

## Why Retirees Are Choosing Costa Rica's Rainforest Villages: The Essential, Animalistic, and Affordable Everyday Life You Never Asked For.

James and Carol were not your usual retirees. Instead of retiring, they had not planned to even stop working at that age. They came to Hawaii from Southern California where the couple had raised their families; he worked in high-tech and she in finance and they planned to spend their retirement in a secluded oceanfront home. That was until a week's visit to Costa Rica turned their world around. But, two years from now, they're sitting on a porch, sipping coffee while watching scarlet macaw in Osa Peninsula and the smell of the tropical flowers. "Well, this was never the idea," James mimes the air quotes and chuckles, "but the jungle sucked us in and we can't get out now."

### Costa Rica's Jungles: Not Just for Tourists

But Costa Rica's rainforest is not exclusively for tourists and adrenaline hunters. More and more, they're turning into retirement and expat communities where people desire a slower, more grounded existence, a better climate, and lastly, an affordable way of life. As the coastal areas of Tamarindo and Jaco draw travelers with their waves and sand, the province's interior has many secrets that allow you to live right in the middle of the jungle having all the amenities you need.

For instance, the Osa Peninsula. The rainforests found in this region are dense, full of life, and, in large part, still unexplored because it is reputed to be one of the richest areas in terms of biological diversity in the entire world. Within them are these districts reserved for the expat population that is integrated to a large extent with the environment. More and more retirees are starting to leave behind the paved trails to the beach and take up residence in cheaper and less congested jungle towns.

"They say you get used to it – the notion of waking up to the roar of howler monkeys instead of noises of traffic and horns was enough," Carol says. In other people's mouths that might sound trite but, for us, it was perfect: "We'd had enough of the rat race."

### Why the Jungle? The Financial Case

Let's talk about costs. One would expect that living in such an active, biologically charged environment would be expensive, but it is not. "We are cutting thousands monthly than what we used to use in California," adds James.

Here's how it breaks down:

1. Housing: Prices for property and land have remained quite modest, for example in the Osa Peninsula, one can find a bedroom house with land for \$ 100,000. Rentals? That's about \$500 to \$800 for a jungle getaway, in today's money. That is if you compare the price to what you

would expect to purchase a small flat in the United States, the numbers are considerably different. James and Carol bought a house with a nice yard that contains fruit trees and tropical plants and all this costs less than 150 thousand dollars. “We never thought we’d have this much space,” added Carol.

2. Utilities and Food: Electricity is a little more due to some rural homes having air conditioning, but homes in the jungles use fans, and electricity is inexpensive. Food is another advantage – half of the purchase is made in local markets and it is cheap. Hence, you are likely to spend around \$200 to \$300 every month to purchase fresh produce, fish, and meats sourced from local producers. “We’re blessed to have a banana tree in our compound,” Carol was cheerful to note. I remember this man saying: “Well, how much more local can you get?”

3. Healthcare: Now it is getting even better. First, Costa Rica has one of the best healthcare systems in the world, and, second, it is incredibly cheap. What is more, expats can become members of the national healthcare program, called Caja, paying only a few hundred US dollars per year. “We’re covered for everything, and the quality is amazing,” James says. For those people who are looking for health care that provides more immediate private care, private health insurance costs between \$60 and \$200 monthly. ‘Medical care – doctors, operations, everyday check-ups, etc. – is much cheaper than it is in the United States.’

#### Fitting into a Forest, Revisionist Style

Not all the jungle towns are suitable for every expatriate. The secret to getting the rainforest of Costa Rica to play to your advantage is location and this involves striking a balance between getting the most seclusion and at the same time within proximity of nature’s amenities. While James and Carol have chosen the lifestyle of a small remote thatch and grass village home, others are more comfortable with town proximity to such places as San Isidro or Liberia where there are International airports and modern facilities.

And when deciding on the place of living one must involve a real estate agent who is knowledgeable about these concealed jungle settlements. Carol offers this advice: “Don’t just look online. “Come here, get around, visit other regions and that is where you can discuss with people who have relocated here.” Most of the villages contain a limited number of foreigners who have friendly dispositions and would not hesitate to assist by providing or directing one to the right agent or a legal practitioner to assist in processing the residency.

#### Real Estate Tips:

Leverage local knowledge: Getting in touch with a local estate agent or fellow ex-pats will aid in the search for a perfect home for you in the jungle. Quite a number of the top options are not found on the internet.

Consider accessibility: Housing is beautiful If you live in the jungle, but what about access to medical facilities, grocery stores, and even transportation? This can be solved by select communities such as Atenas or San Isidro which are more javel-like but close to the comforts as the video presented.

Rent before you buy: But why don't you join the 'jungle' lifestyle first? Services are cheaper in the long run than buying making renting for a few months a good way to see if you want to live the lifestyle.

### Everyday Life in the Jungle

Despite that they live in the jungle they still have all the comforts. Indeed, it is commonly heard by retirees who move to the countryside that their lives are of a much higher quality as they get rid of stressful city life. James and Carol's typical day has become waking up early and going for a morning hike, going and having coffee routinely taken in the garden, and afternoons spent visiting waterfalls and or volunteering with wildlife conservation organizations. "We are busier now than ever we were in California" Carol quipped. And it is not the same kind of busy, which includes finding oneself trying to do more and more constantly. It's meaningful."

Here's a reality check: But, of course, life in the jungle is not without its peculiarities; I mean, no one has complained about the way they lead their life here. It will be entirely normal to share your living space with bugs, many of them, and sometimes, quite sluggish motion. It is also recommended to accept the local environment that in some countries is greatly contrasted with the Western world's mentality where time is money. "Tico time is real," James reminds me, laughing, this is a phrase that is common to Costa Ricans – everyone here works slowly, and no one is concerned with time. "But honestly, after a few months to be in that position, you start to develop a love for it."

### A Welcoming Expat Community

What many people do not realize is that the towns located close to the jungle in Costa Rica are not strictly for handicapped or lone travelers. Most of them are established in highly developed zones such as Central Valley's Atenas or the mountain zones around Arenal. Fresh vegetables at a farmer's market, with neighbors at a dinner party, on a bicycle there are so many ways to be social. "We have been able to make friends with more people here than what we used to make in the States," Carol says. "I think everybody wants the same – to find love, to be calm, and to improve the quality of life."

The best part? On this topic, one needs to say that Ticos, the people of Costa Rica, are rather hospitable. Although everyone speaks Spanish as the national language, many people, especially in areas that have many foreigners living in, understand English. And for those who want to go the extra mile, knowing little Spanish does make a difference in terms of improving your relationship with your neighbors.

## A Happier and Heftier Retirement

One thing almost every expat in Costa Rica will tell you: It is claimed that one is healthier if living in the region. Strange enough, it reminds me of fresh, organic food or perhaps a natural tendency to spend more time outside, the jungle is very revitalizing.

“Within six months of moving, says Carol, both he and she dropped pounds, felt increased strength, and maybe most importantly—just felt happier. “That’s the reason why it is really difficult to be sad surrounded by such lovely things.”

And then there is the stress factor. Or rather, the lack of it. This together with the laid-back atmosphere in Costa Rica can help reduce stress a great deal. For some time now, this particular worker confesses that he was a headache patient when he was in California. “The simple fact we’ve been living here no I have not had one.”

## Final Thoughts: Why the Jungle Is Worth It

Not everyone wants to live it up in Costa Rica’s jungles when they retire. It’s a chance of a lifetime for those who are looking for an extraordinary, natural, healthy, active, inexpensive lifestyle.

Ivy: You know, the jungle isn’t just a place Jim. “It’s a way of life. It is slower, richer, and more connected it was the kind of show I would feel most at home with. If you are tired of the mess and are willing to accept something more meaningful, then this place is probably precisely for you.

Carol also says, ‘Who for saw that we would be here today but now having been here we cannot consider living anywhere else.’