

Que Pasa Grecia
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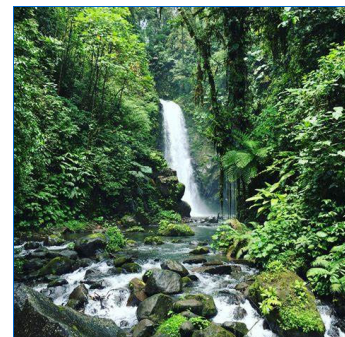
¿Qué Pasa?



Que Pasa Grecia Update #4 April 2025

What's New in Que Pasa Grecia

Since our last Update, we have someone heading back to the States and needs to sell her car: contact her friend, [Bertilla Baker](#). [Greg Thomas](#) has inherited two very cute dump-and-run puppies that need a home (see photo at right), we have an update on the lawn mower for sale, and 1-4 May Sarchi is hosting its first-ever Gastronomic Market Festival. For more info, please take a look on the [QPG website](#).



Miscellaneous

One Person on a Moto Law – There is a new law in Costa Rica aimed at addressing gang-related homicides. During specific days and hours in specific locations, it will be illegal to have two people on a motorcycle. It is hoped it will cut down on the killing of gang members and innocent bystanders in areas here. Gang violence has gotten out of control. I don't know, but that's what they say. We shall see.

Preparing for Disaster – As you have probably been able to smell, Poas volcano is acting up again. This time the park has been closed and an amber alert has been issued for much of Grecia canton and a part of Sarchi. With our volcanos, not infrequent earthquakes, increasingly violent rainstorms, gale-force winds, plenty of lightning, and sometimes lengthy power outages, we need to be prepared to leave our residences—sometimes in a hurry.

Get yourself a “go bag” and stuff it with the most essential things you'll need if you're forced to be away from home for a while (including computer, cell phone and chargers—and I'll also add a corkscrew). Know where your valuable papers (including an up-to-date contact sheet, bank account and utility info, and a password sheet) are located and be ready quickly to grab them in a hurry and stuff them in your go bag. Know your escape route to safety and have an alternate.

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.

With our apologies, some of the following section was written mid-week. With actions and events happening so rapidly in the U.S., some background, likely effects and suggested actions may already be partially out-of-date.

U.S. Government Changes Impacting Expats

Social Security - Here is some recent background regarding the Social Security Administration. Musk, who is leading the

Que Pasa offers articles on local places to go, helpful how-to's, and general observations of life in the Grecia/Sarchi area.

Click on the photo to visit our site!



This is a [direct link to a recording of the 4/4/2025](#) press conference with Ovsicori regarding the current status of the Poas eruption.



Two abandoned pups need a home PDQ!
Contact [Greg](#).



DOGE team's hunt for fraud and inefficiency, has said publicly that Social Security is the nation's biggest "ponzi scheme," and the SSA is "the big one to eliminate." A complete agency reorganization is underway, including a 12% reduction in SSA staff (about 7,000 employees) that has already taken place, and an incoming new director is expected to cut staff up to 50%. So far, most of the reduction in staff is at U.S. call centers and many computer systems I.T. staff are also gone. Understandably, SSA clients are concerned and are trying to get information. So many are attempting to gain info that call center hold times can be up to four to five hours and the SSA phone system and the SSA website crashed ten times in the last half of March. The outgoing, temporary SSA administrator has said these staff cuts will reduce the agency's efficiency in dealing with its clients by as much as 90% and has said to expect probable delays in the delivery of monthly benefit payments, at least, once in the next 90 days.

Instead of doing it over the phone as in the past, new SSA requirements just implemented in the U.S. force people who change the bank or financial institution where their monthly benefits are sent (or if their SSA account is flagged for some other reason) to be required to make an appointment and visit an SSA office to prove their identity before their account will be reinstated. We don't have that option as expats residing in Costa Rica. Your editor has investigated and can find no mention or information of how expat Social Security recipients will be impacted by these new rules, or by the staffing and services cuts at SSA.

Please assume that we all will be impacted by these SSA reductions just as U.S. SSA clients are being impacted. God forbid it comes to pass, but I suggest that, just in case, you immediately begin to put away as much as you can into a "rainy day fund" in the event that your monthly Social Security benefit payment is interrupted for days, weeks or even a month or more, Until you hear otherwise, do not change the bank where your monthly benefits are deposited. And as non-U.S. residents, we are already required to register (SSA forms 7161 & 7162) to prove that we are still alive every two years with the SSA or have our benefits terminated—and they will be terminated until our response is received. This process is not likely to go away or get any easier going forward.

The U.S. Embassy Costa Rica website currently states that the FBU, Federal Benefits Unit (direct number: 506 2519-2228),

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at the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, will continue to assist its citizens with Social Security issues, or other administrative issues with the U.S. government. If you miss receiving a benefit payment, or have other SSA problems, contact the FBU or the SSA directly via a personal and secure login by registering at [Login.gov](https://login.gov). Experts advise that you: 1. keep a record of any contact (date/time of contact, who you spoke with, and what was said); and 2. once into your personal SSA account, you make copies of your personal SSA records. If your editor becomes aware of any changes in the SSA situation that could impact receipt of benefits for expats, QPG will attempt to alert our subscribers ASAP.

Tariffs and the Cost of Living. - On 2 April, the U.S. president started a global trade war by imposing tariffs on the entire world (including Costa Rica). For most countries, the levies will be 10% and rise up to 50 percent on top of existing tariffs. A 25% tariff on autos and auto parts imported from any country also went into effect. The Wall Street Journal describes these tariffs as taxes on the U.S. consumer. It is unclear if this is just an opening gambit on the part of the White House to start trade negotiations, or if these tariffs will stay in place. All-inclusive tariffs and global trade wars have historically not ended well for consumers and national economies bringing on major recessions and the Smoot-Hawley tariffs enacted by the U.S. were a major cause of the Great Depression.

Whether or not all-inclusive tariffs make sense in today's global manufacturing and supply chain is questionable. The intent of these tariffs is to encourage manufacturers around the world to build factories in the U.S. and build their products in America and revitalize U.S. manufacturing. However, for comparison: auto workers in the U.S. make \$70/hour (with all costs and benefits included) - auto workers in Mexico make \$6/hour. In today's diversified global economy, it is difficult for your editor to see how manufacturing based solely in the U.S. could ever cut enough costs to manufacture competitively priced products for the U.S. let alone for the international marketplace. There have already been retaliatory tariffs from China of 34% on all products imported from the U.S., and the president has promised to respond with his own retaliatory tariffs on those tariffs on 9 April.

If the global tariffs hold for any period of time, the price for consumables, raw materials, components, and finished goods in the U.S. will rise. These materials may even become



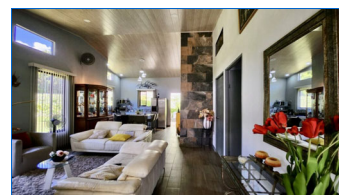
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New Real Estate listings in Atenas!



We continue to highlight **DUO**, a CR non-profit dedicated to education and assistance in suicide prevention. They

unavailable. For instance, the U.S. gets most of the soft pulp it needs to make toilet paper and paper towels from Canada. In a retaliatory move to the tariffs imposed on their country, Canada has prohibited the sale of this pulp to the U.S., which will make production of enough of these important paper products impossible and/or extremely expensive.

Those of us living in Costa Rica can expect to pay more for just about everything we buy coming here from the U.S., especially products with any content from or manufacturing done outside the U.S. For example, private label products like Equate at Walmart or Members Selection at Pricemart that have content originating outside the U.S. will be more expensive. We should also expect everything we buy on Amazon and ship down here from the U.S. will cost more, especially imported items. And, since the price of new cars for sale in the U.S. will rise by thousands of dollars, we can assume in the U.S. there will be more demand for used cars, which means used cars will be more expensive including those imported to Costa Rica. Costa Rica's economy may be somewhat impacted as its exports to the U.S. will be more expensive and demand for them may fall.

Besides China and Canada, other nations have or will also retaliate to U.S. tariffs by buying products and materials typically purchased from the U.S. from some other source, which has already devalued the dollar globally and is likely to continue to destabilize it. Also in retaliation to U.S. tariffs and threatened tariffs, China, Canada, Japan, Germany, and France are off-loading their U.S. Treasury bonds in favor of gold and Euro-bonds. This should also have a destabilizing effect on the dollar against other currencies, which might further reduce the dollar's exchange value with the colon. (Plan for your dollars to buy even less than they do today.)

With tariffs remaining at a high level across the board, corporate earnings will shrink and economic conditions will stagnate. It is highly likely that the U.S. will rapidly move into recession territory. The U.S. has unemployment on the rise, which is happening as corporations lay off employees due to the outlook of lower earnings caused by tariffs and retaliatory economic policies, and over 200,00 federal employees and federal contractors have already been fired, taken the early "retirement" offer, or placed on leave. Annual inflation remains at 3.5% and Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell says if tariffs remain in place inflation may be moving higher. Not only will America be in a recession but also approaching a

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Help Aldair Fight Leukemia:

Update: Aldair has been under the weather the past 2 weeks with fever and body inflammation, so the dental surgery is still postponed. His family is worried - his chemo is done in Sept which is good... but a friend from

state of stagflation (heightened inflation, stagnant economic growth, and elevated unemployment) and as America goes, the rest of the world, including Costa Rica, has typically followed.

Retirement Savings – Rising unemployment, rising inflation, foreign policy and economic policy changes, changes made to U.S. government departments and federal staffing cuts, significant political volatility, previous tariffs implemented and then rescinded and then re-implemented have created major uncertainty in the U.S. stock market. The market doesn't like uncertainty and has officially transitioned from a bull market to a bear market. The just-added new global tariffs have sent the U.S. stock markets into a record-setting tailspin.

Those of you with personal U.S. retirement accounts invested in U.S. stocks or stock funds have seen the valuation of your assets diminish. It is uncertain how much more the market will fall or how long it will take just to recover your losses from the market downturn, but now you will see, if you have investments in the stock market that your retirement nest egg is smaller. I suggest that you look at making adjustments accordingly in your retirement budgets and also make other financial contingency plans to protect your remaining assets.

Traveler Safety - In the area of foreign affairs, the U.S. administration is still courting Vladimir Putin at the expense of our traditional European allies. One bit of fallout from the U.S.-Russia relationship among our former allies in Europe and elsewhere is that the valve to the information pipe for sharing security information with the U.S. will likely be turned down or turned off completely. (The recent Signal Chat Group debacle will only exacerbate the situation.) This will create weakened security for virtually every American living both inside and outside of U.S. boundaries. It is likely that security and travel alerts issued by U.S. embassies will not be as frequent or as credible.

Medical Research, Environmental Research, Global Health and Vaccines – A number of departments at the HHS are among the world's foremost medical, scientific and environmental research centers in the world. The doctors, scientists, technicians, and staff from these centers have just been fired. An expert and former leader from this segment is saying that if these personnel cuts stand, it puts the research to date, future advances in medical science and world health

chemo appointments, his age, recently died, and his mother is worried sick. We will keep you posted here and via the GoFundMe campaign. Thank you to everyone that is helping!

<https://gofund.me/9d2c568e>



Blooms invites you to get social! Monthly meetings in the Western Central valley.



at risk for years to come. There is no one left in these departments to save the lab samples and data. Years of research and potential advances against such things as bird flu and tropical diseases will be lost. This has a high probability of having a negative impact on all of Latin America. In addition, the U.S. has ended its program of providing vaccines to third-world countries as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic here in Costa Rica. This will impact Costa Rica should an outbreak of COVID or another epidemic occur in Central America, Costa Rica will need to look elsewhere for vaccine funding support.

USAID - A judicial order to reinstate the USAID agency's employees does not appear to have taken place. We will see how much of this impacts Costa Rica. We have been told that Costa Rica USAID employees have received a directive from the State Department to not attend fundraisers or associate with Costa Rica charities even on their own time.

Immigration - Immigrant deportations directly to Venezuela have resumed. In addition, 200 supposed immigrant gang-members from Venezuela were rounded up, shackled, loaded on planes and sent to El Salvador's notorious prison and the largest prison in Central America, all without any due process. It appears that all it took to get these young men deported as a Tren de Aragua gang member was to have a tattoo of any sort. It has become clear that, at least, some of those deported had no criminal record, were family men, and one even has been identified as a professional soccer player sporting a tattoo of his favorite team. The administration has since admitted to making an "administrative error" that sent a legal El Salvadoran immigrant to that prison. Your editor is very concerned, because some of these same procedures and this prison destination are being advocated for U.S. legal residents and even U.S. citizens, who take a position against the administration. I don't think this is trivial, and worry that any of us, no matter where we reside, speaking out or suddenly becoming visible could be victimized by a system that no longer honors due process—a crucial and fundamental element of our democracy.

"Pasar la noche en blanco."

Literal translation: to spend the night awake.

Common meaning: I couldn't sleep last night.

***Thank you Isabel Arguello for your continuing
contributions.
Isabel teaches Spanish and does translations.
Find out more about Isabel on the
[QuePasaGrecia](#) website.***

Pay attention,
D. Davis, editor
Diane Cooner, webmaster

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