



**A Real Guide on Costa Rica  
Real Estate Property  
Tropisphere.com**

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# Costa Rica Real Estate: An Overview

Planning to buy a property in Costa Rica with a beach and a banana tree in the front yard, and a stable..? If yes, then you have spotted the right page. Costa Rica is one of the most wonderful and beautiful countries of the world. It has been seen that anyone who wishes to stay amidst great beauty chooses Costa Rica mainly due to its enchanting beaches, pleasant weather and also superb hospitality. In recent times a sudden increase has been seen in the buying and selling of **Costa Rica property** and at affordable prices.

Costa Rica has come a long way as it has lured various buyers and realtors from various parts of the world. Many people nearing retirement age prefer to stay amidst natural beauty as this gives them fresh air to breathe and also infuses them with fresh energy. Seeing today's trend you can say that Costa Rica properties are being sold like hot cakes in the market and every year more people are buying land and properties. According to international property analysts, the real estate market in Costa Rica is among the top five best growth markets. Costa Rica properties are becoming more popular among the people residing in different parts of the world mainly due to the natural beauty and also competitive property prices.

Despite being so popular, the majority of **Costa Rica property** is affordable in comparison to property prices in more developed countries. The main reason behind this is the lower population and also the peace and solace offered by Costa Rica. Many property dealers make sure that you get the best Costa Rica property so that it not only provides comfort and peace to you but also is a great investment. If you are looking to buy Costa Rica property then the internet is a great way to start shopping. Online you can find various websites and companies offering and providing the best and easily affordable Costa Rica property.

**Tropisphere** is one of the leading companies providing the best Costa Rica properties and at easily affordable prices. They make sure that you get your hands on the best property so that you can enjoy your investment to the fullest. Tropisphere encourages you to buy Costa Rica property as it has many beautiful beaches, forests, wildlife, and waterfalls. Since its an undeveloped country, property rates are still affordable, but rising quickly.

For more information on Costa Rica property, Costa Rica real estate agency, vacation rental in Costa Rica, **Costa Rica real estate** investment, Costa Rica condos, Costa Rica real estate for sale, Costa Rica vacation rental, Costa Rica real estate, beach house rental and vacation rental please visit [www.tropisphere.com](http://www.tropisphere.com). For information on the areas that Tropisphere serves, visit [www.malpaisbeach.com](http://www.malpaisbeach.com).

# How to Score a great deal in Costa Rica Real Estate

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By Geoff McCabe

Many people want something for nothing, and in the current real estate market, bargains have become scarce because there's no shortage of buyers. Many foreigners living here have discovered that the surest way to make a good living is to invest in real estate. While prices seem to be going up everywhere, obviously we all want a great deal. The best bargains fall into one of several categories:

- **Stupid or desperate sellers.** Sometimes sellers want money NOW and can't wait a few months to get the market price for their land, and will sell at a stupidly low price. Just a few months ago, one seller sold a large ocean view farm in Malpais for around \$7/m<sup>2</sup> when the value should have been \$20-30/m<sup>2</sup>. These types of opportunities are rare and when they come in they sell within hours or days, so check with your favorite realtors frequently. Have your money ready in a Costa Rican bank account and let your realtor know that you are ready to buy immediately when a good deal comes up, and tell him or her to call you first.
- **First lots in a development.** Often a person who is creating a development will sell 1-4 of the first lots at a reduced price in order to generate quick cash to pay for the roads, electric lines, wells, and water pipes. These deals are great and you should tell your realtor that you're interested if something like this comes up. Question him or her about upcoming developments and try to find out if you can buy a lot cheap by buying early. You can sometimes get the best lot doing this, making it easier to resell.
- **Unimproved land.** sometimes a seller is too lazy, doesn't have enough cash, is uneducated about the market, or is simply too stubborn to make a few simple improvements on a piece of land or house that would greatly increase the perceived value. For example, we have a great lot for sale now that has trees blocking much of the view. If the owner just trimmed some of the lower branches on the trees, the view would be opened up underneath them, creating a stunning panoramic view and the property would sell immediately. Most buyers make emotional decisions about whether they like a piece of land or not and this mostly has to do with the view. If you want a deal, think with your head, not your heart, and realize the potential a property may have, not what it looks like at the moment you're seeing it.
- **Access Issues.** There are areas nearby in which access is difficult. For example, the road between Cabuya and Malpais is an impassible, washed out, muddy mess throughout the rainy season, and few people would buy a property along parts of this road when they can't even drive to it. But, this road will eventually be improved and maintained year-round. Property values on this road are often cheap, so if you're willing to wait a couple years to have year-round access, then buy this land at a bargain now. There are several areas with bad access that have good prices. You can often even save enough on a piece of land that it makes sense to improve the road yourself.

- **Utility Issues.** By buying a piece of land that requires work and isn't easy you can save a bundle. Generally speaking, most buyers don't want a piece of land that doesn't already have public water and electricity. If you want a deal, don't think like most buyers. If you're willing to live off solar electricity and a well, then you can buy a property significantly cheaper, and wait for the utilities to come to you.
- **Pay Cash Now!** One great way to get a property cheap is to make sure you have all the cash ready in a Costa Rican bank. Then, offer to pay the money immediately for the property, rather than going through the usual escrow with all the delays. To do this, you either have to have a lot of guts, or just make sure you and your lawyer to all your homework on the property in advance before you make an offer. Some sellers will give you a great bargain if the entire amount will be in their hands in a day or two. In this case, you can also have the sales contract prepared in advance, and offer to drive the seller to the lawyer immediately to complete the sale, giving him or her little time to think about it and possibly change his mind about the price or whether they want to sell at all.
- **Buy away from the beach.** Everyone wants a property right by the beach or with panoramic ocean views, but you're unlikely to get a great deal by following the masses. Some of the land that has appreciated the fastest in the past two years is land that's 10-15 minutes from the beach. Some of this land has gone up 5-8 times in two years! Look in areas such as San Isidro, Santiago, Betel, or along the "Pura Vida Road" between Montezuma and Tambor to find cheap land with a short drive to the beach, lots of beautiful trees, a cooler drier climate, and at a much reduced price, and in a few years you'll see a huge jump in the value.
- **Make friends with Ticos.** There are several prominent and wealthy Tico families in the area who have grown rich selling their land and have more money than they'll ever need. Many still have extensive land holdings, and for them, quality of life and having great neighbors is more important than money. Get to know these people and they may sell you a small lot cheaply if they like and respect you.
- **Untitled land.** In the last issue of Que Pasa, I wrote about the dangers of buying IDA land. I certainly wouldn't recommend it, but people do it and sometimes get a great deal without losing all their money. There's another type of untitled land that you can buy, called "Informacion Posesoria." This class of land has been occupied by an owner for a long time without getting it titled. You can buy this land and build on it while waiting for a title, but you must get the signatures of the neighbors that border the land. If they contest the borders, it can end up in court for years. Generally, this land is much safer than IDA land to buy, but still not as safe as titled land.
- **Ask everyone you meet.** You can find a great deal in an unlikely place. from a taxi driver, a kid on the street, or a waitress. I pick up every hitchhiker I see and ask them about land. Sometimes you'll meet someone who has been thinking about selling but hasn't listed their property with realtors yet and will sell to you directly. Being shy isn't going to help you discover a great deal.

As you go about building your own personal real estate empire, please remember that if you're a foreigner living or investing here, you should act in a way that expresses gratitude to the Costa Rican people for allowing you to be here at all. Not every country allows foreigners to come in and buy up their most beautiful places. Act like the guest that you are. Find ways to give back to the community and work to protect and improve the environment, and your experience in Costa Rica will be richer and more rewarding. Tropisphere Real Estate donates 10% of all our commissions to local conservation organizations and social projects such as improving schools. If you have a successful business in the area, join us to help improve our community. Contact me to find out what you can do to help.

# Green Building

## In the Montezuma/Malpais Area

### Primary Considerations

- **Cooling Considerations** - power is already very expensive here and is expected to continue to go up. With all the development coming, we should build so that AC isn't required to keep a house or condo cool. The simplest way to do this is to make sure that air can easily flow through the house, by having sliding doors on both the front and back. Sliding screens can be added to keep out bugs, especially in the rainy season and at night. Screens block at least half of the airflow, but are worth it if your house is in a buggy area. Another good trick is to build a steep roof and orient the house so that the sun never falls on one side of the roof, keeping it forever in shadow and thus much cooler. Or do like Bergit, owner of Hotel Horizontes de Montezuma did - she designed a roof system so the breeze can easily blow underneath it, keeping both the roof and the entire building cooler. Another option is to build the roof an entire story higher, thus creating a huge loft on top of the house, which not only keeps everything cool, but adds more usable space to the house inexpensively. Rather than using a clothes dryer, consider building a sunroom like Jakob Bjerre did in his solar-powered house in Montezuma. Even on cloudy days, this sun-room is hot and dry, and rapidly dries clothes hanging on a line. His brilliant design also located the sun-room next to the solar power equipment and batteries, which used this extra heat generated by the system to heat the drying room.
- **Septic/Blackwater treatment** -You can do your own sewage treatment. Montezuma's Hotel Sano Banano has a \$10,000 system that services their restaurant and 12-room hotel and they claim it could also serve several more businesses around them. It's imported from Italy, and they claim that the water that comes out the other side is drinkable (not that they drink it.) Also, there are septic systems far superior to the cheap ones that are usually installed in our area. They cost a little bit more, but they're worth it. Adding a liquid bacteria called "EM", available at the local Cooperativa, in Cóbano aids in the process. Never use chlorine-based cleaners to clean toilets, because this toxic chemical kills the bacteria that are processing the blackwater waste in your septic system. Instead, use natural cleaners from Bioland, lemon-based cleaners, or vinegar. Hotel Aurora in Montezuma is doing this now and their septic system runs perfectly without any smells or seepage of toxins. Another option is to use an incinerating toilet, which turns blackwater waste into ashes, and has the side benefit of destroying any pharmaceutical chemicals that have passed through your body. These chemicals have been shown to have potentially harmful effects on wildlife in rivers and streams as they build up in the environment. Incinerating toilets are expensive (\$2000-\$3000 for electric or gas models), but they save money on water bills, and if you use them exclusively, you won't need to build and maintain a septic system at all.

- **Water Catchment** - Possibly the most important ecological consideration in the Malpais/Montezuma area of Costa Rica. A house can be designed to channel water from its roof and deck spaces into an underground storage tank, for use during the dry season. A tank can be designed so that it's built into a hillside, and the top becomes a grassy patio. It can also be designed so that it's next to your house, effectively becoming a "heat sink" to absorb the day's heat into the water, keeping your home cool. Water catchment is your best insurance policy against a water crisis that may result from unmanaged development, and is much cheaper than drilling a well. In many areas of the world, such as some places in the Caribbean, water catchment is considered the norm, and it should be in the dry forest areas of Costa Rica also. A tank can be built out of cement like a swimming pool, or large plastic tanks can be used. Visit the website **Agua Solutions** for more info. This company is in Liberia, Guanacaste province, and provides rainwater catchment solutions. How much rainwater can be captured by a roof? If it rains 100 inches per year, then a 200m<sup>2</sup> home can catch around 100,000 gallons.
- **Dogs/Cats** - Dogs are probably the worst destroyer of the local ecosystem. Normally, the area would have one family of coyotes for a thousand hectares or so. With hundreds of dogs introduced to the area, wild animals start avoiding these places and biological corridors stop being used, leading to inbreeding and eventual extinction. Large dogs kill many ground animals such as pizotes, foxes, anteaters, and even porcupines - sometimes dying themselves in the process. Dogs can be trained not to attack or threaten wildlife, but few owners have the skill, patience, or awareness to do so. "Man's best friend" has no place in the jungle.
- **Location** - much of the environmental benefit of trying to live a greener lifestyle is negated if the location is far from services, entertainment, and community. If one does not have to drive a long distance to buy groceries, go to the beach, or visit friends, then more energy will be saved. Such a lifestyle can be more rewarding as well. Thus the ideal location for a "green" house or development is close to town and the beach.
- **Reforestation** - Except for in the deepest, steepest river valleys, most of the jungle in the area had been logged out many decades ago, and the jungle that has grown back has been mostly common softwood trees that are easily spread by birds and bats. Consider planting native hardwood trees that are nearly extinct in the area. Seedlings should be planted near to the beginning of rainy season so their root systems will grow strong enough to keep the plants alive through their first dry season. These trees can be obtained for 500 colones (\$1) at Rainsong Wildlife Sanctuary in Cabuya. Visit their website **Rainsong Wildlife Sanctuary** to see a list of recommended native tree species. Please order your trees in advance so they have time to obtain them for you.
- **Xerascaping** - This is a simple landscaping concept that involves breaking your land into three zones. The first, and smallest, is an area for plants that need daily watering - usually near the house. The second, medium-sized zone, uses drought-tolerant plants that need only occasional watering, perhaps once a week during the dry season. The largest zone contains only native plants that never need to be watered.

- **Construction Materials** - One major consideration in sustainable development is using local materials. While Teak and Melina trees are not native species and both are usually grown as a monoculture, in many ways they are good options. They are grown in large quantities locally, and generally no pesticides or toxic chemicals are needed to preserve them from wood-eating insects. Cement isn't produced locally, but it's made in Costa Rica and is considered a non-toxic building material. Cement is a better option than wood because it lasts longer, requires much less maintenance, and has fewer spaces for bugs to live in. Living in the tropics, you will have many 6 and 8 legged "friends" in your house regardless of the materials you use, but with cement, you'll have fewer and can keep the bugs under control more easily without spraying poisons. Stucco - a good option for covering your walls is non-toxic stucco. As far as I know, there's only one chemical-free brand available in Costa Rica, **Manos Magicas**. For inside walls, consider using stucco that is shiny polished. This lasts much longer than paint and is much more easily cleaned. Low-maintenance construction is "greener".
- **Spend Locally** - a big part of green building is thinking about the effects on the community. Whenever possible, use materials that are not only produced locally, which reduces the energy needs of transporting them, but keeps the money spent in circulation in your area. Whenever possible, use subcontractors that are as local as possible. Spending locally reduces poverty and benefits everyone. For example, instead of buying towel racks from San Jose that are made in China, hire a local blacksmith to make them.

## Secondary Considerations

- **Appearance** - Use green and brown stuccos for coloring, and natural wood, or metal painted to look like wood, creating an almost invisible set of buildings that blends into the jungle and looks very luxurious and high-end as a result. A good example of this is how the Florsheims did their "Latitude-10" luxury beachfront bungalows in Santa Teresa. Choose building shapes that create natural shadows and aren't just big rectangles with flat sides.
- **Grey water treatment** - You can use a series of rocks, gravel, and sand ponds that can be part of the landscaping to clean the greywater. This water comes from showers, sinks, and kitchen, and the food particles and other organic material in the greywater can be beneficial to the environment if treated properly. Chemical and chlorine-based cleaners shouldn't be used for cleaning since these chemicals will go straight into the soil.
- **Solar Power** - may be a waste of money and overall isn't particularly good for the environment. The process of creating solar cells is very toxic, and it requires huge banks of lead batteries that have to be periodically changed and maintained. By using solar, you are essentially cleaning up your local area while polluting somewhere else. I've found that even a large expensive system sometimes won't power a clothes dryer or even a hair dryer. However, tens of billions of dollars is being poured into solar cell research right now by startup companies in Silicon Valley, and in a few years, we may see more efficient solar systems that are made by more environmentally friendly manufacturing processes. If you love solar and want to support the movement to encourage the technology, consider also a solar-assisted energy solution - your solar cells run without battery storage - they're on during the day to help power the refrigerator and a few essentials, and at night you run power from the lines. This saves you money and doesn't require all the lead batteries.

In addition, a new type of solar panel from a startup company called Soliant has been recently invented which is promised to be half the price of the best panels today. This amazing invention is supposed to be ready for residential use in 2008. For more information, click: **Cheap Solar Panels**. Within a couple more years, the company promises an improved model at 1/4 the cost. This makes the use of solar cheaper than regular electricity, and should be a huge benefit to the environment. Using these still requires the lead batteries, but these systems utilize far fewer of the solar cells themselves by reflecting more light onto them. This reduces the toxins created in the solar cell production.

Two good Alternative Energy Solutions to solar power can be obtained in Costa Rica: Windmills and micro-hydro. Micro-hydro will work if you have a small stream running on your property, and has the benefit of providing power 24 hours a day, rain or shine. It's cheaper and much less toxic than solar power, and if necessary, can be stored in battery banks like solar. Such systems need to be built into a very strong cement/stone box at the bottom of a nearby canyon, because they could be easily stolen.

- **Lakes and Ponds** - Build ponds or a small lake bordered by water plants and floating water hyacinth (which has beautiful pink flowers and prevents mosquitoes), stocked with tilapia fish. A lake will bring water birds such as white ibis and roseate spoonbill, jungle animals, and a cooling effect due to evaporation. Lakes can also help maintain the underground water table. Rain catchment systems can be set up to take water from the roofs of the buildings and run them into the lake, so they don't have to be filled by well water. Ideally, lakes should be built where a natural spring will keep them filled during the dry season. As an alternative, consider a seasonal lake that fills during the rainy season, and slowly evaporates during the dry season. The bottom can be lined with local red clay to help prevent seepage, or partially covered with plastic sheeting.
- **Ylang Ylang Trees** - Plant many Ylang Ylang trees, which stay green and flower all year, and have an amazing scent every day at dusk. They also have fruit all year. Having Ylang Ylang trees is like putting out feeders for birds and animals. They will become a destination spot for many rarely seen animals such as Kinkajous, four-eyed tree opossums, parrots, and toucans. Of course the Monkeys and other common species love them too. There is no better tree than Ylang Ylang for this area.
- **Refrigeration** - consider buying a Sun Frost or Sundanzer brand refrigerator. These amazing units are far more efficient than normal refrigerators. The Sundanzer is equivalent to a single 60 watt light bulb! **Sunfrost** or **Sundanzer**.
- **Lighting** - Outside lights should be shielded and oriented in such a way so the bulbs can't be seen directly, which would otherwise create an eyesore at night and attract bugs. Insects are part of the ecosystem and too much light pollution could have a bad effect on their population. Bugs are annoying in your house, but they are food for many of the other animals in the jungle, and also moths are very important for controlling vines. 70% of moth species have evolved their life-cycle around a single species of jungle vine, and they eat it and lay their eggs on it. Consider using compact fluorescent lighting, which saves money on bulbs because of their long life, and uses far less power. You can buy bulk packs of various sizes of these bulbs at Pricemart in San Jose. Most importantly, design your house so that less lighting is required, especially during the day. Adding skylights and clerestory windows, and using light colored ceilings, walls, and floors to reflect ambient light will make it so that you need few or no lights during daylight hours.

- **Butterfly/hummingbirds** - Planting the right type of flowering bushes will not only look beautiful, but will bring many butterflies and hummingbirds to the project. Having an in-ground butterfly garden is a good selling point. Having a lot of butterflies also brings more birds who eat the butterflies.
- **Herbs/gardens/orchards** - consider planting an herb/vegetable garden as part of the project, incorporated into the landscaping. Plants that grow very well here are basil, cilantro, chili peppers, and cherry tomatoes. Perhaps add some fruit trees - avocado, mango, lemon, lime, etc Some types of garden veggies, such as lettuces and spinach, will grow well here, but are devastated by grasshoppers and iguanas. You can keep away these pests by creating a greenhouse with walls and ceiling made from screen, and putting some plants above ground on tables. I've seen this working well even in the Osa peninsula. The screen also reduces the amount of sunlight, so the plants don't get burned by the intense tropical sun.
- **Electric Wires** - Too many monkeys and kinkajous have been fried on wires and transformers recently. Wiring should ideally be below ground, but this is very expensive and if you can't afford it, then above-ground wiring should have the TOP (hot) wire shielded with a rubber covering, and the transformer leads should be shielded with foam. This adds extra cost, but not much in the grand scheme of planning a whole development.
- **Nature Trails** - Even with all the wild jungle-covered places in the area, there are few places to go hiking. Developers in the U.S. have found that having trails for walking, jogging, or mountain-bike riding are the #1 amenity requested by potential homeowners. Consider building trails that are also suitable for night-hikes, so that people who want to see wild animals can look for them at night with flashlights, when they're most likely to be spotted.
- **Views** - Everyone wants breathtaking ocean, mountain, and valley views, but sometimes trees are blocking these vistas. Instead of removing trees, you can cut them shorter, effectively "banzai-ing" them - keep them trimmed short and they will grow horizontally. An even better option is to only cut the lower branches off, leaving a high canopy that provides shade. Both options leave the trees' root systems intact, which hold in the soil and prevent erosion from the hillside.
- **Green Shading** - consider using clever and innovative techniques to shade your house, both roof and walls, using plants. One concept is to put a metal grid next to the wall and let vines climb on it. Planting vines such as passion-fruit will give you beautiful flowers and organic fruit to eat. Such a grid can be mounted over the roof as well, and these can be incorporated into the design. Another option is to build a flat roof with a geodesic-dome type structure on top, creating a ceiling of plants and a shady green space underneath. Such structures are also fun because you can easily hang lights and décor from them, creating a very magical rooftop space.
- **Soil Maintenance** - Erosion, mulching, chemical free. Steps should be taken to prevent erosion of the soil on the property but making sure there's a good living ground cover, or a mulch to keep the soil from washing away from heavy rains. A good groundcover is mani (peanut) grass, which also has pretty yellow flowers. Its root system holds tightly onto the soil, and is especially useful in steep areas. Mani grass is available everywhere and can be obtained for free
- **Construction Site** - A well-organized construction site will reduce waste. Burning leftover wood releases large amounts of CO2 into the atmosphere, so waste wood that can't be used for anything can be buried, or left in a pile to decompose naturally. Sawdust can be used as mulch in the garden.

# A New Market: Real Estate & Carbon Trading

By Andrea Drost

Tropisphere was happy to hear that Costa Rica intends to become the first carbon-neutral nation by nurturing its forests. In February 2007, Environment and Energy Minister Roberto Dobles said Costa Rica aims to reach this goal using budgeting, laws, and incentives, including measures to promote biofuels, hybrid vehicles, and clean energy. Another key component of the national strategy will be a "C-Neutral" label to certify that tourism and certain industrial practices mitigate all of the carbon dioxide they emit.

To augment the development of C-Neutrality, the country is cultivating a carbon certificate market that aims to not only boost carbon capture and storage in the nation's forests, but also help maintain its scenic beauty.

Already this small country has been showing its appreciation of its ecosystems by actually paying landowners by the month to maintain forest on their properties. By using funds from diverse sources including proceeds from a tax on fuel, grants from international aid agencies, and even support from a beer company concerned about water quality, the government so far has disbursed more than US\$100 million to landowners who've become forest stewards. In Costa Rica, these lands are commonly called "fincas de oxígeno".

Still Costa Rica has huge privately owned Primary forest areas for sale. Most of the owners did not want to have their forests cut and resisted selling in the 90's, when international logging companies invaded Costa Rica. These owners feel that now their time has come, and hope to sell their lands as carbon credits to International companies or environmental foundations. Tropisphere has sampled these properties, sharing the land owners' hope to bring them into protective hands instead of to loggers or developers.

The Carbon Trading Real Estate market in Costa Rica is still not very developed. The reasons are the higher prices than in other Latin American countries, where pasture land goes for less \$/ha, whereas in Costa Rica deforested areas are much more expensive than Primary forest areas. For Costa Rican Farmers, deforested land was "worked" and is more valuable. Our primary goal is therefore to bring the primary forest areas and the "Oxygen Fincas" - already forested or reforested areas - under the "Carbon Credit" protection. Costa Rica's asset is its stability, whereas many other Latin American countries are still struggling and are seen as less safe for a long-term investment.

The carbon-trading trend is controversial, primarily on grounds that firms will be encouraged to take the easy way out by buying what in essence are pollution permits instead of directly reducing pollution at the source. This is particularly troublesome at a time when scientists warn that the world must cut back fossil fuel emissions by no less than 70 percent to start turning things around.

Despite this very reasonable observation, Tropisphere considers Carbon Trading as an opportunity for Costa Rica. The country has strong bonds to its nature, and there is no better way to be rewarded for the turn of politics regarding the protection of its forestal heritage as a reaction to the sins of the early 90's, when the country had one of the worst deforestation rates in Latin America. Costa Rica was once 99 percent forested, but forest cover has steadily diminished from 85 percent in 1940 to around 35 percent today according to the FAO's State of the World's Forests (FAO's Forest Resources Assessment says the current cover is closer to 50 percent). Historically, clearing for agriculture (mostly coffee and bananas) and cattle pastures has been the largest contributor to Costa Rica's rainforest destruction. During the 1970s and early 1980s, vast stretches of rainforest were burned and converted into cattle lands, but when the largest importer of Central American beef, the United States, ceased beef imports, Costa Rica was left with millions of acres of cleared land and a lot of cattle.

Costa Rica belongs to the Tropical Forest Mosaiclands, where forests and agriculture coexist. Degradation rates are high in these relatively densely populated areas-about 20 percent of Latin America's mosaiclands with trees were degraded in the 1990s. Because these forests are highly fragmented, they comprise biodiversity 'hotspots' where unique species are threatened with extinction. Also the protection of a small acreage can make a huge difference for an entire region, for example, by offering a corridor for wildlife to migrate.

Already in 2004 the World Bank had mobilized a new fund of \$53.8 million to demonstrate projects that sequester or conserve carbon in forest and agro-ecosystems. The Fund, a public/private initiative administered by the World Bank, aims to deliver cost-effective emission reductions, while promoting biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation. Costa Rica already hosts one reforestation project supported by Bio Carbon Fund of the World Bank. Tropisphere would be happy to provide information about properties convenient for programs, which could be sponsored by the Bio Carbon Fund of the World Bank.

# Buying IDA Land: For Fools and Gamblers Only?

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By Geoff McCabe

Oh sweet IDA land. the forbidden fruit of real estate in Costa Rica. We've all heard the stories about people who have "bought" IDA land and ended up with a great property, titled in their own name, at a quarter the market price. How did they do it, and how can you?

First, a little history about IDA land. IDA is a government organization in Costa Rica that takes "unused" land and redistributes it to "settlers". As an example, consider the story I heard about how the IDA land in Cabuya was acquired. The story is that much of Cabuya was a very big cattle farm owned by an absentee landlord. One day when he became sick, the manager of his farm moved the cattle off the land, at which point, the land became "unused" according to Costa Rican law. That opened it up to squatters, who fenced off portions of it using barbed wire as quickly as possible and moved onto it legally. By the time the owner recovered, his land was lost. Whether this rumor is true I can't confirm, but it's an example of what's possible in Costa Rica. Not all IDA land is given to squatters, some of it is given to poor people who apply with IDA and are awarded the land to settle and improve. However the general consensus is that much of the IDA land in this area was obtained by squatting.

The squatters are given a title to the land as part of a contract with the government to work and improve the land for a period that is generally 15 or 20 years. The title in the Registro Nacional contains a restriction stating that it cannot be sold.

So now YOU want to buy this land from them before their contract has expired, and they want to sell it. The general idea is that you pay some money down now, and in exchange, they sign a contract agreeing to sign over title to the land in the future once their contract is up and the "no sell" restriction is removed. Sounds reasonable, right? Well actually no. here are four ways I know of that you can get screwed in the deal:

- The Costa Rican government doesn't want this type of transaction to happen! When you enter into a contract like the one described above, you are basically attempting to circumvent the law and defraud the government. Judges have ruled that such contracts aren't valid and have set a precedent that they won't allow them, and have made many examples of foreigners who tried to do this by ruling against them. This means that if the Tico seller refuses to honor the contract, you will not only lose the land, but you will lose your money too! The bottom line is that buying IDA land is a handshake deal between you and a person who may very likely have (legally) stolen the land from the previous legal owner. If you want to do that, you have bigger cojones than me.
- Normally when you buy land in Costa Rica, the Option to Buy contract is registered with the government, which means that the seller can't sell the land to someone else at the same time. A contract to buy IDA land is a private contract, and there's nothing to prevent the seller from selling the same IDA land many times to a variety of suckers who will all lose their money.

- Each piece of IDA land is normally part of a larger mother finca. Any piece of IDA land that's part of the original mother finca can end up in a lawsuit that will cause ALL the individual pieces of IDA land to be unable to be released from IDA, and you won't be able to get your title even if the owner wants to give it to you.
- If the seller dies before the IDA term has expired, his or her children definitely do not have to honor the contract, and I think most likely will not. You may be seen as the greedy foreigner who tried to take advantage of the deceased parent's poverty and financial desperation by offering far less than the market value of the land, and they will have no sympathy for you.

So if after reading and understanding this, you are still either a fool or a gambler and want to buy some IDA land anyway. How can you improve your chances of success? Here are several tips:

- Find Ticos or others living here who know the seller personally and ask about his or her reputation. Most Ticos are wonderful, honorable people. If you can satisfy yourself that your seller is a good person with a good reputation, then obviously it's more likely he or she will follow through on his part of the bargain.
- After the deal, move onto the land immediately and start to occupy it. Costa Rican law often favors the side that has possession, so you're more likely to win in court if you're living there with your family. But also consider how you're going to get a building permit, apply for utilities, or sell the land later without a title.
- Buy from a seller who seems healthy and is unlikely to pass away before the IDA contract expires.
- Create the contract so the seller's immediate heirs, wife, husband, kids, etc sign it as well and agree to honor it. If they won't sign, then they probably don't want their parent to sell to you at this lower than market rate. Having all these signatures still won't make it a legal contract though.
- Pay as little as possible up front, and put the rest in escrow. In some cases, you can help the seller by agreeing to pay for the legal costs to get the IDA property released from its restrictions early. There are cases when IDA land can become fully titled before its contract expires, such as if the seller can prove he had possession for many years before the IDA contract's start date, through a special legal process done by a knowledgeable attorney.

To sum up, consider two final points. First, while you may have heard many stories of people who have successfully bought IDA land, you have never heard from the many people who have left Costa Rica broke and in tears, having lost their life savings. Second, ask yourself why someone would sell their land for much lower than the market price when they could wait a few years, get their title, and sell it for much more. Either they are desperate and you're taking advantage of that, or they have no intention of giving up their title.

If you still want to risk buying IDA land, I would recommend as your lawyer Marta Guardia, who has her office in Santa Teresa right above the Tropisphere Real Estate office. Her number is 366-6645. She speaks perfect English and is a graduate from the best law school in Costa Rica.

# Buy Property in Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a beautiful place, with scenic landscapes, lush rainforest and wonderful beaches. Costa Ricans are a friendly people and together with its welcoming beauty, the country offers an open invitation to tourists all over the world. Costa Rica's mesmerizing charm captivates tourists who return year after year. Many of these people buy property in Costa Rica and have made this enchanting place their home.

If you wish to buy **Property in Costa Rica** you are making a very sound decision. Costa Rican property is part of a demand driven market where the climate is great, the place is safe and its beauty unparalleled. Moreover the property is affordable as compared to beach areas of America and the cost of living is low. All these factors contribute in making buying property in Costa Rica a profitable proposition.

Costa Rica Properties are easy to acquire as the government policies are very relaxed and for titled properties, the laws are applied equally to Costa Ricans and foreigners who buy properties in Costa Rica. It is the most opportune time to invest in Costa Rica Real Estate as the property market is witnessing a boom.

Tropisphere **Real Estate of Costa Rica** offers titled as well as concession properties in Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica. We provide beautiful properties at attractive prices. Your investment in this friendly international community is a lucrative option and a sound decision. Our focus areas are Montezuma, Malpais, Tambor and Santa Teresa.

We have a vast and varied property list to offer to our customers that range from Beach Front Homes for Sale, Beach House Rental to luxury villas and resorts. Choose your dream home and indulge in the luxuries that life has to offer.

Tropisphere is a **real estate company in Costa Rica** and is the only realtor in Costa Rica that donates 10% of its sales commissions to local community projects. These projects include schools and wildlife conservation organizations. We work closely with an excellent team of professionals such as lawyers, topographers, and vacation home management services to offer our clients an all inclusive service of buying as well as development of the client's property.

Tropisphere offers you the best of properties in Costa Rica that are perfect for your dream home. Visit the site **[www.tropisphere.com](http://www.tropisphere.com)** and get more details about property in Costa Rica, and book your appointment today!

# More about Costa Rica Properties

Costa Rica is a land of promise especially if you are looking for an international real estate investment. If you are looking for a high return on your investment while owning a part of the most beautiful place in the world, then investing in Costa Rica properties is a safe and sure bet.

The problem that middle class Americans face today is that the most desirable markets are saturated with tourists, investors and a growing population. The areas that were in demand 15 years ago such as California, Florida and Hawaii were considered gold mines in the past, but are now beyond the reach of ordinary Americans.

Some of the best options on the international real estate market available today is **Costa Rica Real Estate**. Costa Rica is bordered by the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans and has a wonderful and diverse ecosystem. It is one of the best tropical paradise destinations with an incredible climate, comfortable lifestyle along with political stability.

Despite the fact that Real Estate in Costa Rica is witnessing a boom, the property prices are still within a reasonable range. Investors are happy with Costa Rica's medical facilities, lower property taxes and relaxed lifestyle. Many foreigners are not only enjoying Costa Rica as regular vacation destination, but are investing in its real estate and enjoying returns of 20-40% per year.

All needed building materials are readily available for new construction while construction labor is extremely reasonable. Costa Rica is one of the most stable Central American countries in terms of political stability and crime rates. If you are looking for Costa Rican properties then you can start by searching **Costa Rica Real Estate** listings on the internet or you can approach Tropisphere Real Estate of Costa Rica to find the most comprehensive list of properties in the areas of Montezuma, Malpais, and Tambor, offered at one place.

If you are looking for Costa Rica condos , Beach front home for Sale or Beach House Rental, we offer you the best properties at affordable rates. We sell both titled and concession properties in areas such as Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica. We are located at Southern Nicoya Peninsula, a beautiful region with appealing properties at attractive rates.

If you are interested in **Costa Rican real estate** then the time is now as the prices are appreciating fast and soon the property prices here will be out of reach. This trend has been witnessed time and again in the American and European markets, therefore it's a prudent investment and the time to act is now.

Visit the site [www.tropisphere.com](http://www.tropisphere.com) and find more details about our services.

## More about Tambor Real Estate

In today's world real estate is the best and safest option for investment and if it is Costa Rica real estate then you ought to earn great financial benefits. Costa Rica is a still undeveloped natural paradise, and this is the reason why many people are heading toward this wonderful country. Amidst its great beauty there is a small beach town known as Tambor. Tambor might be small in size and but it is very famous for its breathtaking bay named Bahia Bellena, or popularly known as Whale Bay.

According to experts, Tambor is attracting more and more people to buy property there as this scenic beach is embraced by four miles of palm lined white sand beaches. Every year whales migrate to Tambor bay to give birth, mate and nurture their offspring in the thriving marine habitat found here. That's why anyone who thinks of Costa Rica **real estate Tambor** strikes their mind first. Being a beach area, Tambor offers various adventurous and sports activities such as snorkeling, fishing, sailing and diving, and that daily charters to famous Tortuga Island, or Turtle Island.

Many people living in Costa Rica take leisure trips there as this place is very refreshing and special boat trips are arranged to this lovely island. Seeing today's trends you can say that the values of **Costa Rica real estate** will continue to rise rapidly and continue to outshine neighboring countries competing in the international real estate market. Tambor lies between two well-known National Parks in the Southern Nicoya region: Curu National Wildlife Refuge and Cabo Blanco Absolute National Park.

The mainstay of foreigners' attraction to Costa Rica **real estate in Tambor** is the abundance of wildlife accompanying various activities such as bird watching, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, various water sports and even golfing. Tambor still has a wild and unspoiled jungle shoreline along its beautiful and extensive beaches, providing an excellent locale for swimming, sunbathing and enjoying walks, horse ridings and an array of aquatic sports. Thus, if you wish to secure your future by investing your hard earned money then Costa Rica real estate is the best option.

For more information on **Costa Rica real estate**, Costa Rica real estate agency, vacation rentals in Costa Rica, Costa Rica real estate investment, Costa Rica condos, Costa Rica real estate for sale, Costa Rica vacation rentals, Costa Rica real estate, Costa Rica property, beach house rental and vacation rentals please visit [www.tropisphere.com](http://www.tropisphere.com).