

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

The World is Talking about Costa Rica.

"...For decades the remote Pacific Coast of northern Costa Rica - the Guanacaste province - was the domain of die-hard surfers and backpackers, with other visitors deterred by the grueling five-hour drive from the country's main airport in San José. But in the last few years, Guanacaste has been transformed by a collection of hotels and real estate developments aimed at America's affluent baby boomers. All up and down the coast, bulldozers are at work. Three major developments, including a project anchored by a Four Seasons hotel, are

already selling luxury condominiums for \$500,000 and up, and hundreds of smaller, more speculative endeavors are also breaking ground. The airport in Liberia, the capital of Guanacaste, is at the center of the transformation. Three years ago, when the first direct flights from the United States landed, only 50,000 people a year arrived there. In 2005, 300,000 did."

New York Times
February 3, 2006

The Beach Times
April 7, 2006

"...Developers are in discussions with at least ten major hotel chains who want to build high-end accommodations on beachfront land along the northern Pacific coast. The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, the Hilton Hotels Corporation, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, Regent International Hotels, the Starwood Group's St. Regis Hotels, Rosewood Hotels and Resorts, Aman Resorts International and the JW Marriott are all vying for beachfront land. Most are planning up-market, five-star hotels and resorts, which would relieve the region's room shortage and create thousands of jobs..."

"...Legions of retiring baby boomers, troubled by the high cost of living-and aging-at home, are venturing far south of Florida and Arizona to make their golden years extra mellow. Although places like Playa del Carmen and Cancún in Mexico have long been retirement havens, ever venturesome boomers are settling deeper into Central America, lured there as much by the laid-back ethos as by the lush forests and beckoning beaches.

Costa Rica alone, according to the foreign-retiree association Casa Canada in San José, plays host to 50,000 Americans. Savings still go far in Central America. 'I know people who live here on less than \$1,000 a month,' says Sadlier. Even in tonier Costa Rica, \$1,500 buys monthly comforts (including \$150 for a full-time housekeeper)..."

Time Magazine
Sunday, March 19, 2006

"...Costa Rica's economic performance has been strong over the past 18 months, with growth higher than expected, reports the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In an August 3 statement, the IMF said Costa Rica's vibrant economy is the result of sound economic policies, strong external demand, and favorable conditions in international capital markets. The IMF said Costa Rica's 'spending restraint and improved revenue collections have contributed to the lowest public sector deficit in a decade.' While inflation in the country has remained in the double digits, Costa Rica's 'near-term' economic outlook remains favorable, the IMF reported. For 2006, the country's gross domestic product is expected to increase by 6.5 percent, while inflation is likely to remain at 12 percent. The IMF said, however, that Costa Rica's economic outlook is not 'without risks as a cooling of the U.S. economy or a further increase in [global] oil prices could adversely' affect economic activity."

**Bureau of International Information Programs,
U.S. Department of State
May 9, 2006**

**Los Angeles Times
March 18, 2006**

"...The crates that leave this Central American nation these days are more likely to be stuffed with microchips and telecom components than the bananas that once represented Costa Rica's plantation economy. With little fanfare, Costa Rica has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in investment from some of the best-known names in technology, including Intel Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co. and Microsoft Corp. Medical device makers and pharmaceutical companies are sprouting in the tropical heat. And the nation is becoming a hub for call centers and back-office outsourcing... Costa Rica's big

prize, however, was Intel. The chip maker opened an assembly and testing plant in Costa Rica in 1998, after a huge recruitment effort that included then-president Jose Maria Figueres... Today, Intel has grown to be Costa Rica's largest high-tech employer, with 2,900 workers. English conversations float through the carpeted halls and uniform cubicles of the firm's gleaming campus outside the capital. Except for the rice-and-bean dish gallo pinto served in the company cafeteria, one would be hard-pressed to distinguish the facility from one in Silicon Valley."

"...The Hyatt Hotels and Resorts chain became the second major hotel group to confirm it was moving into Guanacaste, with the announcement this week of a 214-room resort and spa in Brasilito. Phase one of what will be known as Hyatt Regency Azulera Resort and Spa will be built on 225 hectares (557 acres) just north of the town of Brasilito and will include an 18-

hole, Greg Norman-designed golf course. In what is described as a first for Costa Rica, the entire \$100 million dollars for the first phase of construction will be funded by four Costa Rican banks in a deal brokered by the New Jersey-based, Global Financial Group. However the entire project, built over five to seven years and including the resort, 100 condominiums, up to 240 villas around the golf course, an unspeci-

fied number of single dwelling homes, a spa, gymnasium, six restaurants, a banquet room seating 350, various salt and fresh water swimming pools and a commercial centre, is likely to cost closer to \$200 million..."

**The Beach Times
May 19, 2006**

**Continental Airlines
Magazine
November, 2006**

"...Costa Rica, with just 0.03 percent of the world's total land mass, holds approximately 6 percent of its biodiversity, a truly stunning number. In addition, about a quarter of Costa Rica's land lies within a national park or some other protected area. The opportunity to hike, swim, and ride horseback alongside plants and animals found nowhere else has been a big lure to visitors. And it's helped to fuel a real estate boom."

Frommer's Costa Rica 2006

"...The northern zone, roughly defined as the area north of San José, between Guanacaste province on the west and the lowlands of the Caribbean coast on the east, is a naturalist's dream come true. Slight changes in elevation create unique microclimates and ecosystems throughout the region. There are rainforests and cloud forests, jungle rivers, mountain lakes, lowland marshes, and an unbelievable wealth of birds and other wildlife..."

"...The United States values its relationship with Costa Rica and reaffirmed its strong support for the country at the May 8 inauguration of President Oscar Arias, according to U.S. first lady Laura Bush. Oscar Arias first served as Costa Rican president from 1986 to 1990, winning the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end civil wars in Central America at the time. He ran for president again in February, won the election, and assumed office on May 8. The first lady led the U.S. delegation to his inauguration. "Today I had the opportunity to convey to President Arias the United States' strong support and partnership with Costa Rica," she said. "We have a history of a long friendship, and I'm very, very happy to have been the one to get to give him the very best wishes of the American people." In an interview with Costa Rica's Channel 7, the first lady

cited the values shared by the United States and Costa Rica. "The relationship between the United States and Costa Rica is very important; it's very important to the United States," she said. "We respect the country of Costa Rica for its long democracy, its emphasis on education, and other values that are important to us, as well, in the United States." In subsequent remarks as she prepared to depart from the country, the first lady added that Costa Rica continues to serve as a model of the benefits of democracy. "Costa Rica is still a democracy that's an example for the world," she said. "Costa Rica's democracy shows every country that if you have strong democratic institutions, it leads to the best for the people of that country."

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