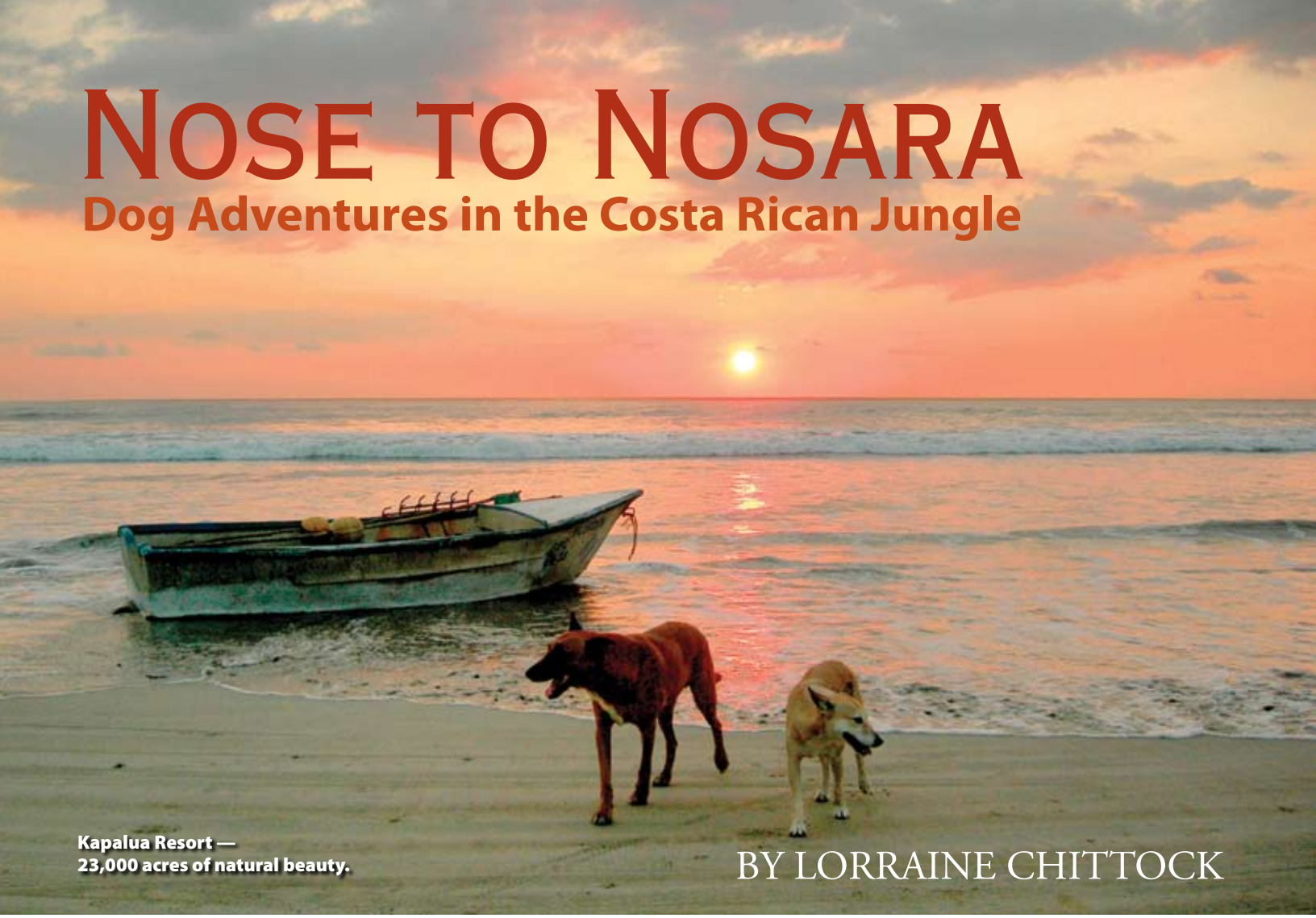
Nose to Nosara

Dog Adventures in the Costa Rican Jungle



Kapalua Resort — 23,000 acres of natural beauty.

BY LORRAINE CHITTOCK

Dou wake up in the morning to the cries of monkeys. Before you have a chance to get out of bed you wonder, "Is that the squawks of parrots in the background?" You open the door. It's not your garden outside and it's certainly not Kansas. Instead, an exotic jungle greets you. And your loyal Toto is still beside you.

Without bothering to put a leash on Toto, you beckon him to join you outside. He bounds down the walkway, where horses and chickens greet him. Dwellings in the distance are partially obscured by mango trees and fragrant hibiscus blossoms. After your Toto does a quick tour of your new neighborhood, he bounds back to the house with exotic wood paneling and waits while you drape a sarong over your bathing suit. Together, you stroll down a dirt track to a beach just 10 minutes away and admire early morning surfers negotiate huge waves. Dogs bound along the road and on the beach, some owned by the people in the waves. You still don't bother putting a lead on Toto. You're on vacation. And so is Toto.

If it has always been your dream to spend a holiday surrounded by both domestic and wild animals, or to ride a horse down dirt tracks through jungle to watch the sunset while monkeys swing through trees, Nosara, Costa Rica might just be the place for your next holiday. Your dog is very welcomed as long as he won't chase the cats or livestock. At Campo Alegre, animals rule the roost as well as the swimming pool and tennis court.

Dream

To spend a vacation surrounded by both luscious jungle and ocean in luxury accommodation. To be surrounded by wildlife... and your dog. Ah, dreams.

Reality

You can have it all!

Campo Alegre, whose proprietor is Linda Cox, a former California gal, is a complex of three vacation homes each hidden from the other, and has two resident dogs, five cats, three horses, turkeys and chickens to keep you company if your dog can't accompany you. In addition, howler monkeys roam from tree to tree alongside parrots and other tropical birds, while armadillos and an animal that looks like a raccoon with brown fur and a long tail wander along the ground. Though Campo Alegre is less than a 10-minute walk from the ocean, if you're feeling lazy or want a break from the beach, you can swim in the pool or play a game of tennis on the courts.

Though all three residences are appealing, Linda prefers renting the home named El Establo Marea only to people who really appreciate animals. The newly completed wood-paneled home will definitely appeal to horse lovers as El Establo Marea sits directly over the stables as was once the tradition in Europe centuries ago.

It's at Campo Alegre where you'll meet Freddie and Roxy, both rescued dogs.

"Freddie was originally named Stimpy and hung out less than a mile away in an area of town called Esperanza, which means 'hope,'" says Linda. "He arrived one day with a big black dog, and was hungry. So of course, I fed him. But he wouldn't let me touch him. He hung around the area four days and then one morning, he walked in with a mouth full of porcupine quills. I took him to the vet who had to sedate him in order to take the quills out. Quills are straight here

Caption here and here.

and not barbed like the North American variety. From then on, he sure didn't mind me giving him love! But the name wasn't going to work. I was going through my Flintstone era, and had cats named Wilma, Betty, Barney and Pebbles. So he became Freddie."

She continues, "Roxy was given to me by a Gringo who was returning to the states. Since his life was going to be a bit uncertain, I took Roxy in. She was hit by a motorcycle when she was about eight months old and now she's getting older, she's starting to have trouble with her back end."

While not tending to the needs of her animal-loving guests, Linda has administrative duties at the local water company which serves all the houses and businesses in the American Project. Linda assures me the water source is regularly checked every three months. However, some people find just a change in climate or eating habits can result in a stomach upset. If this is the case, you'll want to head over to the local pharmacy, Farmacia San Antonio and ask for Dr. Karla Morales Mora. Tito will be behind the counter and Karla will gladly regale you with Tito's latest story. When Karla found Tito on the street, she realized he'd been badly abused. Though Dr. Mora had no intention of using him as a guard dog, it appears that's his calling in life.

"Tito followed me to the pharmacy one day," says Dr. Mora. "I kept telling him to go home, but he wouldn't go. He kept looking in through the glass door and whimpering until finally I said, 'OK, fine you can stay!' An hour later as I was closing up, two men came to the pharmacy to rob me. But Tito was there to protect me. Absolutely, Tito saved my life! Now he comes with me everyday. He's the pharmacy's personal security guard during the day, and in the evening we go home to spend time with Millie."

She continues, "Millie is a very special dog. When I was pregnant, Millie would always press herself up to my womb, as if she was communicating with the baby. But before nine months, I had a miscarriage. When I came back from the hospital, Millie was very depressed. She would still come over to my stomach, but there was nothing there. She wouldn't eat, wouldn't drink water. Her depression got worse and worse. Finally, I took her to Dr. Delgado who said she was so bad, it would be very difficult for her to recover. But he told me to try giving her a soup mixture with water, beef and chicken. I had to feed her with a syringe three times a day. It was a very difficult time, because I was so sad, too, about losing my baby. Then I began talking to

IMPORTING/EXPORTING FIDO

BRINGING YOUR DOG TO COSTA RICA: A health certificate from your veterinarian certified at the nearest Costa Rican Consulate in the United States and upon departure, the aforementioned document certified at Vigilancia de la Salud, Costa Rican Ministry of Health, Street 16, Avenues 6 & 8, San Jose, Costa Rica. Open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., telephone 011 (506) 255-1427.

BRINGING A COSTA RICAN DOG BACK TO THE UNITED STATES: Obtain a health certificate from a Costa Rican veterinarian and an export permit from Vigilancia de la Salud Department along with the following stamps: 1 Timbre Fiscal (stamp with a value higher than 20 colones) and 1 Timbre de Archivo. These stamps are available at major bookstores in Costa Rica. It will take 2 business days to obtain the export permit. And as long as the dog is healthy, just an hour or so of paperwork is needed at the destination airport. For more details, check out: www.TheRealCostaRica.com.

DR. DELGADO

Dr. Delgado's reputation among animal lovers is well known in Nosara. For those bringing their dog to Costa Rica, Dr. Delgado is a 90-minute drive away in the town of Nicoya, but he also does clinics in Nosara about once a month. There's also a fund set up for local residence who can't afford the fees. His English is very decent. Once there, you can reach him by telephone numbers 685-3492 and 830-1506. You can also reach him care of his helper Sarah Foster at nosaraanimalcare@gmail.com or by calling 682-1031. If you fly into San Jose airport, Costa Rica's National Veterinary University, reputed to be the best in all of Central America, is located just a short drive away. Ask for Dr. Morales or Dr. Hernandez at 260-9234.

Caption here and here.

If you run into any mechanical difficulties, you'll want to see Taller Pena and their many dogs and geese. The dogs are for loving and the geese are for guarding, of course.

Millie about what happened. I told her the baby's in heaven with God. I had to explain it to her as if she was a kid. And slowly she got better. It was amazing."

Because of the tropical environment, many restaurants are without doors and windows. Locally owned dogs and community dogs who roam the streets come in and out at will to scrounge and see the newest tourists in town. Marlin Bill's is one of those restaurants and it's owned by Roxy's mother who's named Sugar. Whenever Roxy goes wandering (which is less as she gets older) this is where she heads.

Most dogs here do not wear collars! Make sure you ask extensively before assuming a dog is lost or abandoned. He may just have a very large route he travels on a daily basis, many do.

Another place where dogs are allowed is La Paloma supermarket. The owners have two tiny dogs. To see a dog wandering up and down the isles can be disconcerting initially, but your dog will see it as a completely acceptable practice and wonder why it's not commonplace in the states. After all, how else can he decide which dog food is the one best for him? There is a decent selection of dog food to choose from, both locally produced and brands you're familiar with from the states.

Perhaps Costa Rican dogs have more self-control than those raised elsewhere. Like dogs in America 50 years ago, the freer environment allows these dogs plenty of exercise. Maybe this is why more than once I've heard newcomers ex-

A MONKEY IN THE JUNGLE

It helps to be either an early riser in Nosara—or a heavy sleeper. The monkeys aren't named Howlers for nothing. Around five every morning, that's what they do. And loudly. Your dog will want to keep a good watch on them throughout the day. Monkey gymnastics take place high up in the trees and the primates use their long tails as an extra arm. The chances of falling are rare. But this does happen, and your dog will certainly want to examine them closer. Sometimes, too close. In the unfortunate event this happens, there is a rescue center for monkeys at Harbor Reef hotel and restaurant where a small sanctuary has been built.

However the main reason monkeys are brought in is not because of your dog, but because of electrocution, this happens when Howler monkeys become victim to cables which are strung above ground, they mistake the cables for branches. There is an effort to try and have all the cables and transformers buried beneath the ground and many residential developments have that as part of their plan. Unfortunately, the cables running along the street are all above.

The injured monkeys will not be able to be reunited with their mother, as the rest of the troop will not accept them after so much time apart. There's also a limit to how much space Harbor Reef can offer. So Vicky Coan and her husband, Steve, are in the process of creating a large monkey sanctuary on a site they're also developing for potential home owners. People buying their dream lots at Sibu understand they are buying into an area which is as hospitable to wildlife as possible. For more information see www.SibuJungalows.com.

Caption here and here.

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claim, "Oh, these dogs are all so thin!" Your dog will look pawsitively plump next to his new canine companions. Undoubtedly, some native dogs suffer from worm problems. But local dogs are largely scavengers and are fed table scraps as opposed to processed food.

"…he wouldn't let me touch him. He hung around the area four days and then one morning, he walked in with a mouth full of porcupine quills. I took him to the vet who had to sedate him in order to take the quills out… From then on, he sure didn't mind me giving him love!"

Just as with humans, dog standards for beauty in Costa Rica may not be the same as in America and you'll see many varieties of dogs you aren't accustomed to in the states. Perhaps you or your dog might become attached to one of the local dogs. If the process to bring your dog to Costa Rica was easy, bringing a Costa Rican dog back to the United States is even easier.

But be very sure the dog doesn't already have an owner. Most dogs here do not wear collars! Make sure you ask extensively before assuming a dog is lost or abandoned. He may just have a very large route he travels on a daily basis, many do.

In addition, the question you'll want to ask yourself is, "Can I provide a better quality of life for this dog?" Most certainly, the medical care in the U.S. will be better. However, Tico dogs (the term for those born in Costa Rica) have lived by their wits for countless generations, and only the strongest and smartest of dogs survive in the Central American jungle. Because few people have tried to make them fluffier, cuter or friendlier, the process of natural selection has developed a dog without the diseases or hereditary problems which debilitate some overly domesticated breeds. A question you'll want to ask the dog is, "Do you want to give up being able to mingle with your dog friends?" These dogs are around people and other dogs all day long. How often are you home? The freedom of jungle living can be tough to beat.

CITY NOTES

Nosara is located in the Guanacaste Province of Costa Rica and is the most northern of the seven provinces of Costa Rica. You're sure to see lots of cattle and the cowboys on horseback who work with them. From November to April the climate is hot and dry and is when most tourists visit. The rains begin in May, which helps keep the temperatures down and the dust away. The warm tropical rains usually last a few hours in the late afternoon. In October and November are the heavy rains, but sun often shines in the beginning of the day. All year round the sun rises around 6 a.m. and sets around 6 p.m. The expression you'll hear most often is Pura Vida, Life is good!

RESORT NOTE

Though all three residences are appealing, Linda prefers renting the home named El Establo Marea only to people who really appreciate animals. The newly completed wood-paneled home will definitely appeal to horse lovers as El Establo Marea sits directly over the stables as was once the tradition in Europe centuries ago. You can find out more about all three properties at: www.CampoAlegreNosara.com.

IF YOU GO

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