

MARINA PAPAGAYO

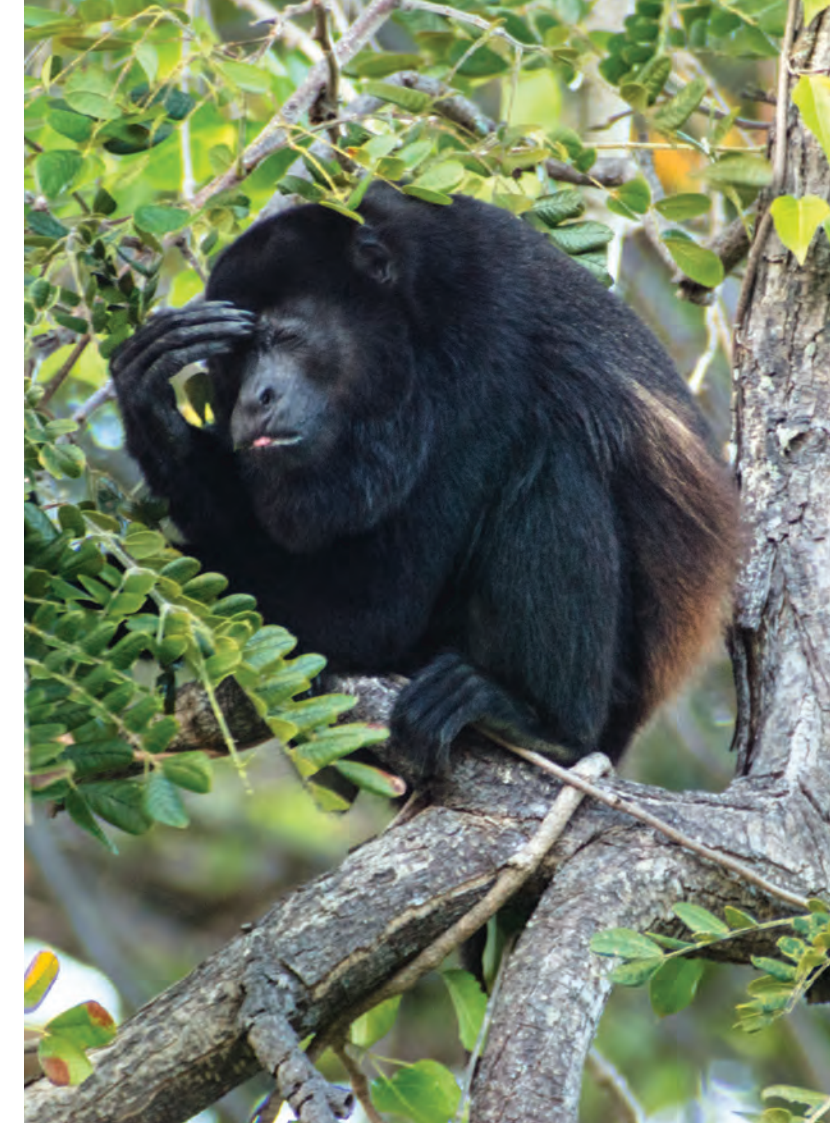
A SMALL SLICE OF PARADISE

BY BECCA GUILLOTE



THE SKY IS IMPOSSIBLY BLUE FROM ONE HORIZON to the other, broken only by a slow parade of puffy white clouds. As I step off the boat, a ray glides by a few feet from my feet and breaks the surface with its wing tips; I wave back. The chatter of friends enjoying the pool drifts down on the wind amid the chatter of parrots in the trees above. I amble down the dock, greeted by every passing worker and guest, and admire the diversity of boats gathered in this secluded corner of paradise. I love it here.

The dock I am on belongs to Marina Papagayo, an impressive harbour tucked into the protective embrace of Peninsula Papagayo in the northwest corner of Costa Rica. It is auspiciously situated in the heart of some of the most stunning and least crowded cruising grounds in the world. Where howler



monkeys offer a wake up service, the jungle climbs straight up from the sea, and kind generous people enrich every experience on shore.

Costa Rica has been a popular land-based tourism destination since the 1980's when the president, Oscar Arias, introduced his country on the world stage as a safe, welcoming and eco-friendly travel destination. It is one of the most progressive nations in eco-tourism and conservation, with an impressive 23.4% of its land dedicated to national parks and protected areas. Costa Rica is home to over 500,000 species of plants and animals and an estimated 5% of the entire world's biodiversity, despite a total landmass that could fit within the borders of Lake Michigan.

The numbers may sound impressive, but it takes personal experience to truly grasp the awe and wonder of this place. We took advantage of the safe and secure dockage at Marina Papagayo and rented a car to explore some of Costa Rica's 27 national parks, in hopes of catching sight of sloths, toucans and monkeys. Within a two-hour drive of the marina, we were immersed in dense protected rainforest crisscrossed with waterfalls plunging into a clear blue lake at the base of an active volcano sending wisps of steam and ash into the sky. The wildlife abounded, and in just a few days, we saw a three-toed sloth, two species of monkeys, several toucans, and about a thousand butterflies. The hardest

ABOVE:
A HOWLER MONKEY
LOOKING SOMEWHAT
SHAMEFACED

**OPPOSITE
AND BELOW:**
THE IMPRESSIVE
MARINA SETTINGS



ABOVE:
JUST ONE OF THE
MANY STUNNING
VIEWS AFFORDED BY
THE REGION

RIGHT:
THE SPLENDID
ISOLATION OF
THE MARINA

part was deciding what to do each day; watch monkeys from a series of hanging bridges, ride horses to a secluded waterfall, hike through the rainforest or soak in the hot springs!

It is not only the biodiversity that draws visitors to Costa Rica; it is also the people. The country maintains a large middle class and well-educated workforce under a stable democratic government. The literacy rate is an impressive 94.9% and many locals speak English, particularly those employed in the tourism industry.

Costa Ricans, locally called Ticos, have a contagiously positive and laid back attitude about life. They call it Pura Vida ('pure life'). Not only is this phrase an effective life philosophy in Costa Rica, it has also become a greeting, a response, a show of appreciation and an acknowledgement. In every day conversation, as a 'hello' or 'thanks', Ticos verbalise 'pura vida', reminding others and themselves to stay optimistic, to be happy, to find balance. The result is tangible; in all of my travels, I have never met a more generous and welcoming culture of people.

Costa Rica has hosted land-based tourists for decades, but many yachts still pass it by today. While some are perhaps put



off by the high incidence of lightning strikes in the southern part of the country, others may be worried about the availability or quality of services and amenities to meet their needs. These are unfounded concerns at Marina Papagayo. Nestled at the edge of a unique tropical dry forest, the Marina receives far less lightning storms than the southern coast of the country. The weather is amenable all year, with reliable temperatures and a modest rainy season. The easy weather conditions make a convincing assurance for yachts looking for a year-round home base.

The amenities and level of service at Marina Papagayo rival those found at the most prestigious marinas in the USA. It is a





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deep-water harbour that can facilitate yachts from 35 to 220 ft, one of the very few marinas that can host mega yachts in Central America. For the boat, there is a high-capacity fueling station capable of dispensing 15 to 85 gallons per minute, electricity sources adaptable to a variety of power requirements, and a small but equipped chandlery. For the crew, there is a well-appointed gym, a quiet pool, an air conditioned conference room, and a gathering space with TV's, comfortable chairs and a pool table.

The knowledgeable concierge team is available to ensure the guests in the marina have a comfortable and stress-free stay.



The team can facilitate travel logistics, car rentals, provisioning trips, private tours, or dinner reservations. The Liberia International Airport, just 30 minutes away, offers daily flights to San Jose and direct flights to several US cities. With the marina's hassle-free transportation options, there is no better gateway to explore Costa Rica's rugged and rich coast.

It seems the marina has thought of everything. In fact, once settled into our slip, the variety of activities and facilities made it difficult to leave again. Our intention was only a short stop over, but we found ourselves extending our stay again and again, happily exploring the peninsula and region at our doorstep. There are mountain bikes for rent, nature walks through one of the last remaining corridors of dry tropical forest, live music on



MARINA PAPAGAYO

Saturday nights, and many restaurants to sample, including one that serves arguably the best burger in all of Central America.

In addition to the marina, the Papagayo Peninsula hosts a 1400-acre geo-luxury facility that encompasses two prestigious resorts, an Arnold Palmer Signature golf course, 8 restaurants, 11 miles of coastline and 21 stunning beaches. The only Forbes five-star resort in Central and South America, the Four Seasons offers guests unparalleled views, unforgettable wildlife encounters, exclusive luxury and extraordinary beaches. Weaving through the native forest on the Peninsula, the Arnold Palmer Signature golf course boasts dramatic water views on 14 out of its 18 holes and is a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. This devotion to the preservation of intact forest and bird habitat allows golfers the unique opportunity to see rare birds and other wildlife while playing one of the top golf courses in Central America.

In contrast to many luxury developments, the peninsula's resorts merge with the landscape through their unobtrusive and



THIS SPREAD:
A MYRIAD OF VIEWS
INCLUDING THE GOLF
COURSES OF THE
PAPAGAYO PENINSULA



sustainable design. Under a unique covenant with the Costa Rican government, the peninsula is an environmentally protected area in which a minimum of 70% of its land will remain undeveloped in perpetuity. A macaw sanctuary will augment the already abundant bird life on the peninsula; a botanical nursery fosters endemic plant species; nature programs educate guests on the fragile ecosystem and amazing creatures that call it home. This unparalleled devotion to conservation not only keeps the peninsula's wilderness in-tact; it also offers guests unforgettable interactions with nature.

As we planned our time in the marina, it became clear that the list of activities available to travellers in this region is almost embarrassingly long. From adrenaline inducing zip lining and 4-wheeling to world-renowned surfing and kite boarding, there is quite literally something for everyone here. Trails for hiking and biking crisscross the peninsula and a new Explorer's Club offers morning and nighttime nature walks. For those of us that can't get enough of the water, there is an abundance of snorkelling, diving, fishing, and sailing. Two famous surf breaks, Ollie's Point and Witches Rock, are just across the bay. Bahia Salinas, 45 miles north of the marina, is the 8th windiest place



in the world and a dream for kite boarders. It is hard to imagine anyone feeling bored here!

The sun slowly dissolves into the sea, sending beams of red and orange overhead. I sit on the terrace overlooking the marina, a glass of chardonnay in hand. An iguana sits motionless on the sidewalk facing me, soaking up the last rays of warmth; I smile back. A group of jovial and somewhat sun-burnt travellers strolls into the restaurant, already exaggerating the fish tales of the day and laughing with the captain of their charter. A young couple scurry about on their 40 ft sailboat, preparing for an impending ocean crossing. Four friendly marina employees greet me with smiles and *pura vida* on their way to receive the graceful 55 m yacht just entering the breakwater. There is something for everyone in this corner of paradise. I love it here. >||

Contact: www.marinapapagayo.com



EVENTS ROUND UP

SINGAPORE YACHT SHOW
12 – 15 APRIL 2018
www.singaporeyachtshow.com

ANTIGUA CLASSIC YACHT REGATTA
18 – 24 APRIL 2018
www.antiguaclassics.com

MYBA CHARTER YACHT SHOW – BARCELONA
23 – 26 APRIL 2018
www.mybashow.com

PALMA SUPERYACHT SHOW
27 APRIL – 1 MAY 2018
www.palmasuperyachtshow.com

MEDITERRANEAN YACHT SHOW – GREECE
28 APRIL – 1 MAY 2018
www.mediterraneyachtshow.gr

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
8 – 19 MAY 2018
www.festival-cannes.fr

MONACO GRAND PRIX
24 – 27 MAY 2018
www.formula1.com

EAST MED. SUPERYACHT FORUM – ATHENS
31 MAY 2018
www.quaynote.com

THE SUPERYACHT CUP – PALMA
19 – 23 JUNE 2018
www.thesuperyachtcup.com

CANNES YACHT & BOAT SHOW
11 – 16 SEPTEMBER 2018
www.cannesyachtingfestival.com

SOUTHAMPTON BOAT SHOW
14 – 23 SEPTEMBER 2018
www.southamptonboatshow.com

THE MONACO YACHT SHOW
26 – 29 SEPTEMBER 2018
www.monacoyachtshow.com

LES VOILES DE ST. TROPEZ
30 SEPTEMBER – 7 OCTOBER 2018
www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr

THE PINMAR GOLF TOURNAMENT
18 – 20 OCTOBER 2018
www.pinmargolf.es

ICOMIA WORLD MARINAS CONFERENCE ATHENS
25 – 27 OCTOBER 2018
www.greek-marinas.gr

FORT LAUDERDALE INT. BOATSHOW
31 OCTOBER – 4 NOVEMBER 2018
www.showmanagement.com

GLOBAL SUPERYACHT FORUM – AMSTERDAM
12 – 14 NOVEMBER 2018
www.globalsuperyachtforum.com

METS & THE SUPERYACHT PAVILION – AMSTERDAM
13 – 15 NOVEMBER 2018
www.metstrade.com

ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX
23 – 25 NOVEMBER 2018
www.formula1.com

ANTIGUA CHARTER YACHT SHOW
4 – 10 DECEMBER 2018
www.antiguayachtshow.com

LONDON BOAT SHOW
9 – 13 JANUARY 2019
www.londonboatshow.com

BOOT DUSSELDORF
19 – 27 JANUARY 2019
www.boot-dusseldorf.com

ASIA SUPERYACHT RENDEZVOUS
JANUARY 2019 (tbc)
www.asia-superyacht-rendezvous.com

THE SUPERYACHT CHALLENGE – ANTIGUA
30 JANUARY – 3 FEBRUARY 2019
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