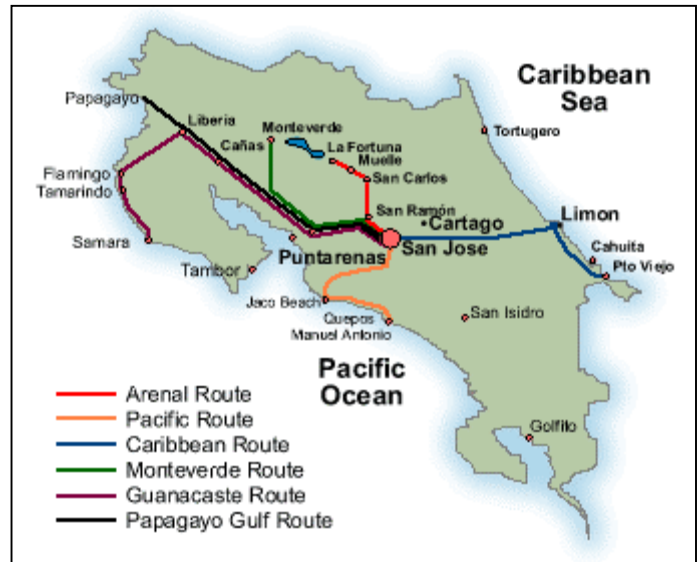


Costa Rica – 2003



“Viaje De Las Dos Madres Etc”



The trip of the two mothers etc included five people. Starting from a variety of locations around North America, Glenn, myself, both mothers and our friend Evie all congregated in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Our first night was spent in Alajuela. One of the only highlights, other than the mother's introduction to hostels and budget travel, was the midnight flooding of their bathroom. This caused nothing more than some nightmares and the willingness to move on the following day.

After a grueling bus bus bus then boat ride we arrived in the remote Tortugero Reserve in northeastern Costa Rica. We spent a week there eating, birding and learning about sea turtles.

We got to see the faces of the baby turtles (that escaped death from ants and crabs) as they skipped their way toward the ocean waves and into the shark-infested breakers.

We hired a guide to paddle us deep into the reserve to a very small path in the jungle. It took us two minutes of walking (told strictly to touch nothing) to find our first deadly eyelash viper. Lemon yellow and hanging in delicate S shapes it waited beside the path for frogs or hummingbirds, which ever came first. One more minute of walking and we came to our second viper, same description different S shapes and protrusions in the eye region resembling lashes.

MUERTA!-- dead in 30 minutes if bitten "Let's go!".... birds, monkeys, crocodiles, sloths and red poison arrow frogs with blue-black legs (known locally as “blue jeans” frogs).

Our escape from Tortugero began with a motor boat ride. Unfortunately there was something wrong with the motor and it lost power a rhythmic 64 times (my mother counted) in the first 2 hours of the trip. Anyway, for the remainder of the trip we traded boats with an unsuspecting group and were whisked speedily away to the point where we took a taxi bus and bus to Cahuita!

We dined sumptuously, walked in the jungle, swam in the ocean and listened to howler monkeys scream their opinions like roosters, dogs and children.

After a week of endless sweat then relief and sweat and relief, we moved on.

At this point in the trip we had accumulated and responded to a number of maladies. Among the five of us we had; digestive problems, a cold, stomach cramps, bites, a cut arm, a misdiagnosed bladder infection, swollen ankles and a sinus infection that partially blocked the vision in one eye.

Actually we were doing pretty well at this point. I proudly claim the winning affliction. Without a doubt, the champion. While tip toeing along a jungle path in my bathing suit I was sprayed by a disturbed insect.

Although I did not know it when it happened, three days later my upper thigh was well aware of the event. There were four linear spray marks surrounded by a feverish red swelling 8 inches in diameter. However, the highlight among the 100 or so tiny blisters was the one the size of an unshelled brazil nut. It stuck out from my thigh a full inch. Looking at the taut yellow surface reminded me of my reflection in a convenience store mirror. It was a clear victory. Thank you.

Later in the trip we found enough reference books at a butterfly farm to research the event. A “blister beetle” (family Meloidae) was the culprit.

The beetle sprayed poison blood from its knee joints. Hard to believe. The book said the liquid was the same used for Spanish fly???

Our next stop was Manzanillo. Although we were only there for two days, we delighted in some torrential rain and some excellent snorkeling from shore.

After Manzanillo we bused bused taxied and based our way across the country and into the mountains, landing at the base of the Arenal volcano.

Here we basked in the luxury of a swimming pool and gorgeous tiled rooms (fridge and TV) for \$11 each per night. We engaged in some serious shopping-till-dropping and volcano watching. I was relieved when we finally left the area, since I felt obligated to stare continually at the volcanic vent in the unlikely event of a spectacular eruption. Red flares were visible at night!

A highlight was lounging in and beside the pool, spotting Christmas banquet-sized iguanas in the trees. Long orange spikes, huge dewlaps and black circles on their cheeks, they draped over limbs, thinking their primitive thoughts.

Next we mini-vanned, boated and mini-vanned our way to Monteverde for a final fling of an intense day and a half of hummingbirds, coatis and agoutis, before finally turning our thoughts toward airports and our other, monkey and bougainvillea-free lives.

Best book/best quote ("Life of Pi" p31): “To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a mode of transportation.”