

Costarriqueñismos

Pura Vida | “Pure life”

This quintessential Costa Rican phrase tells you pretty much everything you need to know about the Tico approach to life. It has many meanings, all friendly: “great” or “fantastic,” “hello,” “nice to meet you,” “thank you” or “you’re welcome.”

Mae | “Dude”

It’s used astonishingly frequently, especially among men. It’s used like “dude” among friends or it can refer to any person.

Diay – has many meanings

In Costa Rica this word can be a filler word akin to “hey” or “well” or it can mean “obviously,” “what happened?” or “what can be done?” or even “there’s no exception.”

Por dicha / qué dicha | “Fortunately” / “How fortunate”

Costa Ricans readily express appreciation for their good fortune and that of others.

Llevarla suave | “To take it easy”

Literally “to carry it soft,” this expression is a constant reminder to breathe.

Hablar paja | “To take straw”

This expression can mean “to take bull” or “to shoot the breeze.” There’s also pura paja, “pure bull.”

Suave un toque | “Hold on a sec”

Embracing this expression is an important step toward learning how to relax.

Buena nota | “Cool or nice person”

Literally “good note,” this expression is used often to say someone is cool or nice.

Qué torta | “What a mess / screw up”

Those of us who mess up often will learn this expression – literally, “what a patty” – early on. Example: “I accidentally knocked off his toupee. Qué torta.”

Vara | “Thing” / “Stuff”

It’s also used in varying ways in many expressions: Qué es la vara? (“What’s the deal?”); pura vara (“pure lies”); toda esa vara (“all that stuff”); tumba la vara (“calm down,” “drop it”).

Brete | “Work”

Ticos love to play, but they also love work – as evidenced in the commonly heard phrase, Mucho brete, gracias a Dios (“Lots of work, thank God”).