

Que Pasa Grecia
Serving the Expat Community since 2014

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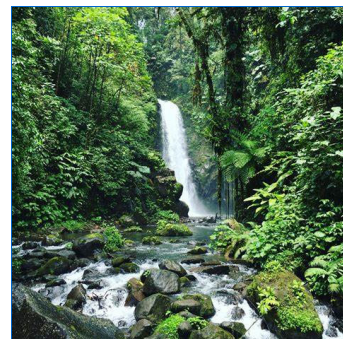
¿Qué Pasa?



Que Pasa Grecia Update #5 May 2025

What's New in Que Pasa Grecia

Since our last Update, we have a contemporary chair for sale; a new rental listing for a fully furnished house with two air-conditioned bedrooms in Grecia and a three-bedroom, two-bath furnished house in a small, secure community in Sarchi becoming available on 7 May ([contact Brooke Bishop](#)). Also, we have new Atenas real estate listings. This is the first year of a gastronomic event, Mercadito, in Sarchi running through Sunday, 4 May. Go check it out. We also have sad news: Adios, Espiritu Santo



Coffee Tour in Naranjo!!! If you haven't been before or want to go again, hurry. It's a wonderful experience and **they are closing for good at the end of May**. Vera, Karen, Ronny and Jose, hoping you land on your feet. For reservations: 4104 0552.

Miscellaneous

Costa Rica Tightens Its Prison Model – Costa Rica, now experiencing a dramatic increase in violent cartel/gang crime (homicides in 2024 were at a record high of 17.2 per 100,000), will adopt stricter prison policies modeled after El Salvador. Inmates in the country will have the number of conjugal visits reduced and family visits will drop from weekly to monthly. There will be increased limits on delivery of personal items, and daily phone calls will be reduced to 10 minutes. For the high-security prison population, reallocation of cell spaces will allow an increase from 80 to 1,000. However, Costa Rica claims that incarceration emphasis will remain on inmate rehabilitation.

Ever striving to cut costs, the Chaves administration in Costa Rica worked a deal with the Bukele government in El Salvador to copy the plans and incarceration techniques of the CECOT prison. Chaves estimates that using these plans will save the country \$25 million in the construction of a new prison for 5,000 inmates. Costa Rica is planning to build the mega prison in the space of 195-days to help deal with the rising violent, drug-related gang crimes. Let's hope that the horrific conditions of El Salvador's CECOT and the lack of due process those prisoners suffer are also not duplicated here.

Poás Volcano – Poás is acting up more severely than in recent years. Lots of nasty ash, dust and acids are being thrown miles into the air. And what goes up must come down. To keep the paint and chrome on your vehicle protected, keep it in a garage or under a cover and hose off the acid and ash on the vehicle and around your house frequently. Amber and red alerts have been issued for much of Grecia, Sarchi and portions of other nearby cantons. Track the volcano's activity online for alerts (on FB, [Ovsicori-Una](#)). To our readers: we advise that you keep the doors and windows closed and wear an N95 facemask when you are outside until the volcano's activity subsides. The adverse physical results of over exposure to these conditions can be severe.

The grit and ash can be serious stuff for all things mechanical. For instance, if you are having difficulty starting your car, it may not be a mechanical issue. It may be volcanic ash or grit in something

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!**



Spectacular photo of the April 23, 2025 eruption of Poas, at 5:14 a.m. Ash and sulfur gases are real issues. [Click here to see Red Cross recommendations](#) for self-care (in Spanish!). Don't forget your pets need care and protection, too.



[Comfy Chair for Sale!](#)

like your car's starter. Air filters are another item that should be checked. A good, careful cleaning may solve your problem.

Traffic – Have you been wondering if there are more cars on Costa Rica's roads? Here are some facts about our roads and the vehicles using them. Costa Rica ranks as the second-worst country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ([OECD](#)) for transportation infrastructure quality among its 38 member nations, coupled with the highest number of vehicles in Central America. Between 2015 and 2022, the number of vehicles in Costa Rica grew by 402,591, totaling a whopping 1,748,935 by 2022. We all know that the number of vehicles has grown noticeably since the study was completely three years ago. The addition of new roads and improvement of roadways has not kept up with the demands of the increasing numbers of vehicles.

There is a new funded national program to repair, renew and expand community bridges, and an \$800 million project to add 50 kms of railway with 46 stops. One of the culprits of the growing number of cars on the road is the desire to have the freedom of movement that car ownership provides in concert with recently introduced bank programs to promote new car loans to consumers, making car ownership available to a broader swath of Costa Ricans. Traffic congestion causes bad air quality, psychological issues and stress. However, as a native of California, reflecting on its history in dealing with more vehicles proves that it's not possible to make traffic better. You can only attempt to keep it from getting worse.

Scams – The U.S. isn't the only venue that prays on the trusting and vulnerable, particularly seniors. Scams are getting more sophisticated. You need to know that if someone is making unsolicited requests of your personal identification via email, in real time on your computer, over the phone, or even at your front door, chances are they are not legit. It is the policy of banks, financial institutions, and utilities not to ask for personal information over the phone. One caveat: we have confirmed that the Cruz Roja in the municipality of Grecia does solicit personal information for background use in future emergencies. To your editor, the info being requested door-to-door did sound a bit invasive, but it was confirmed to be legit.

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



Almost New Lawnmower - 16"!



For Sale - Beautiful home on a quiet street, 10 minute walk to downtown Grecia!



Your bank will NEVER call asking for your private information. Neither will Social Security or the IRS.

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

Social Security – There have been drastic cuts in the SSA staff and elimination of local U.S. offices with the threat of more cuts to follow. Wait times for Social Security call support is now tagged at 4-5 hours. We suggest trying the U.S. Embassy's Federal Business Unit (FBU) for assistance first, before attempting to call or go online as not only are hold times longer that the battery on your cordless phone, but the SSA website is still crashing frequently.

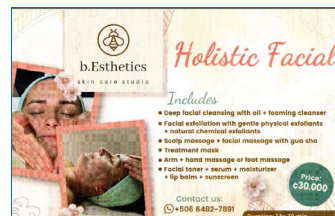
I don't think any of us U.S. expats have yet seen interruptions of our monthly SSA benefit payments. If this happens, please let us know at QuePasaGrecia.

Tariffs, Retirement Savings, and the Cost of Living – The impacts of 10% global tariffs imposed by the U.S. president (with 25% tariffs for Mexico and Canada, and 145% for China) are about to be experienced. The cost of what you order from Amazon for shipment here is likely to increase or may even become unavailable as countries, especially China, Mexico and Canada, hold back shipments to the U.S. due to these tariffs.

Many of us have already seen decreases in our retirement investment portfolios as the stock markets are down about 8% since the first of the year. Most economists are projecting a recession is likely. Also, the interest rates on U.S. Treasury bonds have been falling, which the U.S. government uses to finance its debt as China, Canada, Japan, Germany, France, and other countries are off-loading their U.S. Treasury bonds in favor of gold and Euro-bonds. This is weakening the U.S. dollar, which means the unpleasant exchange rate with the Costa Rica colon is unlikely to improve anytime soon.

As mentioned before, tourism here is in the tank (due primarily to the poor exchange rate of U.S. dollar and the increase in violent crime here). This is causing tourism industry business failures and layoffs, which is impacting Costa Rica's overall economy. Lastly, a 10% tariff has been put on everything Costa Rica exports to the U.S. This will likely translate into a decrease in business and a loss of income nationally due to higher costs.

An All-Inclusive National Database – A troubling result of DOGE's actions within SSA, the IRS, HHS, DHS, the Veteran's



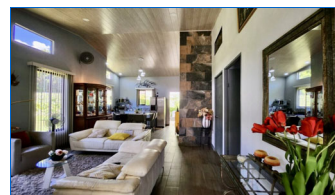
Treat yourself to a spa date! You'll thank yourself!



[Blooms invites you to get social!](#) Monthly meetings in the Western Central valley.



Natural Pest control that works, including assistance with those hungry red ants!



New Real Estate listings in Atenas!



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

Administration and a number of other federal agencies' databases is the creation of a master database built from all of these separate databases. These personal record databases have always been kept separate for privacy reasons. It is troubling that: 1. they have been merged at all; 2. who is keeping it or using it; and 3. why? Your editor thinks it's a bit "Big Brotherish" and is troubled that this information could now be used to intimidate citizens wherever they reside when in the hands of someone lacking a moral compass.

Environmental Research and Weather/Climate Monitoring – NOAA and the U.S. Weather Service have experienced severe cuts in personnel and services. These entities monitor weather systems in the western Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico and create models that predict severe weather systems that always have the possibility of impacting Costa Rica. We won't be able to rely on their predictions any longer. Virtually all of the studies, monitoring and regulating done by the EPA and other federal environmental entities are being defunded and their staffs fired. This will only accelerate climate deterioration and the onset of even more severe weather events worldwide while leaving the world population less-informed about the advance of climate change.

U.S. Travel - When travelling to the U.S., remember that the new secure I.D. program has been implemented for any and all domestic air travel. Unless you already have one of the new I.D.s, be sure when traveling in the U.S. to carry your passport at all times for the ability to check in for domestic air travel.

Medical Research, Monitoring, Global Health and Vaccines – During the past month, the department staffs of the HHS have been reduced and specific projects have been terminated. The U.S. National Institute of Health was the leading medical research entity in the world. This department has been dismembered and the research grants that it oversaw have been cancelled. Terminating this research will have a negative impact on health globally. 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 been fired and are trying to head elsewhere. Halted is research on such health issues as Alzheimer's, heart disease, addiction prevention, vaccine development, tropical diseases (specifically, bird flu), and many forms of cancer. The CDC has experienced big personnel cuts and global health alerts that we previously took for granted will no longer be forthcoming. Vaccine testing will now include placebos, even for well-established vaccines such as polio vaccines. This will

suicide prevention. They offer a monthly donation option, making it easier than ever to support their vital work. [Click here to read about](#) their services.



[Caribe Sinfónico asks for your support!](#)



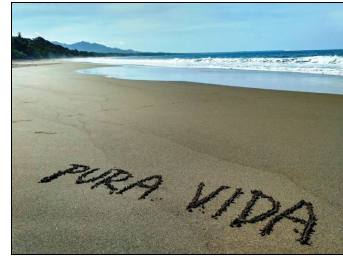
Help Aldair Fight Leukemia:

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 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>

considerably slow the availability of life-saving medications. In addition, the FDA has terminated its inspection program for E.coli and other viruses and contaminants. Products that were previously inspected will not be before they are distributed to the consumer. They will be exported globally including to Costa Rica, creating a new health risk that did not exist before.



Immigration and USAID – There is no new good or bad news on these fronts from what was previously reported.

"El hábito no hace al monje"

Literal translation: A person's appearance does not determine who he is.

Common meaning: Similar saying: You can't tell a book by its cover.

Thank you Isabel Arguello for your continuing contributions.

Dust off your umbrella,
D. Davis, editor
Diane Cooner, webmaster

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