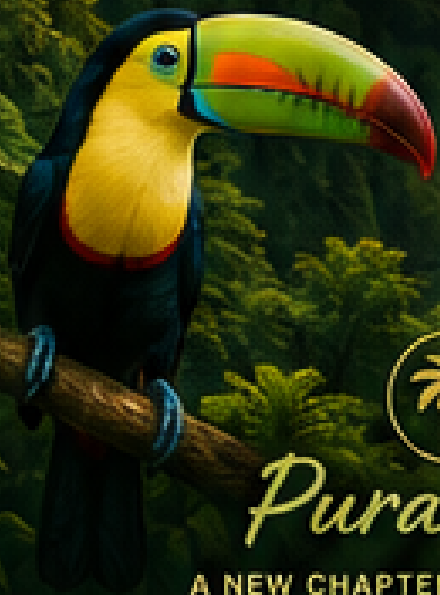


THINKING ABOUT
MOVING TO
COSTA RICA?
Start Here.

YOUR FREE COSTA RICA
RELOCATION STARTER GUIDE



Pura Vida

A NEW CHAPTER. A BETTER LIFE.

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WELCOME TO YOUR COSTA RICA JOURNEY

If you're reading this, there is a pretty good chance that somewhere in the back of your mind—or perhaps right in the middle of it—you have been thinking about Costa Rica.

Maybe you have visited and fallen in love with the country. Maybe you've watched one too many videos of people drinking coffee while looking at mountains and thought, "You know, I could get used to that." Maybe you're tired of the cold, the traffic, the stress, the endless political arguments, the rat race or simply the feeling that life is passing by a little too quickly.

Or maybe you're just curious.

Whatever brought you here, welcome.

Costa Rica has a way of getting into people's hearts. Sometimes it happens during a two-week vacation. Sometimes it happens while sitting in a little roadside soda enjoying a plate of Gallo Pinto. Sometimes it happens while watching a sunset on the Pacific coast, hearing howler monkeys in the distance or drinking a cup of coffee so good that you briefly consider changing your citizenship immediately.

Then comes the question.

"Could I actually live here?"

The answer for many people is yes.

But moving to another country is a big decision, and Costa Rica is not a fantasy island where every day consists of hammocks, toucans and people handing you fresh coconuts. Life here is wonderful, but like anywhere else, it involves paperwork, planning, budgets, decisions and occasionally discovering that the plumber who said he would arrive "mañana" had a very different interpretation of the word than you did.

The good news? You don't have to figure everything out at once.

This guide is designed to help you begin.

I've been involved with Costa Rica for more than two decades, and during that time I have watched thousands of people make the journey from "Wouldn't it be nice?" to "We actually live here!"

Some arrived with a detailed five-year plan. Others arrived with two suitcases and a dream.

Both approaches can work.

The key is getting good information, asking good questions and surrounding yourself with people who understand the road ahead.

So take a deep breath. Pour yourself a cup of coffee. And let's begin.

Pura Vida,

William "Skip" Licht

CHAPTER ONE: WHY COSTA RICA?

Costa Rica means "Rich Coast," and while there is certainly no shortage of beautiful beaches, mountains, rainforests and wildlife, many people eventually discover that the country's greatest wealth isn't something you can put in a bank.

It's the lifestyle.

Costa Rica offers people an opportunity to rethink what they want from life. For some, that means retirement in a warmer climate. For others, it means adventure, business opportunities, family time or simply the chance to slow down and appreciate what they already have.

Costa Rica has become known around the world for the phrase Pura Vida.

Literally, it translates to "Pure Life."

But it means much more.

It can mean hello. Goodbye. Everything is good. Don't worry about it. Life is beautiful. I appreciate you.

In many ways, it represents an attitude.

And for many people considering a move to Costa Rica, that attitude becomes part of the attraction.

They aren't simply looking for a different place to live.

They're looking for a different way to live.

CHAPTER TWO: DON'T MOVE TO COSTA RICA UNTIL YOU VISIT

Yes, I know. This sounds obvious.

But you would be amazed how many people become so excited about Costa Rica that they begin looking at houses before they have spent enough time here to understand what daily life actually feels like.

My advice?

Visit first. And visit with your eyes open.

Don't just stay at a luxury resort and assume that every day will feel like a vacation. Drive around. Visit grocery stores. Sit in traffic. Talk to expats and Costa Ricans. Visit different parts of the country. Ask questions.

Most importantly, imagine yourself living there.

What would you do on a Tuesday morning?

Where would you buy groceries?

How far would you be from healthcare?

Would you enjoy the weather during the rainy season?

How far would you be from an airport?

Do you want to live near the beach, in the mountains, in a city or in a small town?

Costa Rica is a relatively small country, but the lifestyles from one area to another can feel dramatically different.

Spend some time here.

And if possible, spend more time here than once.

Costa Rica isn't going anywhere.

CHAPTER THREE: WHERE SHOULD YOU LIVE?

This is probably one of the first questions people ask.

And the honest answer is: It depends.

Do you want warm weather all year? Do you want cooler mountain temperatures? Do you want to be close to the ocean? Do you want a large expat community or a more traditional Costa Rican environment? Do you want restaurants, shopping and nightlife nearby, or would you rather wake up surrounded by jungle?

There is no single "best place to live in Costa Rica."

There is only the best place for you.

The Central Valley attracts many people because of its climate, infrastructure and proximity to services. Beach communities along both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts offer dramatically different lifestyles. Smaller mountain towns can provide a quieter pace of life, while communities near San José can offer greater access to hospitals, shopping and professional services.

My advice is simple: Don't choose your new hometown from Facebook photographs.

Beautiful pictures are wonderful. They are also very good at hiding humidity, potholes, construction noise and the fact that the grocery store is 45 minutes away.

Visit. Explore. Stay in different areas. Talk to people who actually live there. Then decide.

CHAPTER FOUR: UNDERSTANDING LEGAL RESIDENCY

If you are considering living in Costa Rica on a long-term basis, understanding your immigration options is extremely important.

Costa Rica offers several immigration categories, and the best category for one person may not be the best for another. Common options can include categories such as Pensionado, Rentista, Investor, Family Relationship and other immigration pathways, depending upon your individual circumstances.

For example, Pensionado residency has traditionally been an option for people who can demonstrate qualifying lifetime pension income, while Investor residency may be available to people making qualifying investments. Requirements and procedures can change, so every applicant should verify the current rules before applying.

This is where many people make a mistake.

They spend weeks reading Facebook comments.

Please don't base a major immigration decision entirely on what someone named "BeachBob47" says in a Facebook group.

He may be a wonderful person.

But your legal residency is important.

Every person's circumstances are different. Income, investments, family relationships, work, travel history and other factors can affect the appropriate immigration strategy.

Get professional advice based on your specific situation.

Costa Rica can be an incredibly welcoming country, but immigration is still a legal process. Understanding your options before you begin can save you time, money and frustration.

CHAPTER FIVE: YOUR DOCUMENTS AND THE APOSTILLE PROCESS

One of the most important things to understand before moving is that many immigration and legal processes require documents from your home country.

Depending on your circumstances, you may eventually need documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, police background reports, proof of income or other supporting records.

Certain foreign public documents may need to be authenticated for use in Costa Rica.

For many documents originating in countries that participate in the Hague Apostille Convention, this involves obtaining an apostille from the appropriate authority in the country where the document was issued.

The process can become complicated because documents may come from different states, government agencies or jurisdictions.

One important piece of advice: Don't wait until the last minute.

Some documents may have time limitations, and the correct sequence of obtaining, certifying and apostilling documents can matter.

A little planning can prevent a great deal of stress.

This is one of those areas where working with people who understand the process can be extremely helpful.

CHAPTER SIX: HEALTHCARE AND INSURANCE

Healthcare is one of the most important things to investigate before moving anywhere.

Costa Rica has a public healthcare system administered by the Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social, commonly called the CCSS or La Caja. Costa Rica also has private hospitals, clinics, physicians and international and private insurance options.

Depending on your legal and personal situation, you may have different insurance obligations and options.

Don't make the mistake of assuming that your current insurance will automatically work in Costa Rica.

Before moving, ask: Will my existing policy cover me? What happens in an emergency? Do I have international coverage? Should I investigate private insurance? What healthcare facilities are available where I plan to live?

These are questions worth answering before you need an ambulance.

Costa Rica has excellent healthcare resources, but you should understand your options before making your move.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REAL ESTATE-BUY, RENT OR WAIT?

Costa Rica has beautiful real estate.

That is both good news and dangerous news.

Good news because you may eventually find a property you absolutely love.

Dangerous news because you may fall in love with it after two margaritas and begin mentally choosing curtains before you've investigated the title.

My advice for most newcomers is: Take your time.

Renting initially can give you the opportunity to experience an area before making a major investment.

If and when you decide to purchase property, work with qualified professionals and conduct appropriate due diligence.

Real estate should never be treated casually simply because the view is spectacular.

Understand what you're buying. Understand the title. Understand the zoning. Understand access. Understand utilities. Understand what can and cannot be built.

And understand exactly what your professional team is doing on your behalf.

Costa Rica can offer extraordinary real estate opportunities, but good decisions require good information.

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHAT WILL IT COST?

This is another question I hear constantly.

And again, there is no single answer.

Your cost of living in Costa Rica will depend heavily upon where you live and how you choose to live.

Someone living simply in a smaller community may have a completely different budget from someone renting a luxury condominium in a high-demand beach town.

Housing. Healthcare. Transportation. Food. Utilities. Restaurants. Travel. Private schools. Household help. Lifestyle choices. They all matter.

The best thing you can do is create a realistic budget.

Don't assume that everything in Costa Rica is inexpensive.

Some things may cost less than they do in your home country. Some things may cost more.

And imported products have an interesting way of reminding people that Costa Rica is not the same place they left.

Before moving, spend time researching the cost of the lifestyle you actually want—not the lifestyle described by someone who enjoys living completely differently from you.

CHAPTER NINE: SHOULD YOU BRING EVERYTHING YOU OWN?

Probably not.

I know that sounds strange when you're planning an international move.

But think about it carefully.

Before shipping everything you own, ask yourself whether it makes sense to bring each item.

Some people bring household goods, personal belongings and furniture. Others arrive with far less and purchase what they need after arriving.

Every situation is different.

Before making a shipping decision, investigate costs, import rules, storage requirements, timing and logistics.

The last thing you want is to spend a fortune moving things that you eventually discover you didn't really need.

And yes, I know your collection of 43 decorative snow globes may be very important to you.

No judgment.

I'm just asking questions.

CHAPTER TEN: WHAT ABOUT MY PETS?

For many people, moving without their pets is simply not an option.

The good news is that many people successfully relocate to Costa Rica with dogs and cats.

The process, however, requires planning.

Pet travel can involve airline requirements, veterinary certificates, vaccination records and Costa Rican import requirements.

Start researching early.

Airline rules can vary, and animal import requirements can change.

Don't wait until a week before departure and suddenly discover that your dog has become the project manager of your entire relocation.

Plan ahead.

Your furry family members will thank you.

Probably by staring at you until you give them a treat.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: BANKING, MONEY AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

Moving to another country requires careful financial planning.

Before making the move, think about: How will you receive your income? Where will your money be held? What banking services will you need? What cards will you use? What happens if you need emergency access to funds? How will you handle currency conversion? What are your tax obligations in your home country and Costa Rica?

The tax question deserves special attention.

Do not assume that moving to Costa Rica automatically eliminates tax responsibilities somewhere else.

Tax obligations depend upon many factors, including citizenship, residency, income sources and applicable laws.

Speak with qualified tax professionals who understand international situations before making major financial decisions.

A good relocation plan considers not only where you want to live, but how your financial life will work once you get there.

CHAPTER TWELVE: LEARNING TO LIVE THE PURA VIDA WAY

Here is something that may surprise you.

Moving to Costa Rica will not automatically make you happy.

I know. I should probably be arrested for saying that.

Costa Rica can offer beauty, adventure, friendship and an extraordinary quality of life.

But you are still you.

If you were impatient before moving, you may eventually become impatient while sitting behind a tractor on a narrow country road.

If you worried about everything before moving, you may find new and exciting things to worry about in Costa Rica.

The real magic happens when you allow yourself to learn from the culture around you.

Slow down. Be flexible. Laugh more. Appreciate the little things. Talk to people. Spend time outside. Watch the sunset. Drink the coffee.

And understand that life doesn't always have to be a race.

That's where the Pura Vida philosophy comes in.

It isn't about pretending that everything is perfect.

It's about deciding to appreciate what is good.

And there is a lot of good here.

THE BIGGEST MISTAKES TO AVOID

The first mistake is trying to do everything too quickly.

The second is believing everything you read online.

The third is making major financial or real estate decisions without proper professional guidance.

The fourth is moving somewhere because someone else told you it was "the best place."

And the fifth is failing to prepare financially.

Costa Rica can be an incredible place to live, but preparation matters.

Take your time. Ask questions. Verify information. Visit different areas. Talk to qualified professionals.

And remember that making a good decision does not mean making a fast decision.

YOUR COSTA RICA RELOCATION CHECKLIST

Before moving forward, spend time thinking about your answers to these questions.

- Why do I want to move to Costa Rica?
- Have I spent enough time in the country?
- Have I visited the areas where I might live?
- Do I understand my possible immigration options?
- Have I identified the documents I may need?
- Do I understand the apostille process for those documents?
- Have I investigated healthcare and insurance?
- Have I created a realistic budget?
- Do I understand my banking and financial needs?
- Have I thought about taxes?
- Have I investigated how to relocate my pets?
- Do I know whether I should rent before buying?
- Have I connected with qualified professionals?

You don't have to answer every question today.

You simply need to start.

YOUR NEXT STEP

If you've made it this far, I have a feeling you're seriously thinking about Costa Rica.

Maybe you're planning a visit. Maybe you're thinking about retiring. Maybe you're considering buying property. Maybe you're trying to understand legal residency. Or maybe you're simply looking for a different kind of life.

Whatever stage you're in, remember this:

You don't have to do everything alone.

After more than 20 years of promoting Costa Rica and helping people navigate their journey, I understand that moving to another country can feel both exciting and overwhelming.

My goal is to help you find good information and point you toward people and resources that may help.

This is the beginning of the Trusted Costa Rica Network.

One place to start. One connection at a time. And one simple goal: Helping you move forward with greater confidence.

Need help with Legal Residency?

Need assistance with Apostilles and Documents?

Thinking about Real Estate?

Looking for Insurance or Other Important Services?

Just beginning your Costa Rica journey?

Let's start the conversation.

Important Note: This guide is intended for general educational purposes and is not legal, immigration, tax, financial or insurance advice. Requirements and laws can change. Always consult qualified professionals regarding your specific situation.

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