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Talking Tico: (Mis)adventures Of A Gringo In And Around Costa Rica



Synopsis

Costa Rica is one of the most sought after vacation destinations in the Americas with some of the world's most attractive natural surroundings teeming with wildlife. Most visitors spend years saving up for a trip of a lifetime, or perhaps even a honeymoon, but Joe decided to move there for ten months to get a closer look at life in and around Costa Rica. Over the course of his time abroad, Joe brings his experiences to life alongside the history of the region as he travels throughout Costa Rica and its Central American neighborhood with stops in Panama, El Salvador and Guatemala. Xenophobic expatriates, delicious food, vibrant market scenes, an epic battle with Mothra, and inevitable culture clashes all make an appearance in Talking Tico, leaving readers with a new impression of this fascinating region.

Book Information

File Size: 3303 KB

Print Length: 358 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1548607649

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Without A Path (November 24, 2016)

Publication Date: November 24, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01N99FI3E

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #295,701 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #53

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Central & South America > Central

America #58 in Books > Travel > Central America > Costa Rica #163 in Books > Travel >

Central America > General

Customer Reviews

Talking Tico is yet another book in the popular Costa Rica travelogue/we moved to Costa Rica

category. I have read many of them – hell, I have written one myself – and fortunately this one set itself apart. Talking Tico is the story of the 10 months Joe and his wife Melanie spent in Costa Rica. The title has a double meaning; first, Joe was enrolled in a Spanish program at University for Peace to learn to talk tico, and second, between each chapter he defines a common Spanish or slang-word. Throughout the book Joe serves up a healthy meal of information about living in Costa Rica with a couple of sides of other Central American countries. The couple travels to many different towns throughout the country documenting their often humorous adventures and experiences. Also included are the stories of side trips to three other Central American countries: Panama, El Salvador, and Guatemala. What sets this book apart from others in the travelogue genre is the amount of history imparted throughout each episode. While history and travel writing can often be staid, Joe uses humor and opinion to spice up Talking Tico. It is this last point that is my only quibble with the book – the amount of quibbling. Not so much that the author has an opinion, in fact I thought it was one of the features that moved the book along and made it more interesting, but the few times the opinion devolves into a tedious whine. For me it did not detract from the enjoyment of the book as a whole, but I could see how it could be for others. Even after living in Costa Rica for 4 years I learned many things from the book. I have no problem recommending Talking Tico to anyone interested in travel or relocation to Costa Rica or Central America. The humor is subtle, the writing solid, and the history fascinating.

Fun to read if you enjoy the travel diary genre. However, there didn't seem to be any lessons learned that were unique to the author's specific experience (living in a different culture and using a different language for almost a full year). We all would experience situations considered atypical, some good, some bad, when compared to our baseline frames of reference. I read the entire text but continually wondered what the author wanted me to take away from his narration.

As an Australian, Costa Rica seems like a very exotic destination and it was great to read about Joe's experiences living there - always a much more in depth experience than just visiting a place. Seems like he and I approach living abroad in similar ways, trying to see as much as possible and saying "yes" to stuff we normally wouldn't, so I really enjoyed hearing about his experiences and his thoughts about some of the cultural differences and nuances between his American life and what he experienced in Costa Rica. Good stuff.

Interesting information about different locals in Costa Rica and side trips throughout some of Central

America. More of a first person story than an educational account of Costa Rica.

Good read.

INTERESTING READ

I received a free copy of this book with the option of leaving an honest review. Like the book blurb says, Baur shares the good, bad, and the ugly about his time in Costa Rica and Central America. I've read a few travelogues and most of them have shared a common theme; an awe-inspiring journey of self-discovery. Talking Tico is different because it's not really about self-discovery; it's about a regular guy who decides to learn more about a culture by living in it while recognizing that he is still an outsider to a certain extent. Reading the book is like having a couple of beers with a friend who is telling you about her/his experiences in a different country. Baur manages to strike a perfect balance of being informative and maintaining a conversational tone throughout the book. His insights are punctuated by humor, sarcastic asides, and his personal opinions on various subjects. Like many of the travelogues that I've read, Baur teaches readers some of the local language; however, he has put his own twist on this practice by sharing slang terms. I enjoyed this as I used to be quite fluent in Spanish a couple of decades ago, but most of the words that have stuck with me after years of disuse are slang and swear words. My only gripe about the book is the fact that Baur didn't include a few pictures from his time in Costa Rica. However, this is a pretty minor gripe since Baur does a wonderful job of describing sites of interest to readers. Talking Tico: (Mis)adventures of a Gringo in and Around Costa Rica is a really approachable read and a breath of fresh air in a genre that is known for being stuffy and boring.

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