-5343 or Sylvia 8868-1386 for more information. Volunteers are needed and welcome.

**AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup> – MOTHER'S DAY IS CELEBRATED IN COSTA RICA - HOLIDAY**

August 20<sup>th</sup> - PLEIN AIR - A group of people with curious minds who meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month at a different location to explore and express their creativity through visual art and writing. Contact Jan Yatsko at 2446-0970 or [janyatsko@ice.co.cr](mailto:janyatsko@ice.co.cr) to find out where we have been and where we are going.

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT [www.atenaslife.com](http://www.atenaslife.com) FOR OTHER REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES.

## A RAY OF HOPE IN ATENAS: HOGAR DE VIDA...



*by Dennis Easters easters3@msn.com*

Like many people, when I think of a children's home, the term "orphanage" comes to mind. Those old Hollywood movies have created a mental picture for me of a sad, dismal, sterile institution, where stern discipline reigns. My recent visit to Hogar de Vida para la Niñez in Atenas, changed that mental picture 180 degrees. In 1995, Divine intervention sent Tim and Dena Stromstad, along with their twin boys, from their mission work in Guatemala to a new calling in Atenas, Costa Rica. Their new calling? To start a children's home to care for those little ones in need and were without a voice. Their mission? To love, protect and provide a substitute family for children at risk whose family units no longer existed or were no longer able or suitable to care for them. Drawing on their previous experience and work in Haiti and Guatemala, the Asociacion Hogar de Vida para la Niñez in Atenas, Costa Rica was born.

At the young age of 19, Tim Stromstad had a devastating

motorcycle accident that would change the course of his life, and help mold him into the man he is today. Tim says "As a 19 year old, I lived for myself. When I had my accident, I was laying there on the pavement and I had a near death experience. God came to me and said "Are you going to listen to me now?" I listened to God and that is why I am here today." In 1988 Tim and Dena were invited to go to Haiti on a mission where they started a children's home. Then in 1990 their calling took them to Guatemala. While in Guatemala there was one experience that made an impact on Tim and Dena and would put the wheels in motion for starting the Hogar de Vida in Atenas. On the streets of Guatemala they saw a mother with a very sick child. The mother had been to the clinic looking for treatment but there were no medicines available. She had no money for food. The child was malnourished. Tim and Dena began supporting that mother with only \$10 per month, and after six months, the child was fine. That is when Tim realized "Wow, \$10 per month, anybody can give us \$10 a month to save a life." From that brief encounter on the streets of Guatemala, fast-forward more than 20 years and literally thousands of lives have been touched by this loving, compassionate couple.

Helen Smith along with her late husband Dennis have served on the board of directors at Hogar de Vida and have been there from the very beginning. They have seen the Hogar develop into what it has

become today. Helen says “When Tim and Dena purchased the finca, the first home was the original farm house, an old, wooden, 2 story home with chickens upstairs and pigs in the swimming pool.” She continues by saying “In 1998 the first of 3 homes was built, housing 13 children. When they outgrew that home, a second was built to accommodate 12 more children. Eventually in 2003 the last home was built giving the Hogar a capacity to support 35 children.”



Since its humble beginnings, the Hogar has developed into what Tim says is “A little piece of heaven for children who have been broken, who come from broken lives.” These children have been abandoned or touched by physical abuse, sexual abuse and poverty. The campus, which is close to 8 acres in size, is a child’s dream with a large playground set among mango trees, a covered sandbox and two swimming pools. There are a total of 5 homes on campus, 3 of which belong to 35 deserving children who call the Hogar home. The directors, Tim and Dena, live on site with their 3 children, all of which are adopted (twin boys from Guatemala and a Costa Rican daughter). In addition there are dedicated staff members who live on site, helping to make the Hogar run efficiently and successfully. The campus also boasts 4 cabins that

are used to house mission workers that come to volunteer at the Hogar. There is also an administration and maintenance building, rounding out the campus.



I wanted to know about the Hogar and its mission? Helen lovingly answers “We are a transitory home for children who are at risk socially and who are from difficult situations. We are NOT an orphanage and do not handle adoptions, because in Costa Rica, that is a government function. Our target population is children from newborn to 7/8 years of age.” Continuing Helen says, “Our mission is to love, protect and provide a substitute family for these children. We are a Christian mission, and our work is based on a Biblical foundation, with Christian values and principles. We raise the children with those principles creating a sense of self worth, value and purpose.” The Costa Rican government is very protective of its children. PANI (Patronato Nacional De La Infancia), [www.pani.go.cr](http://www.pani.go.cr), is the governing body which oversees and sets strict rules and regulations for homes such as Hogar de Vida.

The Hogar de Vida provides its children with everything they need, with the most important being love and a tight family unit. All the basics are covered too, like housing, food,

clothing and education. In addition there are 3 psychologists, 2 teachers and nurse on staff. There is a pre-school on site but the children of school age go to the local school and are walked to and from school by a caregiver known as a "tía" (aunty). Each child has the option of going to a local church on Sunday with their "Tia". By law, health care is provided for by the CAJA. Special needs such as psychological help and language development are provided, giving these children the tools they need for a bright future.

Cultural and recreational activities are also part of life at Hogar de Vida. There are 5 national holidays in which the children must participate in celebrating. Of course there are many fun times with birthday parties, Christmas celebrations, off campus trips to the beach, national parks, volcano's, and INBio Park ([www.inbio.ac.cr](http://www.inbio.ac.cr)), which is a fun and educational natural experience. Special "socialization" trips are also important so visits to places like the local fire department and grocery store are common. Like most children, the little ones at the Hogar de Vida have their own toys to play with, books to read, and television for entertainment.

It is obvious that providing a sense of normalcy to the lives of these children that have been so abruptly disrupted is the top priority at Hogar de Vida. Privacy and safety are top priorities. Many times vacationers coming to Costa Rica want to make the Hogar de Vida a stop on their tour, and if prearranged, it is possible. However, Tim, Dena and

Helen respectfully remind us that they do not allow "drop ins" because the Hogar is a "home", not a tour.



The reality of maintaining a non-profit like Hogar de Vida has its challenges. Apart from strict rules and regulations imposed by the government, there are the responsibilities of efficiently running a family household of 50 (35 children, plus staff). Imagine the cost of rearing 1 child, now multiply that by 35. Then there is the upkeep and maintenance of the campus, as well as much needed projects. I asked Helen, how the Hogar covered its expenses. She says, "We receive about 35% of our budget from the Costa Rican government." And the remaining 65%? I ask. Helen humbly replies, "The rest we raise on our knees."

The Hogar attracts mission groups from church organizations throughout the United States. These groups will arrange a mission at the Hogar, donate a project, paying for supplies and volunteering their labor. In addition, the groups will stay at the Hogar, renting the 4 cabins on campus, creating much needed cash flow. At present, the Hogar is hosting a large group of 18 from an organization in Texas called CAN

DO. This mission is working on painting the inside of the homes and roofs, pressure washing walkways, concrete work, and building a roof to cover the clotheslines. Tim says, "Here at the Hogar, we are all about building relationships. It's more than just financial support that they provide. The group members bring books and toys for the children. They spend time reading and playing, really getting to know the children. For this reason, we have many repeat visits from groups and individuals."



One of the much-appreciated supporters and contributors to Hogar de Vida, is the Atenas Charity Chili Cook Off ([www.atenaschilicookoff.com](http://www.atenaschilicookoff.com)), which was founded by Tom and Kay Costello, owners of Kay's Gringo Postres in Atenas. In its six years, the Chili Cook Off has almost doubled in size every year, raising thousands of dollars to help keep the Hogar running. The Hogar also receives private donations from groups and individuals as well a sponsorship program for the children.

I asked Helen if there was anything in particular or special products that Hogar was always in need of? I could see Helen's discomfort as she responds, "Of course, we can always

use money, but with rice, beans, milk and baby formula (Nan1 and Nan2) we can survive. Also, cleaning products, toiletries, new and good used clothing for children ages 0-8, and shoes." Helen laughs and says the children are rough on shoes because they love to use them as "brakes" for their tricycles! Helen finishes by saying, "Think of your home, as a mother, what you need for your children. We need the same things."

As our conversation continues, it hits me that this is a never-ending project. I am amazed and in awe of how effortlessly and efficiently the Hogar runs, as if on auto-pilot. However, there are a few immediate needs and projects that would bring relief to the Hogar. Some of those include:

1. Converting the electric stoves to gas. Electricity can be quite costly in Costa Rica and gas is much more economical.
2. Installing solar panels to help relieve some of the electrical costs as well as becoming more "green".
3. Space is tight in the professional building and 2 additional rooms are needed.
4. Build a security wall around a portion of the property. This project has been broken down into 4 phases, and phase 1 has been donated and is now complete.
5. Automatic gate opener for extra security.
6. Beef up security measures in general throughout the campus, with things like security cameras.

Now, with many of the technical details out of the way, I wanted to

get to the heart of the Hogar, the children. I asked Tim and Helen if they could share a few success stories they have experienced over the years and immediately, they looked at each other, their eyes lit up and the flood gates were opened. One story after another came flowing out with such emotion, that eyes began to water.

One story in particular stood out, that of a little girl we will call Susie. Susie was raised by her mother until she was 2.5 years of age, at which point she was removed from her home by the Costa Rican government (PANI) and placed at Hogar de Vida. You see, little Susie was being sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend. Tim says "Susie did not smile for 3 months. My heart was broken." Susie's father was alerted of the situation, and he came to the Hogar for 7 months to visit little Susie. Tim continues, "This man was married, and had a family. Susie was the result of an extramarital affair, but her father took responsibility and stepped up and wanted his daughter." Government officials from PANI visited the father's home and imposed strict requirements that he had to fulfill if he wanted custody of this daughter. Susie's father complied with all the government's requirements, including adding on an additional bedroom to his home for little Susie. He also had to prove that he could provide Susie with a quality standard of life. The icing on the cake was that Susie's father and wife welcomed little Susie into the family with open arms. Tim says, "Now that is true love."

Another heartwarming story is that of Guiselle and Carlos, a loving couple who have been friends and volunteers at the Hogar for many years. The couple would help out in any way they could, like taking the children and staff to the beach. Guiselle and Carlos have known for 15 years they could not have children but had prayed for God to bless them with a child. The couple applied to PANI to adopt a child. In February of 2012, a little boy angel was born and came to live at the Hogar. As fate would have it, in June of 2012, PANI gave a child to Guiselle and Carlos. There was a twist to the story and little did they know, but the child they were going to be taking home was the little angel born in February that had been living at the Hogar, where they had served with all their hearts for years. They are now living their dreams as a family and Helen says, "They look like they really belong to each other!"



So what does the future hold for the Hogar de Vida? Tim responds, "That's in God's hands." Helen adds that, "We are continually working to improve the care for the children, employ more people to that end, give more one on one attention, and more individual interaction. We are working on a literacy program and have started a library. Once per week during our morning devotional time, we put the books in a wagon,

every child/adult combo gets a book, and then they read that book.” A feather in the hat of Costa Rica is that PANI has recently received the prestigious ISO 9001 accreditation. The Hogar de Vida is one of 10 children’s homes in all of Costa Rica that qualifies and will receive the ISO 9001 accreditation which attests to the excellent standard of care offered by the Hogar.

Reflecting on my three hour visit to the Hogar de Vida, I can only say I am deeply touched, humbled and grateful for compassionate and caring people such as Tim, Dena, Helen and the staff at the Hogar de Vida. They, along with hundreds of volunteers, have created a real home and family for these deserving children who otherwise would be neglected. There was one thing in particular that touched my heart and sums up the wants and needs of these brave children. Helen says, “At night when the children say their bedtime prayers, the one thing that they always ask for is a mommy and daddy.” Personally, I feel that the love of our parents is a basic human need. Oftentimes we take that love for granted. Hopefully seeing these children and hearing their stories will remind us that the gift of family is the most valuable possession we have. Cherish it.

I encourage anyone who has the ability to help the Hogar, be it financial, with your time, or by donating food and clothing, to please consider Hogar de Vida in Atenas. You will be contributing to the development of their future.

Our future!



For more information on how you can help please contact Tim, Dena or Helen at:

[www.homesoflife.org](http://www.homesoflife.org)

[info@homesoflife.org](mailto:info@homesoflife.org)

[www.facebook.com/hogar.devida.3](https://www.facebook.com/hogar.devida.3)



## Pearls before Swine – Select Culinary Misadventures



by Suzanne Mark  
Suzanne@thenowtechnique.com

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Have you ever gone to a party, or thrown a party, and you wanted to make something really special. Something that either you had always wanted to make, or thought your cohorts would love, and it BOMBED?

I can tell you dozens of these stories; like the time in Italy when I made this beautiful Russian salmon loaf called “Coulibiac” – a mix of onions, mushrooms, barley, dill weed and flaked salmon all held together in a flaky pastry crust (that I painstakingly made) all served with a butter sauce. Although the dish was perfect, my dinner guests were clearly less than thrilled. They just didn’t get it. You have to understand, the Italians have kind of a limited palate. They like things how their Mamma made them, without much deviation. (They will argue for 20 minutes about whether or not a Caprese salad wants oregano or “basilico”.) They did not know what dill was. So I learned the hard way that you don’t go throwing strange herbs and spices at an Italian (much less a Sicilian) and expect them to sidle right up and tuck right in. At the end of the dinner I was in the bedroom crying.

A few years ago, I participated in a potluck New Year’s party thrown by my networking group. The invitation said to bring whatever you would like to “feast on in the New Year”. Wow, I really took this to heart. For weeks, I felt into the deep symbolism of the dish I would bring and the *amazing* abundance it would engender in the New Year. (I know, I am pathetically literal sometimes.) What to bring...caviar on cream cheese? Shrimp? Finally, I decided on half a smoked salmon with all the exhausting-to-assemble garnishes: red onion,

chopped egg, lemon wedges, cream cheese, those cute little rye bread slices, fresh dill... Ten minutes into the party, I saw that the ungrateful hordes were taking HUGE slabs of the salmon, as if it were VELVEETA! (The garnishes remained largely untouched.) To make my ill-advised decision worse, there were more cheese balls and corn chips on that table than I have ever seen in one location. So, \$50.00 and 15 minutes later, this “prosperity salmon” that I had agonized over, was GONE. Sigh. I felt like such a screw up.

What was I *thinking*??? Why didn’t I take meatballs or heat-and-eat taquitos or a nice Waldorf salad? (I have a tendency to overdo.) My salmon was just too precious for that party. I had a blast anyway.

Many years ago, I made a Sicilian dish called “pasta con le sarde”, literally, pasta with Sardines (you may have seen it on Batali’s show) for a Chinese guy living in Sicily. (I made it with tuna, so it was not really fishy...) and he could not even eat it (there goes that gag response) so I had to prepare him an omelet. This was another case of me not knowing my audience. Ok, I still like to try weird things on my more adventurous friends, but I am reigning in my impulse to serve haggis to the Japanese. I hesitate to say it, but I also think that some people, like the extremely picky eater with the kiddy palate (you know who you are) is someone I should NOT have for dinner.

My most common error is also my biggest. I call it: MAKING ENOUGH FOR THE INVADING HUNS (and the opposing army). Having no formal training in restaurant management or “chefery”, I tend to way overestimate the amount of food required for a meal.

All of this begs the question: are we over achieving in life? Are we going for the extravagant gesture when simple (but good) will do? If this happens, I think that the best thing that you can do is admit it and move on. Go back to the "beginner's mind" and start again. Living in Costa Rica gives us many opportunities for this. We can keep it simple. A good meatloaf and a salad might seem tried and true, but you know that it will be likable and comforting. You also know that you won't screw it up *and* spend the utility money. Sometimes it is good to be run of the mill.

In proud mediocrity,

Suzanne

Speaking of meatloaf, here is a simple but good recipe with a gourmet twist. It is salty sweet. The proportions do not have to be exact, so feel free to experiment. It is hard to screw up. I should call it "Hard to Screw Up Asian Meatloaf". You can call it that if you want.

## Unbelievable Asian Meatloaf

### Ingredients

- 1 cup (or so) sliced celery
- 1/2-1 cup (or so) sliced green onion
- 1 cup (or so) sliced carrot
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- 1 small bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 lbs (or so) ground turkey or chicken
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup (or so) Hoisin sauce (you can get this at an Asian Market, it comes in a jar and it is the sweet thick stuff. NOT the runny un-sweet stuff you get at the Tico grocery stores.)
- 1 T soy sauce
- 1 T Brown sugar or tapa dulce, if desired
- 2 t toasted sesame oil
- 2 T vegetable oil
- 1/2 c breadcrumbs OR 1 c cooked Quinoa

Sautee the onion, celery and carrot in the two oils until softened but still crunchy. Add garlic and onion and sauté for 2 minutes more. Remove from heat, and allow to cool slightly.

In a bowl, combine turkey, egg, ½ of Hoisin sauce, soy sauce, sugar, breadcrumbs or quinoa, just until incorporated, and then knead in half of the cilantro together with the vegetable mixture that has been cooling.

Once everything is just incorporated, spread it out in square or round baking pan to desired depth (thick moist, thin burger-like). Cover with remaining Hoisin that you have watered down slightly (slightly!)

Bake in 350° oven until done, about 20-30 minutes, depending on thickness. This meatloaf can also be "baked" on the stovetop, on medium-low heat with a lid on, although I like it better in the oven. When it is done, sprinkle with the remaining cilantro.

Serve with rice or boiled baby potatoes and a salad.

Email Suzanne at  
Suzanne@thenowtechnique.com



## Mexican Fandango and other myths...

How to ride through Central America

Part II

by

Paul Furlong

In Part I, we met Rich Knowlton in Texas and followed his ride to Guatemala in his own words. As I was doing my own tours, Rich would check in once in a while from Guatemala. He wasn't learning the language; I suggested he not wait to learn Spanish before getting on with his life. Language and culture come in through the pores, I told him, and he should get moving. His emails began to come from different dots on his map. Bits of information with his thoughts on the things he saw defined his trip for me. He wasn't afraid to explore, and visited places I've never been. One thing was certain, he wasn't bored anymore and it seemed he was headed to Costa Rica.

Next thing I know, he's riding up my driveway in the rain. I put on the coffee and we talked about finding a place to stay. We went for a ride and I showed him our town. But Rich is his own man and wanted to look around the country. It's funny; wanderers rarely talk about why they are where they are, just where they plan to try next.

During our conversation, Rich complained about how uncomfortable he was on his bike. That's how motorcycles lose weight; they become uncomfortable for their riders. I put his mule on my bench and began to tinker. First we made two piles of his tools, one that worked with his bike and the other that didn't. He was prepared to fix leaky toilets, abandoned field guns and amphibious landing craft. We selfishly reduced his kit to tools only *he* needed. Parts, too, most people don't know, but you can get parts most everywhere in Central America. There's no need to carry extra sprockets and chains, for instance; or more than two pair of underwear, for that matter. One wonders how many Columbus carried in 1492.



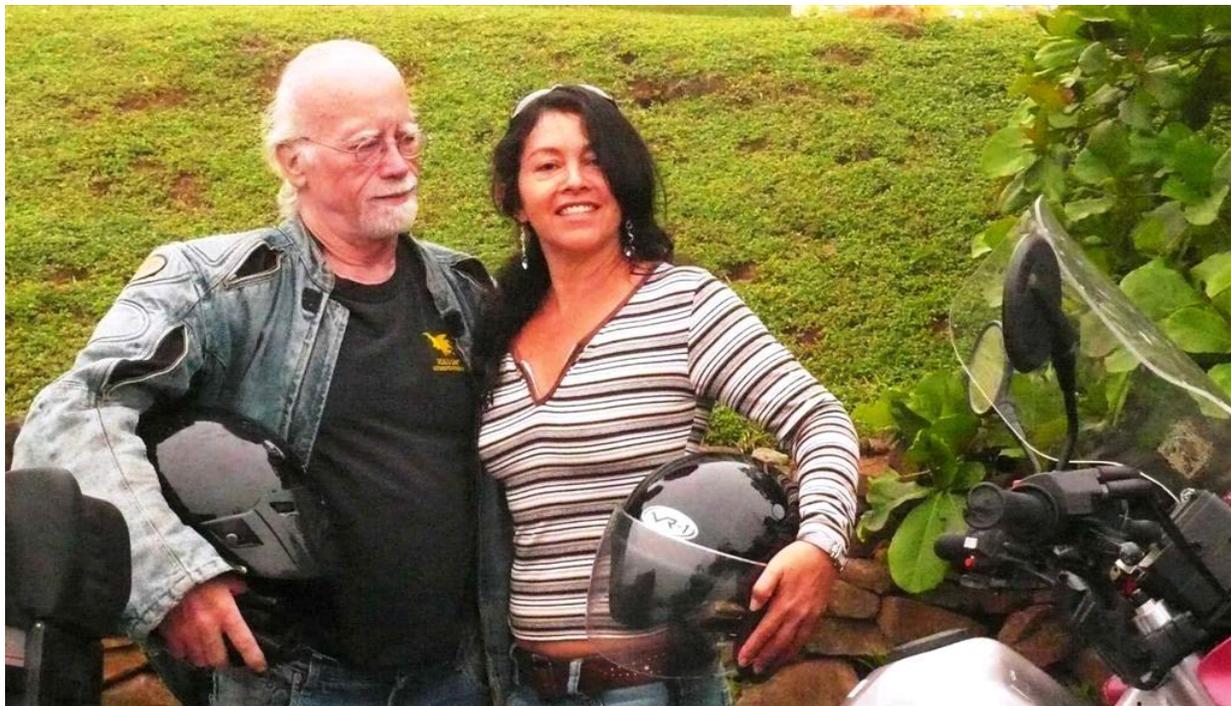
Me, nibbling at a good fit for Rich. Bars back an inch... there, try that... we'd removed lowering links, run the forks up in front and gave him a little steering ability. Gaby Foto

Rich found a place in San Jose and visited us from time to time. One day he came with a woman who my wife approves of. Still looking for a country and a place to live, they rode to Panama and devoured its every beach, mountaintop and pueblo. The two of them rode to see her sister in the Osa Peninsula and stayed awhile. They just explored and seemed to move more with the tide and the moon than any kind of plan. Sometimes I feel overly *planted* when he comes around. Truth is Rich is living our dreams.

They each knew a few words of each other's language and, according to Rich, never had a cross word. Meanwhile, I continued doing tours to Texas and our emails continued. In this way, friendships are made. A couple years went by. Just recently, Rich called to say he'd gotten his residency papers together for Costa Rica so I guess he's staying. He still has his passenger on the back. She's buying some land up in the mountains East of Paritta. He says it's hard to get the bike up there in the rain. I imagine he'll get a Jeep someday, but that's planning way too far ahead.

As Rich says in one of his emails back home, "If anyone sees Dr. Edsel Holden, tell him my weight is down to 79 kilos and I am feeling great. He should prescribe retirement for all his patients!"

Do all Gringos make it in Central America? No, but they live, and the odds are good if the urge to go is powerful enough. Rich came across with no Spanish and no intentions of meeting a woman. His Spanish is still mostly nonexistent but he did find the right school, her name is Mariana.



Sometimes you find what you never dreamed of...by not looking. Fuzz Foto

.....

fuzzlong@gmail.com

Atenas Today Interviews  
Mary Encarnación A.



- AT: We spent some time chatting with Mary Encarnación, owner of Atenas Beauty Center, located on the second floor of Roma Centro.
- AT: Mary, why don't you tell us a little bit about this beautiful place?
- ME: Thank you, I appreciate the visit and the opportunity to let your readers learn about this Beauty Center which I have been operating for almost one year.
- AT: It's very elegant and distinctive here; no doubt you have invested a great deal of time and energy bringing something different to our town. We'll let you tell the story!
- ME: Yes, I have. I am originally from the Dominican Republic. I worked there as a beautician for many years and I really enjoyed my work but it was hard. I was raising a young son on my own.
- AT: Really? That is tough. How did you end up here in Costa Rica?
- ME: It was one of those events that happen that change your entire life. I had a friend who lived here in Costa Rica, actually it was my former mother-in-law! Her daughter was coming to visit her in Costa Rica and asked me if I would like to come along. I thought it would be a nice change and I ended up staying.

That was 16 years ago! Although I did not think I would be making a life change, I began working in the field and I eventually saved enough money to open up my own Beauty Parlor in San José. That was an important step for me and I was really fortunate that I have been able to successfully combine my work with being a parent. It wasn't always easy and like all working mothers, I feel sad that I wasn't able to spend as much time with my son as I wanted but those are the sacrifices that have to be made. My son is now 24 years old and I am very proud because now that I have the Beauty Center here in Atenas as well, he is helping me by administrating the business in San José.

- AT: It's always heartwarming to hear stories like yours. It's never easy to leave home and the people you love but sometimes it is necessary and we do it for our kids, to give them better opportunities, don't you agree?
- ME: Yes, I miss my family and I enjoy going back to the Dominican Republic to visit but my life is here now and I don't regret that.



**Hot Stone Massage**

- AT: That's terrific. Can you tell us how your business is different from some of the other local salons that are around town?
- ME: Well, for one thing, the locale is spacious and modern. I want my customers to feel transported, like they have stepped into a place that has their well-being and satisfaction in mind.
- AT: How do you manage that?
- ME: Well, the beauty business is more than just cutting hair and manicures. I am

always seeking ways to improve what I offer our customers. For example, I have recently employed a masseuse who is trained in many different techniques. We have an area that is set up just for that purpose and it provides the atmosphere that is needed when having this experience. Today's customers are very knowledgeable and they demand value for the money they spend. In today's economy, many times people feel they have to trim the budget and the beauty treatments are often the victim!

AT: Yes, that is true. I know a lot of people who go a week or two without cutting their hair, or having manicures!

ME: That's right, I can understand their point but I also believe that setting aside time and money to devote to personal grooming is a very good idea. Most people leave the salon feeling energized and looking good!

AT: That's very true. We all know that there is a special bond that develops between customer and the specialist who takes care of them.

ME: Yes, that's correct. I am always attentive to the way my employees do their jobs. I am careful to observe and point out the areas where there can be improvement because it just makes good business sense. I want my customers to keep coming back and to recommend us to their friends.



AT: You mention that you have another beauty parlor in San José. How did you end up here in Atenas?

ME: I guess you could say it was love! I met my husband, Peter, and he brought me here to Atenas. That was three years ago. I still go to San José to check on the business there a couple of times a week but we live here now.

AT: That's a nice story. What made you decide to open the beauty parlor here also?

ME: I heard many people remark that there was no place in town that offered the services they could find in Escazú. I noticed that a lot of my acquaintances were travelling there on a weekly basis, dealing with traffic and tolls. I thought it would be a great service to provide to the local community.

AT: It's true, many of our residents feel they need to go to Alajuela or Escazu because they can't find the goods and services here in Atenas. Let's hope the business sector does not ignore this telling fact.

ME: I have been told that it takes a while for the local community to visit a new store or business. I am fortunate that my business in San José is thriving because it gives me more flexibility. In the near future, we will probably be selling beauty supply products and equipment as well.



AT: Thank you, Mary, for spending this time with us. We wish you every success and look forward to hearing more about your future ventures.

ME: You are welcome, I hope your readers will come for a treatment soon!

**It's A Dogs Life...REALLY!!**



**Stories from Mr. BudBud, Primero Perro of Lighthouse Animal Rescue. They were written 8 years ago when he first came to Costa Rica for a house sitting job.**

**6/9/2004**

**Hola!! Y'all**

**Mom got up this morning and said "We are staying home today and RESTING. I'm TIRED!!" By 1:00 we were on the road....again. Mom has a really hard time just being lazy.**

**For the first part of the day though we just kicked back and relaxed. I even got to bask in the sunshine. It is the rainy season over here so it rains usually once a day, in the evening.**

**It sounds nice on the roof when it rains. They don't use any insulation here so the roof is right next to the ceiling. Most of the roofs are made of metal and look like the**

**old spanish tile roofs. They are not allowed to use the real spanish tile because it is heavy and if it fell during an earthquake it would crush people. So they just make tin roofs that LOOK like the real thing!**

**Anyway, when the rain comes down it sounds really nice. They have rain gutters on the roof, like back in the states, but they don't run those ugly drain pipes down to the ground. They have plastic chains coming out of the gutters and the rain runs down the chains into a concrete "box" like thing. If it is done right it looks like a little waterfall running down the chain! Neato huh?!!!!**

**We went to Grecia to look around at the shops. Mom and Dad want to learn what is available in this town. San Ramon is a much larger town and there is a lot more available there. Mom is looking for a baby stroller for me. We had to**

leave mine at home and Mom says I am pretty heavy when I am in the pouch on her front side. So the stroller would be the best way for me to still get into all the stores. Mom's pretty sharp at things like that.

We took some pictures of the outside of the church in Grecia. It is real fancy in there.

The ladies here all wear tight jeans and short blouses that show their tummys!! They are all so pretty!! Dad keeps tripping over his tongue. LOL!!!! Mom just laughs at him.

Mom is REALLY hungry for some southern cooking so she is making a list of stuff she needs to cook up a good old southern meal. Then she is going to try to translate it with the translator we have on the computer. I sure hope she doesn't end up with another mess like the cornbread she tried to cook cause I really LIKE Mom's southern cooking. ESPECIALLY the cornbread. That's my favorite.

Anyway, it was just kind of a lazy day today. Mom didn't get stopped by the policia today so that was a plus!! LOL!!!

Oh!!! We learned a couple of new words today!!! Ice is "hiello" and sounds like yellow. Bad is "malo" and sounds like follow

More tomorrow  
BudBud the travelin' perro



## Cabo Blanco Nature Reserve is a little-known gem on the Nicoya Peninsula



By Shannon Farley, Atenas

Exploring the little-known gems of Costa Rica's national parks and reserves leads me to the very tip of **Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula**, to **Cabo Blanco**.



*Beautiful Cabo Blanco Nature Reserve at the tip of the Nicoya Peninsula ([www.costarica-nationalparks.com](http://www.costarica-nationalparks.com))*

Officially named the **Cabo Blanco Absolute Natural Reserve**, this small park is spectacularly picturesque with tropical forest, pure white-sand beaches, warm aquamarine sea, waterfalls and rivers and hundreds of natural sights from trees to birds to monkeys to shells.

Costa Rica counts 25 national parks covering a little over 12% of its territory, but with private reserves, protected areas and wildlife refuges, the number jumps to 161 adding up to 25.6% of the country. Mainly only the principal attractions are visited each year, leaving many such treasures as Cabo Blanco to travelers exploring "off the beaten path."

Measuring 3,140 terrestrial acres and 4,420 marine acres, Cabo Blanco Reserve has an **interesting history**. By 1960, the area was nearly completely denuded for farming and cattle. Two nature loving conservationists, Olof (Nicolas) Wessberg and Karen Mogensen moved from Sweden to the area and bought land. They saw the wealth of nature still left at the very tip of the peninsula, and with the help of an international agency, bought 3,100 acres in October 1963, convincing the government to turn the area into the country's first privately protected reserve. Now it is a fully regenerated secondary forest, protecting a combination of dry and humid tropical forest and all waters extending 1 km out from the shoreline.



*Olof & Karen*

*([www.nicoyapeninsula.com](http://www.nicoyapeninsula.com))*



The Cabo Blanco Reserve is **open Wednesday to Sunday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm**. There are **two main trails** for visitors to walk. The shortest trail, called "Sendero Danes" (Danish Trail), is 1.3 km long and can be easily walked in a morning or afternoon. The longest trail, called "Sendero Sueco" (Swedish Trail), is more than 4 km and leads you to

the pristine white-sand beach in front of Cabo Blanco Island. This trip will take more than half a day, so plan to bring a lunch, plenty of drinking water and allow time to enjoy the beach and have a swim. There are showers and drinking water available at the beach.



*White-faced capuchin monkeys in Cabo Blanco Nature Reserve*

**What can you see?** About 140 different species of trees, howler and white-faced monkeys, coatis, white-tailed deer, coyotes and margays (wild cats) call Cabo Blanco home. The area is ideal for bird lovers. Due to the combination of sea coast, freshwater rivers, mountains and forest, you can see hundreds of different types, including roseate spoonbills, kingfishers, toucans and bellbirds. The rocky coastline of the mainland and Cabo Blanco Island are a rookery for marine birds, including a huge concentration of pelicans and the largest colony of brown boobies in Central America.

If you want to stay longer, the **San Miguel Biological Station** in the reserve supports teaching, research and environmental education of the area. Facilities include classrooms, laboratories, reference library, bunk house lodging with electricity and shared bathrooms for groups of up to 30.

While visiting Cabo Blanco, it is very important to follow **park policies**:

- Don't take anything out of the park (nature) or leave anything behind (trash).
- Keep to the trails.
- Don't disturb the animals or plant life.
- No hunting or fishing.
- No smoking! This is a *dry* forest and very susceptible to fires.

The entrance to the Cabo Blanco Reserve is at the far end of the tiny **fishing village of Cabuya**. Complete your day by taking time to hang out and watch the fisherman bring in their catch, or beach comb and explore the coves. A very interesting feature of Cabuya is the village's unique cemetery, located on a tiny deserted island that can only be reached by foot at low tide.



Map of Cabo Blanco area ([www.montezumabeach.com](http://www.montezumabeach.com))

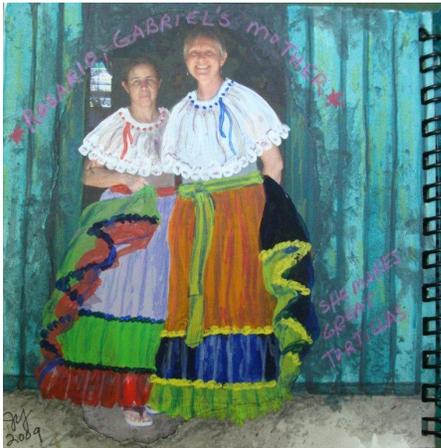
**How to get there?** From Atenas, take Route 27 (Caldera Highway) to Puntarenas. Take the ferry across the Gulf of Nicoya to Paquera, and then drive through Tambor, Cobano and Cabuya. The Cabo Blanco Reserve entrance is 2 miles south of Cabuya.

**Where to stay when visiting Cabo Blanco?** A great place is Hotel Tropico Latino at the amazingly beautiful Santa Teresa Beach, just up the coast a bit. Imagine your own private suite right on the beach, and relaxing in your own private pool and Jacuzzi while watching spectacular sunsets. Hotel Tropico Latino won the Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor in May 2011. The hotel offers daily yoga classes, “front yard” surfing, and week-long yoga & surf retreats. You can pamper yourself at the hotel’s first class all-natural spa and dine on fresh tropical cuisine in the restaurant.



Check it out at <http://www.hoteltricolatino.com>.

## What will happen if we look down?



By Jan Yatsko  
janyatsko@ice.co.cr

When you were young, your mom told you to look both ways before crossing the street. In the June issue of Atenas Today, Suzanne Mark wrote about the delight of looking up to a starry sky after falling on her bike. So what will happen if we look down?



Photo credit: Photos by Kaneeta

Most assuredly you will trip or fall into a hole if you don't look down while walking in Costa Rica. For artists who work with found objects, their treasure is discovered by looking down. There are also the moments of delight when you have looked down and found instant cash. Have you ever gone into the Antaño Restaurant in Atenas and looked down? Or almost any church in Costa Rica? What you will find are colorful patterned cement tiles called "mosaicos" and each one has been made by hand.

Mosaicos are inlaid cement tiles that utilize pressure instead of firing to finish the process. Its pattern is not a glaze but liquid colors composed of ground marble dust, fine white cement and natural earth pigments. Inside of a square metal mold, the liquid color is squirted into sectioned metal that resemble cookie cutters and that create the design. After all of the colors (ranging from 2-6) have been filled in, the tile is backed with layers of cement and a hydraulic press fuses all of the components together. The tiles are removed from the mold and allowed to cure for 2-3 weeks.

Encaustic or mosaic tiles first came into existence in 13<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe and over the centuries were made to decorate churches, monasteries, palaces, government buildings and eventually stately homes in the 1920's and 30's. These tiles can be seen all over the world, but England was considered the center of manufacturing and therefore its use is most prevalent. Cement tiles were replaced by ceramic tiles after the 1930's, but they have gained popularity today because it requires less energy to produce them and all the materials are natural.

A look at mosaicos is a lesson in one of the principles of design. A *pattern* is created with four like tiles when it is repeated to create a floor design. Mosaico designs can also be used as artistic inspiration. Create a border for a journal page (who says a journal is only for words) or for a mirror. Repeat a mosaico pattern to create a quilt. Most important, don't forget to look in ALL directions; a well-intended observation might lead you to a new discovery.

You can see a short video of the tile making process by going to [www.villalagoontile.com](http://www.villalagoontile.com)

## **The Atenas Today Art Gallery**

The Art Gallery is a regular feature of Atenas Today. Local artists are encouraged to submit photographs of their works to be included in the gallery, and to send a new picture each month. The artists may be contacted via the email addresses shown.



**Monteverde Cloud Forest,  
26" x 33" Oil on Linen**

Al Alexander  
*jeanandal@gmail.com*



## Papaya Silhouettes

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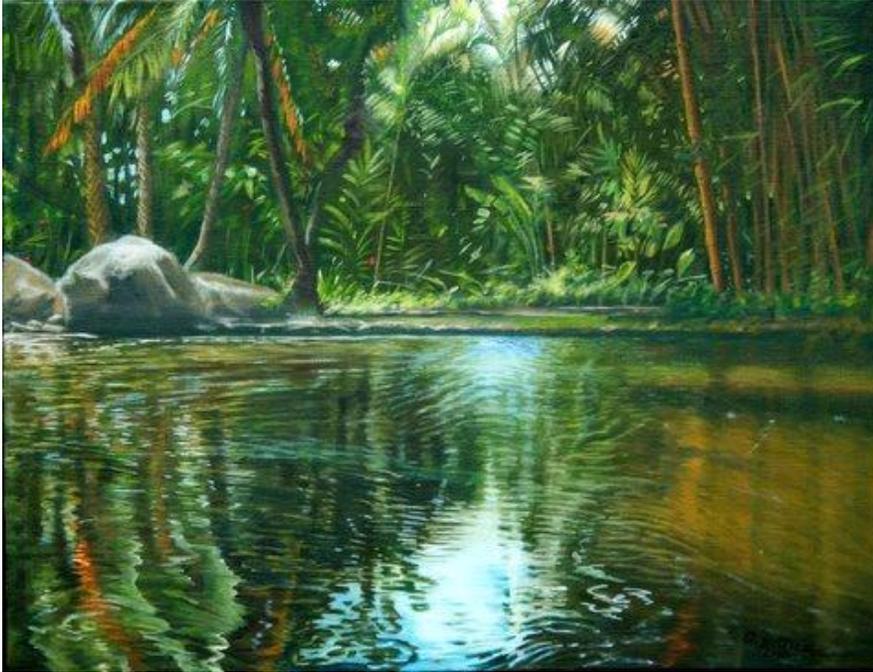
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