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Que Pasa Grecia
Serving Grecia, Sarchi, and Naranjo since 2014

¿Qué Pasa?

Que Pasa Grecia
Update #11
November 2026

What's New in Que Pasa Grecia

Since our last update, there's a garage sale scheduled 14-15 November at **Strong Missions** located on Calle San José in the Santa Gertrudis district of Grecia. Proceeds will benefit the mission's children's programs. A donation of items you no longer use or want will be welcomed. Anyone wishing to donate can contact Rebecca, annarebecca1951@gmail.com, to arrange a drop off or pick up.

It's been quite a while since anyone has **recommended a restaurant** they have enjoyed. Our subscribers are always looking for new or different places to dine. Give them some suggestions. By recommending places you enjoy, you'll be helping yourself, as well. If these establishments can't generate enough revenue from new and returning business, they'll go belly up and you'll lose one of your favorite spots.

With our apologies, the size of this *QPG Update* just kept growing due important developments. We have moved some content that can wait to December's update newsletter.

Miscellaneous News

U.S. Social Security Update – Those receiving monthly U.S. SSA benefits will receive a 3.6% increase to their monthly benefits beginning in January to cover the increase in the cost of living since the COLA calculation of a year ago.

Ruta 1 News – The temporary Cambronero bridge between San Ramon and Esparza has caused Ruta 1 to be closed since it was damaged by a semi on 25 September. The bridge and Ruta 1 reopen on 3 November with a new, "permanent" bridge replacement.

A Nasty, Tasty Fact – Costa Rica's farmers are using 10x more agricultural chemicals than the global average. The September issue of *Environment International* includes research finding that Costa Rica cropland contained nearly 22 kgs. (about 45 lbs.) per hectare (2.4 acres) annually of toxic pesticide, fungicide and herbicides. The fungicide Mancozeb, used on bananas, as well as glyphosate (such as RoundUp), diazinon and ethroprophos have been found in crops as well as in aquatic life due to run-off. This could explain the high rates of cancer in farming areas, like Sarchi and Cartago, sources for much of the local produce sold at ferias.

If you are not growing your own, or purchasing organic, you might consider soaking your produce purchases in a bath of water and baking soda, 1 tsp. per two cups water for 15 minutes. This can help remove **surface** contaminants.

C.R. Gov't. Update – President Fernandez signed a mutual cooperation agreement to fight drug cartels with President Bukele of El Salvador while on a visit to CECOT prison in El Salvador in late October. CECOT has a reputation of taking its occupant's guilt or innocence lightly and for its harsh and regimented treatment. Many Costa Rica opposition leaders have called for guarantees that citizens, residents, and prisoners legal rights and human rights will be respected and applied at Costa Rica's new CECOT-clone maximum security mega prison, CACCO. CACCO had its "grand opening" last month (which was boycotted by all of the judges in the nation's highest court, and more on this as it develops). CACCO has a 5,100-prisoner capacity and was built to contain "the worst of the worst" of the nation's growingly violent cartels and drug gangs.

The same week of its opening, a guard at La Reforma prison's maximum-security section was caught circumventing the high-security entrance with prohibited cell phones, SIM cards, batteries, and chargers in his possession allegedly destined for the incarcerated cartel leaders waiting to be transferred to CACCO. This guard is the son of one of the president's hand-picked elite security squad members. This episode calls into question the real level of security that will be offered at the country's new maximum-security prison, as well as questions of nepotism and corruption and their impact on national security and the fight against the cartels.

In a related item, the Fiscalía General (Office of the Attorney General) having had a great deal of recent success in identifying and arresting drug cartel kingpins in Costa Rica is teaming up with the U.S. DEA to launch a new effort to find the "invisible drug-traffickers" hiding in the shadows of government.

Costa Rica has fired its trade minister and withdrawn its request to join the Pacific Trade Pact (CPTPP) citing secrecy over the deal and risks to ranchers and dairy farmers. For a small country the size of Costa Rica, withdrawing without a stated regional trade association alternative may prove to be a major miscalculation.

The government has put forward 20 Seguridad Social reform proposals. Among them are proposals that would extend the worker retirement requirement from 25 years of employment to 30 years, give them a smaller retirement package, and require them to make a monthly contribution toward their medical coverage.

The ruling party, the PPSO, has introduced a constitutional amendment in the assembly to allow for consecutive presidential terms, getting rid of the eight-year waiting period before past presidents can run again. A constitutional amendment requires 38 votes to pass, the PPSO has only 31 deputies in the Assembly, but if passed, it would allow Rodrigo Chaves to run again in 2028 and, then, run for re-election in 2032. This could conceivably give Chaves 16 consecutive years as president or second in command.

A Historic First – Patricia Vargas was elected president of the Costa Rica Supreme Court on 26 October. She joins President Laura Fernandez, and Yara Jimenez, president of the National Assembly. For the first time in its history, all three branches of Costa Rica's government are being led by women.

Year-End Obligatory Payments – It's that time of the year again and a reminder that the following payments are required by law: 1. On their first visit in December, regular workers (such as housekeepers and gardeners) to your home or property are due their *Aguinaldo* (year-end bonus). It is the equivalent of 10% of their annual wages you paid in 2026.
2. *Marchamo*, the annual road insurance tax (increased 5.4% in 2027) for all vehicles is due by 31 December. On 2 November, you can find your 2027 Marchamo fee online on the **Registro Nacional** website, www.rnpdigital.com. Each amount is listed by vehicle type and license number. This year begins use of the 10-year digital windshield sticker. These "fees" are mandatory and there are fines and/or other penalties for not paying on time.

Rainfall
El Cajon de Grecia (Irina)
October: 28.3 cms; 11.1 ins.
YTD: 180.8 cms; 71.2 ins.

San Juan de Sarchi (Tom)
October: 19.5 cms; 7.68 ins.
YTD: 171.5 cms; 67.6 ins.

Note: El Cajon's October rainfall is the least since 2012. The latest forecasts agree that it will get even drier by the end of November. (Locals, including farmers, tell me that they think verano is already upon us.) Please, conserve your water usage, and do your part to try to avoid water rationing later during our summer months and early into next year's Green Season.

Ways to Save – Please share your suggestions with us on your best practices. Send your ideas to: editorqpg@gmail.com.

As part of the category of formal discounts, let's look at pharmaceuticals and medical products. It seems as we grow older more and more RX labels find a home in our medicine cabinets and most are not inexpensive. If you are a resident, then you are making monthly contributions to CAJA, and if your doctor can write prescriptions in the CAJA system, and you find medicines available through the CAJA acceptable, then free is a great price. However, many, many prescription drugs and medicines are unavailable through the CAJA and the generic drugs that CAJA does stock come from the cheapest bidder. While they may be made from quality ingredients, some generics at CAJA pharmacies may not be state-of-the-art or an exact substitute for the medicine that your doctor prescribed.

Most for-profit pharmacies, whether independent or part of a hospital or discount chain, offer some level of reduced pricing. Some offer discounts for paying with cash (efectivo), most offer discounts to seniors, and some can be considered legitimate discounters (the pharmacies inside PriceSmart would fit in this category) where discounted offerings are their pricing policy. Hospital medical discount programs, such as MediSmart offer discounts to members at facility farmacias. MediSmart discounts can also be received at the Fischcel drug chain.
I don't want to do a commercial endorsement, but one pharmacy chain, FarmaValue, with 55 farmacias in Costa Rica including Grecia, San Ramon, La Guacima, and in the mall in Alajuela where PriceSmart is located, offers seniors 5% daily discounts that increase to 10% on all items in their pharmacies when purchased on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. In addition, if registered in store or on their mobile app, everyone gets 2% of their purchase credit for free merchandise from their catalog or at participating local merchants. Also, if you have the FarmaValue-Davivienda VISA credit card, an additional 10% discount is applied. (If you are retired, you'll need to open a ₡2,000,000 CD and apply for this credit card in-person at a Davivienda branch.) It requires a bit of effort and commitment, but that's a non-trivial amount of up to 22% off on medicines, prescription drugs and other health items.

Some drug labels and specific drugs are offered on a buy-two-(or three)-boxes-get-one-box-free basis. If you have identified yourself as a senior, FarmaValue also applies their other discounts to these buy-two/get-one offers. These benefits can quickly add up. Discounts are seldom advertised and not automatically applied at any farmacia, so **always ask** for any discounts available.

Note to Readers:

The following section, **U.S. Government Changes Impacting Expats**, is accurate at the time of writing, but may contain information, conclusions, and/or suggestions with which some readers may disagree, cause discomfort, or find objectionable. For those individuals, we recommend that you finish your Que Pasa Grecia update reading here and skip to the Costa Rican saying. For the rest of our readers, we hope you find value in reading the section below.

U.S. Government Changes Impacting Expats

Foreign Entanglements – The U.S. military has suffered more casualties than previously announced and had its bases Bahrain and the UAE destroyed in the early days of the conflict. These bases were the primary supply depots for the ships of the U.S. Navy stationed in the immediate area of the conflict. Without supplies, Navy sailors' morale tanked and the flexible logistics of fleet movement has been greatly impaired giving Iran greater and freedom of movement and control and giving them the upper hand to call the shots in and around the Strait of Hormuz. Despite a known shortage of offensive and defensive weapons, rumors abound that the U.S., perhaps along with Israel, will resume offensive operations against Iran after the mid-terms. If so, the fallout is certain to further impact oil supplies, as well as, threaten the spread of hostilities to other nations in the Middle East.

The U.S. president has: sided with Russia in the Ukraine War by cancelling oil sanctions on Russia; temporarily blocked Ukraine military access to Musk's StarShield military communication platform; cancelled funded shipments of weapons from the U.S. to the Ukraine; called President Zelenskyy names; asked for regime change in the Ukraine; and welcomed Putin's offer join China and Russia to unilaterally determine the terms for ending the Ukraine War without Ukrainian involvement. These developments in the Middle East and Ukraine have contributed to world resource scarcity and rising prices for oil, fertilizer, and grains, as well as further adding to global instability.

Immigration – The current U.S. regime has been firing and consolidating U.S. immigration judges, and in some cases, the DOJ has been telling them how to rule on cases, and if they don't comply, firing them. These judges are now called "deportation judges", which calls into question whether these judges are being allowed to do their job description of providing fair hearings to the immigrants brought before them.

Costa Rica is still one of 25 international third-country deportee destinations from the U.S., accepting up to 25 non-citizen U.S. deportees per week. Of the first 460, 210 were still in here as of Sept. 25, including 37 waiting for assisted voluntary return. Figures from the immigration agency as of Oct. 2 put the total at 478 people on 23 flights. Of those, 183 remained here, 26 were in the process of returning to their home countries and 269 had already left Costa Rica. They came mainly from Mexico, China, Colombia and Brazil. The authors of a joint report written by Latin America at Refugees International and the Americas at the Global Strategic Litigation Council, strongly question that these deportees are being assisted and cared for in the manner that the government had agreed.

Tariffs, Retirement Savings, and the Cost of Living – In addition to rising prices, new things that will potentially impact us here have already been mentioned above including possible Social Security cuts by 2032. Some observers are also raising red flags about the risk of Costa Rica holding such a high percentage of dollars in its cash reserves and the economic risk of potential fluctuations in the exchange rate of the dollar to the colon.

The official exchange rate for the dollar to the colon is about $1 = 455 colones, but you are more likely to get closer to what your editor receives at his bank, $1 = 443 colones. National fuel prices have just gone up, and once again regular will be more expensive than premium: regular, ₡808/liter; premium, ₡806/liter; and diesel, ₡808/liter. In U.S. dollars per gallon, regular, premium, and diesel in C.R. (at ₡443=$1) equates to $6.90, $6.89, and $6.90, respectively.

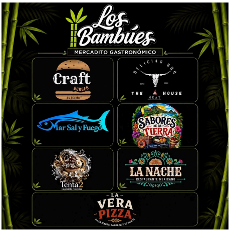
Americans Voted – As you read this, results of U.S. mid-term voting are coming in and being tabulated, and legal challenges are/will be making their way through the courts. The final results will determine how much congressional power changes and the direction and level of congressional oversight, how much substantive legislation can be passed (and not vetoed), and how much light is possible to be shined on administration accountability over the next two years of the current regime. It should be interesting. Film at 11.

"Dios los hace y ellos se juntan."
Equivalent meaning: God makes
them and they come together.
English meaning: Birds of a feather, flock together.

Find the shady places. It's going to get hot,
D. Davis, editor
Diane Cooner, webmaster
Quepasagrecia.com

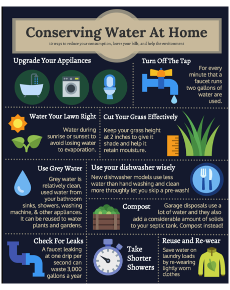
Things to do in the west Central Valley

Electric Bike for Sale



Very Sad to report that this great Food Market is closed for the foreseeable future. After our last heavy rainfall, there was a Huge landslide at the entrance to the facility - the owners had previously filed denuncias with the municipalidad over the existence of a clandestine dump site, and that is what collapsed. About 30 people were stuck onsite until the bomberos could open the road enough to get them out. This will be in litigation, so don't expect Los Bambues to open again soon. A few of the individual restaurants are trying to make a go of it in Cajon. Patronize them if you can.

Mercadito Gastronomico



Conserving Water At Home

10 ways to reduce your consumption, lower your bills, and help the envitonment

Upgrade Your Appilances

Turn Off The Tap
For every minute that a faucet runs two gallons of water are used.

Water Your Lawn Right
Water during sunrise or sunset to avoid losing water to evaporation.

Cut Your Grass Effectively
Keep your grass height at 2 inches to give it shade and help it retain mouisture.

Use Grey Water
Grey water is relatively clean, used water from your bathroom sinks, showers, washing machine, & other appliances. It can be reused to water plants and gardens.

Use your dishwasher wisely
New dishwasher models use less water than hand washing and clean more throughly let you skip a pre-wash!

Compost
Garage disposals use a lot of water and they also add a considerable amount of solids to your septic tank. Compost instead!

Check For Leaks
A faucet leaking at one drip per second can waste 3,000 gallons a year

Take Shorter Showers

Reuse and Re-wear
Save water on laundry loads by re-wearing lightly worn clothes

Practical tips to monitor your home water use.

ALERT!
PHONE SCAM

Always be alert to scams, they are never ending. The latest involves an invitation to a Special Event or Party from someone you know but don't always correspond with regularly. DO NOT OPEN! That just spreads the virus further.

Real Estate For Sale - Atenas

Caribe Sinfónico would love your help! Learn more here and to donate.

Book Readings with Edie, Continuing in November in Tacares (Old Road to Alajuela). Edie will be reading from her book, *'Growing Up in Stone Age New Guinea: Losing Innocence in a Colonial World'.*

Contact her to RSVP, space is limited.

Chikungunya is transmitted by the same mosquito that spreads dengue - Aedes aegypti. It does it's work in the daytime. Be on the lookout, protect yourself. Eliminate standing water sources on your property, keep house screens intact.
Dengue and Chikungunya are both active in the Central Valley. in Pavas - now spread by local mosquitos.

Symptoms of these viruses are similar: they usually appear 3 to 14 days after a mosquito bite and can last 2–7 days. Typical early signs include sudden high fever (102–104°F / 39–40°C), severe headache, retro-orbital pain (pain behind the eyes), intense muscle and joint pain (which can last weeks or even months), nausea, vomiting, swollen glands, and rash.

Aldair is continuing on his new regime - chemo once a week, blood transfusion once a month. That is all they can do at this time. He's in good spirits, and even with leukemia his body isn't ready to quit just yet.
His parents both just finished battling chikungunya, see above. You don't want to get this! Fortunately they are feeling better and stronger.
When you support Aldair's fight against leukemia, you support his entire family - Romeo, Adriana, Valentina - of ceramic artists. Blessings to all, they remain grateful for your continued support!

Read the current update via our GoFundMe Campaign.

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