

# Biking Costa Rica 2010/2011

Day 1, Saturday, 12-18-2010

Linda gave me a ride to the airport and I got on the plane to Houston. I slept for the full 3-hour flight.

Day 2, Sunday, 12-19-2010

While at the Houston airport a nice-looking lady pointed to me and waved. I figured she was looking at some else, so I ignored her and sat down. She came over to me and asked if I belonged to the hiking club. I asked the Mazama and she replied yes. When she told me her name was Evelyn, I remembered her and asked if she was from Columbia. She said yes and I recalled taking her to dinner and a hike about a year ago. That was the last time I had seen her and did not remember what she looked like. It turns out we took the same flight from Portland to Houston and she was on her way to Columbia and was first flying to Panama City. She looked at her seat number and it turned out to be the seat next to me. We talked for a while, since English is her second language it is hard to understand her. She was going to spend Christmas with her 4 sisters, 2 brothers and mother in Columbia. We both slept for most of the flight. Once we arrived in Panama City, I gave her a hug and went to find my ride to the motel in Panama City and Evelyn went to catch her flight from Panama City to Columbia. Once at the motel I walked around town and along the beach. When I was walking in town, I stepped in a very deep mud hole and later stepped on a steel plate that pivoted over a deep hole and I nearly fell in the deep hole. What luck I just got a bruise, I could have easily broken my leg. I checked out the old town part of Panama City and ended up in a scary poor part of town. It seemed safe and most people didn't even notice me. On my way back to the motel I came across a Parade. The parade had a lot of loud motorcycles. As I was walking around town, I only saw one person on a bike. The waterfront had a very nice bike trail, but only people walking on the trail. It seemed funny that I did not see more people on bikes. That evening in the hotel I found a couple of bugs in my bed, I killed them and did not see any more bugs in the room. (Walked about 12.07 miles)

Day 3, Monday, 12-20-2010

I got my bike ready and took it out of the motel for a ride. When I started to ride it I noticed it had been damaged on the plane. I ended up taking it back into the hotel to fix it. At that point I noticed that I could not find the key for my lock. I looked through everything and could not find my keys. I left my bike in the hotel and went for a walk to look for a new lock, I found a bike shop but they did not sell bike locks. I have not seen hardly any bikes in Panama and the ones that I saw were not locked. Seems strange a lot of poverty and it seems scary to me, but no one locks their bike. There must not be that much theft in Panama City, supposedly it is the

wealthiest city in Central America. On the way back to the motel I found a Thrifty Car rental agent and decided to rent a car, to make things easy I paid for the 1/2 tank of fuel and the full insurance. I then decided to go look for the Panama Canal, I took a wrong turn and was on my way to Colon, so I decided to go for it. The military (police) stop had me pull over and they looked at my driver's license, Passport and car rental information. They wanted to know if I was planning on staying in Colon and I told them I was staying in a motel in Panama City, they let me go and I continued to the town of Colon. I ended up finding a bike shop in that small town of Colon with a bike lock that I bought. I walked around the town and went looking for the fort, a group of 4 or 5 very young kids approached me and wanted my money. Even though they were very small it seemed a little scary. I could hear someone yelling and I believe they wanted the kids to leave me alone. I drove back towards Panama City and found the alternate highway over the Canal, that road was closed. I dove over the bridge and found the other end of that road was also closed. I drove down another road and could not get a single glimpse of the Panama Canal, what a bummer. I was using up my 1/2 tank of gas and decided to put \$20.00 of gas into the vehicle, this filled it up and when I returned the car it had more gas than when I rented it, I made a mistake, I should not have pre-paid for the gas. I had touched the Caribbean Ocean and when I returned to Panama City, I figured I would walk to the Pacific Ocean and touch the water, but I could not legally get to the water, so I did not touch it. I went back to the motel and bought dinner, I was thinking about taking a bus out of Panama City the next day, I did not want to bike out of the city. A man in the motel restaurant saw my book and said he had one like it. He suggested that I fly to Boca Del Tora and said I could arrange the travel at the hotel travel agent. I tried to get a flight the next day, but the flights were all full for that day. I have been feeling scared about traveling in Panama. (Walked about 10 miles)

Day 4, Tuesday, 2-21-2010

I started the day by signing up for a Canal tour, the lady messed up and I missed the tour. Originally it was supposed to be \$35.00, they rebooked and now it cost me \$40.00. It was originally going to leave at 9:00 AM, but the new tour left at 9:45 AM. Well at least I was able to get on the tour. It was a nice tour with 2 blonds that spoke very fluent Spanish, I think they were from the US. They talked to me for a while in English and then went back to Spanish. The one blond girl was living in Panama and the other one was her sister. There were also 2 other ladies from Mexico, one of the ladies was very nice and attractive. But we had trouble communicating due to my lack of Spanish. The tour took us to the canal, a park on a hill that overlooked Panama City (I saw an animal at the park, not sure what it was) and to the area where the cruise boats dock (they gave us a 1/2 hour to shop there). After the tour I went to the travel agent at the hotel where I was staying in Panama City and tried lining up a flight to Boca del Tora for the next day. The flights were full for the next day and I

really wanted to get out of the Panama City. I decided not to wait another day and I figured things out the next day. I then went for a 10 mile walk and returned to the hotel. I read about the town of David and was thinking about going to David and Boquete the next day. I had dinner at the motel and met a nice man from Alaska that now has a second home in Panama. He was very friendly and told me stories about the house he was updating. Every night I met nice people at the restaurant in the motel. The first night I met a guy from Massachusetts with his girlfriend that now lives in Costa Rica and the second night a man that was trying to do business in Panama and would need to live in Panama for 3 months. He recommended going to Baca Del Tora and said he would be staying there for 3 months. (Walked about 5 miles)

Day 5, Wednesday, 12-22-2010

I did not wake up as early as I wanted to, I ate me free breakfast around 6:30 AM and then caught a cab to the bus station. Then I paid for the bus to David and was on the 8:15 AM bus to David. As I was looking out the window on the bus it looked like an easy bike ride with, good roads, but not very scenic and not many motels. For about the first 50 miles there was way too much traffic to make for an enjoyable ride. The police stopped the bus and looked at my passport. I think they only looked at one other person and took her off the bus for a few minutes and then let her get back on the bus. After they checked my passport, they left me alone. It was probably a good thing I took the bus. From the bus I noticed I probably would have easily found places to camp, but it gets tiring being in foreign places and wondering if you can find a place to sleep. The guy next to me on the bus invaded my leg room and it was a very uncomfortable bus ride. A couple of times people hopped on the bus and tried selling jewelry. I bought a necklace from the first guy and was planning on buying stuff from the second guy, but he never acknowledged me to give me the opportunity to buy something. I probably would have bought a necklace and ear rings from him. I took a cab to Boquete and wanted to stay at a Hostel, the cab driver took me to a hotel and it seemed like a reasonable price so I paid for 3 nights. Nice place with private bathroom, no internet and a long walk to downtown. I found a cock roach on the floor and killed it. The motel was not perfect, the toilet dripped and the shower was hard to turn off. In town, I found several Hostels; I would have rather stayed at one of them. I could have probably found someone to climb the mountain with me at a hostel, oh well I stayed in the motel. The guy did not speak great English at my hotel and was trying to sell me on the wrong tour, I wanted to climb the volcano and he was trying to sell me on a short hike. The lady at one of the hostels in town also had tours and spoke great English; she recommended climbing the mountain without a guide. I really want to climb the volcano to the highest point in Panama. She suggests leaving at midnight or catching a cab at the bus station at 5:00 AM. I walked around town for a while and then went to an internet cafe. I wanted to check the weather to determine

which day would be best for climbing the volcano. I also worked on my journal.  
(Walked about 5 miles)

Day 6, Thursday, 12-23-2010

I got out of bed around 4:30 AM, I was monitoring the clock all night because I wanted to get up in time to hike to the top of Volcano Barú. This night I did not get much sleep. The motel was locked and I could not get out. A man sleeping on a couch unlocked the front door of the motel so I could get out and then he locked the door after I left. I was at the bus terminal by 5:00 AM looking for a cab, no cabs showed up until around 5:40 AM, but I was not paying attention and it never stopped. At about 6:00 AM a second cab stopped, I was not paying attention that time either but he asked if I needed a cab and I said yes and showed him the piece of paper I had with Volcano Barú written on it. He said something and I agreed. I was pretty sure he knew where to take me and he gave me a ride to the park entrance. It was still dark with a beautiful full moon. I was feeling good and hiked hard to the top. It took about 4 hours to reach the top. For the first 3 hours the skies were clear and I was hoping to make it to the top before it clouded up. It then started getting cloudy and you could no longer see the top of the mountain. About a half hour before I reached the summit the skies cleared and the views from the top were spectacular. On the way up after about two hours of hiking these guys passed me, then they stopped to eat and I passed them. Shortly after they started hiking again, they passed me again, then they stopped and I had the guy take my photo and passed them. In no time I saw them on my tail again I kept going and then they were no longer on my tail. They must have taken a long break then. They didn't pass me again for a while (15 minutes). They were in much better shape than me and I did not see them again until I reached the top. At the top, I met a couple from Arizona, I had them take my photo and we talked for a few minutes. The views at the top were spectacular; you could see the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Caribbean Ocean on the other side. I continued to the cross at the very top and the guys that kept passing me were there. I tried talking to them, but they spoke no English and my Spanish is very limited. However, I figured out they were from Northern Spain (the name of where they lived was on the cross at the top of the mountain, I took a photo but cannot figure out what they were looking at). They told me they were on a month long Central American bicycled ride. They had already cycled through Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Guatemala. From Volcano Barú they would cycle to Panama City. I think they end their trip in Panama City. I think they said the biking was easy, but I'm not sure what they were trying to say. On the long hike up the Volcano my leg started cramping towards the top it was a very tiring hike, the hike down was not much better. It took about 4.25 hours to reach the top and about 4 hours to get down. The guys from Spain started down the mountain and I did not see them again that day (however I did see them when I started biking 2 days latter). Near the top of the mountain, I was hungry and ate the trail mix that Linda had

given me before I left Portland. I really appreciate everything Linda did for me. She bought me great stink free shirts for Christmas and I wore the short sleeve shirt almost every day. She also bought me biking socks that I used almost every day. Before leaving the hotel for my hike in the morning, I was unable to take my normal morning dump and after eating lunch at the top of the mountain I needed to take that dump. No rest room at the top I stopped at the camp ground on the way down and found a very remote bathroom. I took a relieving dump and continued down. I was very tired when I reached the park entrance and asked the man at the window if he could telephone me a taxi and he said no. I walk down further to where the original taxi dropped me off and the people from Arizona were waiting for their ride. I asked if I could try getting a ride with them back to town. They said yes and after a few minutes a taxi showed up and took us all back to town. What luck I was out of water and don't think I had the energy to complete the 5-mile hike back to town. By the time we arrived in town I felt drained and had a headache. I bought some water and drank a soda at the town square then I went back to my motel and took a nap. Then I took a shower and felt great again. I walked around town, ate dinner. Not sure if the lady that cleaned the table took the server's tip. The lady serving me was a great server and she gave me a funny look when I did not tip her at the register. It was a great trout meal and then I went to the internet to work on my journal. I probably should have tipped the server even though I had already left a tip at the table that was taken by the lady that cleared the table. The motel was not great; they did not clean the room and didn't make the bed that day. Maybe because I left too early and they thought I was in the room all day. (Walked about 20 miles)

Day 7, Friday, 12-24-2010

I woke up around 6:30 AM and asked about breakfast, they told me they start serving at 7:00 AM. The previous day I had missed my breakfast. They said it was included with the room, but I noticed it was a separate charge and I was told I was supposed to get a meal ticket each day. The previous night they would not give me a new meal ticket. Then did not understand my request for a meal ticket that previous day, the guy that rented me the room said I would need to get a ticket each day. I used my previous days ticket with the old date and they accepted it for my breakfast. While I was waiting for breakfast to start, I walked to where you sign up for the zip-line tours and they were not opened until 7:30 AM and that's when I returned to the hotel to get my free breakfast. I went on the 8:30 AM zip-line tour. It was a very wet day and I got a little nervous when the prep-talked said that you can reach over 60 MPH on the zip-lines. They said the rain would make you travel faster. Well, it was not that fast or scary. It was a nice group of people on the zip-line tour, a couple from Toronto, a couple from Detroit and a few other people from the USA. There was also a very attractive lady that did not speak good English, she was blond with blue eyes and was wearing shorts. She did not go on the zip-line, but had a child that she took to

participate in the zip-line tour. While on the zip-line I tore a hole in my shorts outside shell. On the tour people recommended going on the Coffee plantation tour and I went to look into it. The first guy I talked to did not do the coffee tour, but had a jungle drive. He took me to another shop to sign up for the coffee tour. I signed up for the tour, but felt I should have gone on the jungle drive. I had about an hour before the coffee tour took off, so I walked to a local resident's house with a free garden to check out. The guy whom had the jungle ride told me about the garden and had given me a free town map. The coffee tour was a little long and boring, but it was probably a good thing to check out. It was recommended by both the Lonely Planet travel book and the other people on the zip-line tour. The things that were neat about the coffee tour was learning about the process they used to get to final high quality coffee beans, it's a lot of work, they also had a neat old functional coffee sorting machine. The machine was very old with big belts and it was operated by water. At the end of the tour an authentic local lady with her 2 kids sold us jewelry. I was able to get neat pictures of the local people. The lady has 6 kids and 3 of them were with her, they all dressed in authentic Panamanian Indian clothes. I was hoping to get back to town sooner after the coffee tour, but did not get back until 4:00 PM. I tried biking around, but my chain kept falling off. The bike had been damaged on the plane flight to Panama City and I could not find replacement parts. I ended up finding a place to buy wire and tied the chain ring to the chain guard. The bike was now working in 5th gear without continually having the chain fall off. People seem honest in Panama, when I bought the wire, I thought the lady wanted \$10.00, but when I handed it to her, she said something which I did not understand and then she showed me a quarter. I then handed her a quarter and that was all she charged me for the wire. The previous day I tried handing the cab driver \$4.00 for the return from the Volcano, but he only wanted \$2.00. At the grocery store the people in front of me let me go ahead, I shook my head no, but they insisted so I went ahead. We both had about the same amount of stuff, not sure why they let me go first. I guess just to be nice. I had dinner at one of the local restaurants and it was a great deal for the spaghetti dinner. Most of the tourists go to the fancier restaurants. I went back to the motel and tried assembling my trailer. I put the nut on backwards and it would not fit. I ended up crossing the threads and needed to wire the bolt to the trailer. It worked like that for the remainder of my trip. It seems like the craftsmen ship is not very good on the trailer, the bolt should have worked with mount on either way. If you look closely it looks like the groove for the screw is filed to barely fit in one direction. It would have only required a very small amount of filing to make it work from both directions. After getting the bike ready I was dirty and took a shower. The lights went out in the hotel and it was very dark. Luckily, they turned back on and I was able to get out of the shower. That night a lot of people were shooting off fireworks, I guess it was to celebrate Christmas. (Walked 6 miles; biked 7.34 miles; total bike miles 165.3 miles)

Day 8, Saturday, 12-25-2010

I woke up at 6:20 AM and quickly got ready to leave the motel. I left the motel about 6:45 AM (a little before my pre-paid breakfast), they do not start serving until 7:00 AM. I was not sure if I would get the breakfast anyways since I never got the meal ticket the previous day. The bike chain kept slipping off and I kept putting it back on. I found that when I put it in 5th gear the chain almost never came off. I ended up leaving the bike in 5th gear for the rest of the trip and walking the bike up all the hills. On the way to David the 2 cyclists that I had met when I was climbing Volcano Barú passed me, we tried to talk but I was not sure what they were saying. Too bad I do not know Spanish, they seemed like very nice people. I tried finding bike parts and someone to work on my bike in David. I found a shop that had parts that might have worked on my bike, but they did not have the tools to repair it or to sell me. The part had 3 rings and mine only has 1 ring and the part cost \$54.00. I do not think the 3 rings would have worked with my bike, however if I could have found the tool to remove the rings it's possible that the biggest ring might have been the correct size to replace my broken ring. Since the part was expensive, I could not get the tools to make the repair and the part might not work for my bike I decided not to buy the parts. I tried getting the guy to sell me a screw driver so I could fix it, but he tried selling me an Allen wrench. Since I did not buy the possible wrong part or Allen wrench, he was no longer willing to help me with a bigger screwdriver. If I would have spoken Spanish, he probably would have been more helpful. I need to learn Spanish before my next trip to a Latin American country. I ended up leaving David without getting my bike fixed and just always left the bike in 5th gear since the chain seemed to stay on best in that gear. As I was approaching the Costa Rica border, I passed a local man on a bike and a branch fell out of a tree and ripped my sweat pants. I ended up making the sweat pants into shorts that night and had them over my torn shorts for the rest of the trip. That made it so I did not need to buy new shorts. The guy that was behind me caught up to me as I was walking my bike up a hill. He was trying to get me to go down the wrong road and I insisted that I wanted to go over the boarder to Costa Rica. I finally just went over the border. I didn't really trust the guy I thought he might be pointing me into a dangerous neighborhood. I think I might have gotten robbed if I would have gone the way he suggested. Maybe I was just over reacting. It's possible that he was trying to invite me over as a social gesture. As I was going over the border a couple of German cyclists passed me. We ended up going across the border together. It seemed helpful since people were checking out our bikes while we paid our exit tax for Panama. We were able to watch each other's bikes. It seemed like a lot of people were interested in my folding Bike Friday. It's not like any of the bikes in Central America. The German's told me they were planning on heading down the Osa Peninsula. It looked like a less crowded route, I decided to look into that route that evening. On the Panama side of the boarder there were a lot of people begging and on the Costa Rica side there were not many people. The Germans

stayed near the border to eat lunch and I continued biking. I noticed that the roads in Panama had better shoulders and less pot holes than the roads in Costa Rica. I biked to the town of Neily, Costa Rica and looked for a motel. The only good motel was the one that showed up my GPS. There were some run down motels, but I decided to stay in the nice one. That motel was named Andrea Motel and had a very nice yard in the back. There was not anything exciting to do in town, it did seem like a nice, quiet and safe town. That evening the German guys showed up at the same hotel. I put my bike in my hotel room, I noticed the German guys left their bikes outside on the porch. They didn't even lock their bikes, it seemed like it would have been very easy for someone to steal their bikes. My guess is since they had been in the area for about a month that they had found it to be a lot safer than it appeared to me. I'm not sure why most of the houses, motels and stores all have bars and security guards if it's all that safe. It was hot and humid in that part of Central America, good thing the motel had air conditioning. The sun was so intense that I was getting a dark tan even though I was wearing 30 SPF sunscreen. I think I even got mild sun burn through the sunscreen. I probably should have reapplied the sun screen half way through the day. As I was walking through town, I saw this girl laying on the sidewalk and she was not moving. She was attractive and young near a small wall. I think she may have fallen off the wall and hit her head. The police showed up and took her away. Seemed strange! I had a great Spaghetti dinner with a couple of lousy beers. When I was walking back to my motel a guy through a fire cracker on the ground and I did not notice it. It blew up right in front of me and my good ear was ringing. The guy laughed, but I thought it was very un-cool of him. The Latin American countries seem to really like fireworks on Christmas and New Years. I don't like them! There were a few small bed bugs in the motel bed, I killed them and never noticed anything the rest of the night. (Walked 2.34 miles; biked 69.53 miles; total bike trip miles 76.87 miles)

Day 9, Sunday, 12-26-2010

I woke around 6:00 AM and it was still dark out. I got ready and left the hotel around 6:45 AM. I biked hard for Golfito, it was mostly flat, but on the uphill sections I had to walk my bike, since the bike only had 1 working gear. I saw one of the big purple butterflies as I was cycling; it was flying a strange pattern, it would suddenly drop and gain altitude as it flew, not a smooth flight like a normal butterfly. I wanted to get to the ferry in time for the 10:00 AM Ferry to Puerto Jimenez, I found the boat dock at about 9:45 AM and I was the first one waiting for the boat. At about 10:00 AM a lot of people showed up and the boat seemed full. They kept putting people in the boat until no one else would fit. They put my bike on the bow as the last item on the boat. The Ferry was supposed to leave at 10:00 AM and they had us all packed in the overcrowded hot boat for almost an hour before the boat departed at about 11:00 AM. The trip went fast and in the middle of the bay the guy slowed down so we could check out a big school of dolphin. When I arrived in Puerto Jimenez I searched



for motels and found a very nice one called La Choza Del Manglar and signed up for a night. A nice lady from Delaware that once lived in the small town gave me information on what beaches to visit and where to see wild life. They needed to clean my room, they said 10 minutes, it took about 30 minutes. While I was waiting for the hotel to get my room cleaned, I saw a large iguana and looked for it. The guy at the motel showed it to in the tree. The lizard climbed way up into the tree. I did not know they did that. I biked all over first down paved road to the Tigre River then down a dirt road looking for the beach the lady from Delaware recommended. When I first biked the paved road I saw another large iguana, but it quickly ran off. After the dirt road I cycled back on the paved road the Tigre River and walk a trail to the river. When I first went to the river I didn't see much. As I was sitting near the river I could hear loud birds that I could see crossing the river. I tried to see them with my binoculars but could not focus in on them. I also saw people riding horses along and across the river. I started hearing loud birds in the trees above my head and noticed they were Toucans and Parrots. I was able to get some fair photos of the birds before they left the trees near where I was sitting. I cycled back to town and then to a little swamp near the boat docks where I saw some small alligators. I went back to town to get groceries and ran into the German bikers again. We sort of talked for a while and then went our own ways. Back at the motel the people from Calgary, Alberta, Canada in the room next to me said they saw parrots, toucans and monkey in the gardens at the motel. The motel is advertised that way. They recommended a restaurant in town for seafood. When I was at the restaurant, I saw the couple from Calgary and the man recommended a specific meal. I figured I would try it and it was good. It was probably not what I would have ordered, but a good choice. I then went to the internet café and started typing in my journal. Before I was able to send anything the power went out and I lost all my work. I ended my internet usage after exactly one hour and the lady tried charging me for longer, I complained about the power and then she only changed me for my one hour of usage. It was hot and the A/C was not working at the hotel. (Walked 5 miles; biked 50.43 miles; total bike trip miles 127.3 miles)

Day 10, Monday, 12-27-2010

I woke up around 6:41 AM. I went out of my room and noticed white faced monkeys in the trees. The monkeys were pounding on the room of the restaurant and you could see that they had cut up bananas to eat. It appears the hotel was feeding the monkeys to keep them around. I biked towards the lodge the lady from Delaware told me would be the best wild life viewing area. Lots of neat flowers, birds and I even found a live turtle on the way to La Palma. At the store in the town of La Palma a family was waiting for a bus. The father started talking to me and it turned out he was brought up in Beaverton, Oregon. He really missed living there and was currently stuck living in Maryland. His wife was from Maryland and they had great jobs there. From talking with him his heart was still in Oregon. At that store in La Palma, I asked where the

Dante Corcovado Lodge was, but I was not sure how to explain it. The first people gave me the wrong directions; I do not think they understood which lodge I was talking about. Then I noticed a truck with the 3 toes on it and ask them how to get to his lodge (the 3 toes are what I saw on the signs for Dante Corcovado Lodge). He told me how to get there and I then was able to bike to Dante Corcovado Lodge. The lodge is very remote with nice wood floors. You need to remove your shoes to walk on the floor, the rooms had a fan, but no AC. There were lots of large lizards and colorful butterflies around the lodge. I biked from the lodge towards the river and the road started crossing the river. My feet would have gotten too wet if I continued so I went back and biked up this long uphill dirt road. The road was very scenic and went through a great rain forest. I mostly pushed my bike up the rough dirt road. I would estimate that I pushed the bike for about 6 km. I had no idea where the road was headed so I made my way back to the lodge. I needed to be back for the 7:00 PM dinner. Before leaving the lodge, I looked at the tours and they had a map that showed the river I checked out and also a hiking trail. The map was not to scale and it looked like the river was about the same distance as the trail. I figured the road I was on went to the trail and that I had missed it by a long shot. When I returned to the lodge, I read the literature that went with the map and realized the scale was way off. The trail was about 8 km down the road that I pushed my bike for about 6 km. The road led to the national park entrance and the trail was a scenic 6 km hike to a waterfall. It was the area the lady from Delaware told me would be the best place to view wildlife in Costa Rica. Missing that hike was the biggest disappointment of my trip to Costa Rica. If I would have just read the information on the tours from the lodge, I would have concentrated on making the 8 km ride and 6 km hike. I would have had plenty of time to do that. The motel tour to the trail and hike cost \$93.00/ per person with a minimal of 2 people. Back at the lodge I hiked the trails around the lodge, they had some long trails. I didn't see much wildlife, a few birds and lizards. I went out one trail and with the aid of my GPS returned on a horse trail. The horse trail came to a spot where my only choice was either turn back or wade through the river. It was already getting dusky and I figured I might get lost if I tried going back the way I came. I waded through the water and soaked my shoes and socks. My feet also got very muddy. I went to the restaurant to get my dinner at 7:00 PM and they told me they did not serve dinner until 7:00 PM. I asked them the time and they said it was 6:00 PM, then I realized there was an hour time change from Panama. They would have served me early, but I said it was OK and went back to my room to change my clocks up an hour to Costa Rica time. I walk the trail again by flash light and still no real wildlife. At that point I figured the lady from Delaware recommended the lodge for wildlife because of the national park hiking tour. I should have probably stayed for another night so I could do the hike, but I really wanted to make sure I completed my 5000 biking miles for the year. I ate dinner and then went to my room. I turned on the fan, it was wired weirdly. When I turned off the lights in my room the fan also went off.

Then I turned the light on and it seemed to flash or something. Then all the lights in the building turned off. I unplugged the fan and turned off the lights. Then with my flashlight I went outside. I noticed all the light in the small village were out. The stars were very nice and I saw a large spider on the road with the moon light. The light finally came back on and I decided not to try the fan again. It was a hot night!  
(Walked 4.67 miles; biked 23.18 miles; total bike trip miles 150.48 miles)

Day 11, Tuesday, 12-28-2010

I woke up 5:30 AM and it was a little boring around the lodge. Breakfast was at 7:00 AM, I biked to the river looking for wildlife, but did not see anything. I then walk around the lodge trail, still no wildlife. Back at the lodge I saw another large lizard. When I arrived at the lodge they asked if there was anything I did not like eating and I told them onion. When breakfast came, I found onions in my eggs. I ate them, good thing I'm not allergic to them. The first part of the road after leaving La Palma was not supposed to be paved and it was with a very smooth surface, flat and a great shoulder. After the town of Rincon, the road got hilly with big pot holes. The rest of the ride out of the Osa Peninsula was very difficult with since my bike only had one gear that worked. There were a lot of hills and since I only had 5th gear I pushed the bike up every hill. I could have tried changing gears, but I did not want to get stuck with a chain that will not stay on when I was so far from any towns. The cars moved really slowly on the road since there are hug pot holes all over the highway. It was very hot and I stopped in the shade on the side of the road to take a break. When I finished my break and entered the highway 2 people were walking down the road, one of them was carrying a machete and gave me a dirty look. The machete made me nervous since he was very close to me. They stopped to look where I came out of the woods and back onto the highway. The guy with the machete continued to give me bad looks and the other person did not seem to care. I continued biking and didn't look back again. It was a nice ride on the Osa Peninsula, light traffic, neat birds, lovely flowers and a scenic rain forest. Once I got off the isolated peninsula road and back onto the Pan American highway the traffic got heavier and the road improved with almost no more hills. I was very tired by the time I made it to Palma Norte, the lonely planet only suggested one motel in the town. I followed their instruction and did not find a motel like they described. So, I got a room at a rundown inexpensive place. Then I biked around town and found the recommended hotel. It was not at all where the lonely planet said it was. That motel would have been a lot nicer, but probably much more expensive. I took a photo of the night club, Papaya Heven. The sign had pictures of ladies in short dresses. Some local people saw me taking the photo and they waved me over. I think they were trying to tell me it was a strip club. I thought about going back that night, but don't want to get in trouble. I walked around the town looking for a good place to eat and I found the nice restaurant recommended in the lonely planet. It looked like a good place to eat, but didn't look like they served

beer. I really wanted beer with my dinner so I went back to a sleazy looking Chinese restaurant I had seen earlier and ate dinner. It was very hot and humid, the motel only had cold water and the cold shower I took felt great. I finished my power bars that I brought from Portland that night in my hotel. (Walked 1.59 miles; biked 65.5 miles; total bike trip miles 215.98 miles)

Day 12, Wednesday, 12-29-2010

I left the hotel around 6:00 AM and no one was at the reception desk so I left the key hanging on the reception window on some bars. I hope they easily found their key. The riding on this day was very easy and mostly flat, the road had a great shoulder most of the time. The traffic was a lot heavier than it was on the Osa Peninsula, so no wild life. I stopped at Uvita and met a guy from Eagle Creek, Alaska, he was actually originally from Massachusetts. He had climbed Mount Denali the previous May and he showed me his frost-bitten fingers. He was almost 29 years old and sort of reminded me of myself when I was that age. He suggested that we go on a bike ride together sometime, but I think my future trip might be organized trips. I think it would be nice to have someone come up with an itinerary like when I did the Bike Africa trip. My bike trips are good, interesting and cheaper, but I never know if I will find food and lodging. I think I'm getting a little old for that life! The guy from Alaska showed me a satellite photo of the beach nearby and suggested that I take my time going to Quepos. I wanted to see the beach he showed me the satellite photo of, but when I went to the road south of the store and it was closed. I then looked for the road north of the store and I think it was the unmarked road just before the bridge. Since there was no sign, I assumed there was an error with my GPS map, it has a lot of errors in the Costa Rica GPS map I bought on the internet. The satellite photo of the beach looked like a whale fine shaped beach. He told me that beach was known worldwide and a lot of people went to that beach. Since I could not find it, I continued to Dominica. At Dominica beach I saw a lot of hermit crabs, the beach was very nice. At the turn off to the town of Dominica I saw the fruit guy the man from Alaska told me about. The guy from Alaska told me there were always monkey near the guy that sold fruit. I went over to ask the fruit seller about the Monkeys and he told me they were only there in the morning. He was banging a piece of metal trying to get the monkeys attention, but he had no luck. The guy from Alaska also suggested that I stayed in Dominica, I checked out the beach and it looked very nice, but I did not see any place I wanted to stay so continued to Quepos. I think the actual town may have been at the road near where the man was selling fruit, but I did not see a sign. I would have enjoyed checking out the town and then deciding if I wanted to stay there. About 5 miles before arriving in Quepos I had a flat, my first flat of my trip. I fixed it at a bus stop, it was my front tire and I was able to quickly fix it and when I was getting ready to leave, I ran over my sunglasses and broke them. Second pair of sunglasses I had broken on this trip. I continue to Quepos. I

arrive in Quepos around 4:00 PM and bike around, I saw a lot of dive motels and one very nice one. I decided to go with the nice one. It was nice with respect to the A.C, a tour office and cable TV, but it only had cold water shower. However, in the hot/humid temperatures that was fine. I should have probably gone for a cheaper motel, but the expensive one seemed like the right one for me. I took a shower and then walked around town. I looked in a bar and noticed it was full of locals. A couple of ladies saw me look in and waved for me to come over. I pretended like I did not notice and left. That bar seemed like trouble to me. I walked down the road and a local guy said something about tequila and then came over and put his hand on my shoulder. I was afraid he might try to pick pocket me so I shooed him away and wondered down the road. The Lonely Planet makes it sound like the town of Quepos had a lot of thieves. I went back to the motel I was staying at and ate snacks. Then I walked around town, I found better options for motels and they may have been cheaper. It's OK I was on vacation and don't want to deal with looking too much. I found a place with Internet and it was a good deal with good speed. I worked on my notes for my web site and never checked my e-mail. I wanted to be on the computer for only one hour. The town I was staying in, Quepos, has more Anglos than anywhere else I had been since I arrived in Costa Rica. I think the prices are also very high for the same reason. The Lonely Planet travel book made the town seem like it was full of crime, I think they got it wrong. However, there were some strange locals. After the internet café I went back to my motel and drank a couple of beers, I guess I was really tired I only started the second beer and fell asleep. I ended out poured out the left-over beer in the morning. The expensive motel was not so great, it had ants in the refrigerator, no hot water and the toilet did not work great. They had a sign that said no toilet paper in toilet, I took a dump, put the toilet paper in the toilet and the toilet sort of clogged, when I tried flushing it. After a few tries I finally got it to flush. (Walked 10.9 miles; Bike miles 67.95 miles; total bike trip miles 283.93 miles)

Day 13, Thursday, 12-30-2010

I went to withdraw money from the ATM, but it seemed like it was not working. I tried 3 times and keep getting a bad transaction message on the ATM with my USAA card, I hoped it did not flag a problem with the USAA credit card. I walked away and then realized I was using the wrong card. I was using my USAA credit card and was supposed to be using my Chase ATM card. I went back to the ATM and since I thought it was not working before, I thought I was reading the money type wrong and when I went to withdraw money, I ended up getting US dollars. I wanted Costa Rica money. I still am not sure how to withdraw Cost Rica money, it says a minimum of 2.000 I think they mean 2,000. Oh well, I ended out getting US dollars and it was enough to where as long as I always used US dollars, I did not need to withdrawal money again. I then went on the Mangrove tour with the motel travel agent. It was a

little boring, I sort of wish I would have done the kayak at the Mangrove instead of the group motor boat. There was a nice lady from Maryland on the Kayaks and we talked a bit on the bus to the Mangrove tour. She was a physical therapist and her son was very good with math. She asked me how the job market was for Engineers and I told her not as good as it used to be. She hopes her son goes into engineering. I didn't know what to say about that. I guess everything is bad and Engineering is as good of a choice as most with the exception of nursing. The Mangrove trip was nice in that we saw some neat birds, a Boa constrictor in a tree, white faced monkeys and a silk skinned ant eater (a rare site according to tour guide). At the end of the trip, they took us to a very nice restaurant with a great view of the ocean. The lady from Maryland was at the restaurant and I talked to her for a few minutes, their group left and we stayed to eat. After the Mangrove tour, I figured I needed to get in some bike miles if I want to make my 5000 miles for the year. I biked to Manuel Antonio National Park. It was a lot of uphill climbing to reach a peak and then a big downhill to the beach near the national park. The beach was very crowded with lots of Anglos, not a lot of locals at that beach. It seemed like an artificial Costa Rica environment. The town I was staying in is a little more authentic, but still a lot more Anglos than other places I had visited. However, I noticed the advertised motel prices were a lot lower than I paid near the beach. The Lonely Planet tour book was wrong again, they said the town would be cheaper. I biked back to the motel and decided to see if I could join an early morning tour of Manuel Antonio national park the following day. I signed up a 7:20 AM tour and then continued biking so I could get in more miles. I biked a long distance and it started sprinkling. I made it back to the hotel before it started raining, then it rained really hard. I watched TV and fell asleep for a while. I was feeling really bushed. Then I decided to go out to get something to eat, it started raining really hard again when I was a few blocks from the motel. I waited under an awning and worked my way towards a restaurant. I figured the rain would improve the wildlife viewing the next day. While I was biking in town a man tried to sell me marijuana and of course I did not want it. This was the only person that tried to sell me the stuff in Costa Rica. Later in my trip the man on the boat to Playas Naranjo ask if I used the stuff and I told him not these days. I went to an internet cafe and typed in notes for my journal. I checked to see if I got any e-mails from USAA complaining about the attempts to withdraw money, but no e-mail. I hope my credit card works next time I try it. The credit card did work for the remainder of my trip in Costa Rica. I hoped the weather would improve since I wanted to continue to Jaco the next day and wanted to complete my 5000 miles for the year (which I did). (Walked 1 miles; Bike miles 25.69 miles; total bike trip miles 309.62 miles)

Day 14, Friday, 12-31-2010

I was signed up for a 7:20 AM Antonio Manuel tour, so I woke up and packed my stuff up. Then I stored my packed gear at the tour agent office at the motel, so I could

check out in case the tour lasted beyond the 11:00 AM motel checkout time. Good thing I got checked out before the tour, it lasted longer than expected and we got back after the checkout time. The reason the tour ended later than expected is because the tour van did not arrive until 7:30 AM and when we picked up the other people on the tour, they paid with credit cards and we had to return to the travel agent so they could pay before we started the tour. The other people were from Germany (2 men and a very attractive lady) and were very nice people. We saw a lot of wildlife on the short tour in Manuel Antonio national park. The tour was on the main route and the 2 trails in the park were closed due to a recent storm. A lot of people I met complained about the tour because they expected more, but I knew what to expect and I really enjoyed the National Park. It was very crowded and we did not go far. Most people expected to get more distance and they expected we could have hiked on the closed trails. The German's said they felt the tour was very slow since we had to spend 2 hours and all the side trails were closed. The Germans now live in DC and one of the guys is an Electrical Engineer. I was very happy because I wanted to see wildlife and we saw Squirrel monkeys, Howler Monkeys, White faced monkeys, a colorful crab, lizards and several interesting birds. Our guide was able to pick out all sorts of stuff and then find it in his tri-pod mounted monocular. He seemed like a great guide. At the end of the trip, we were supposed to get a ride back and a sack lunch. The tour guide was not going back. Me and the Germans did not understand what we were supposed to do to get back. Finally, a cab showed up and the tour guide came over to let us know the cab was for us. The cab had a sack lunch with fruit and water for each of us. We tip our guide, ate and got a ride back to the motels. Good thing I stored my stuff at the tour agent window, I did not get back from the tour until after the 11:00 AM motel checkout time. Back at the tour agent's office I connected my trailer to my bike and continued my bike adventure. As I was biking north on the Pan American highway, I saw a cyclist riding south with a fully packed back pulling a trailer. He turned around and we talked for a while. He was a little in the traffic lane and cars seemed to need to go around him. I would have pulled completely onto the shoulder if I was him. It did not seem to bother him. He was from Switzerland and had been biking for the past year. He started his cycling in New York. He continued by cycling thorough Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California. He then spent 6 months cycling through Mexico. Since Mexico he had cycled through Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. From Costa Rica he was planning on cycling through Panama and then flying back to Switzerland from Columbia for 6 months. Then he would return to Columbia and cycle to cap horn. Basically, he was planning on cycling from New York to the southern tip of South America. For years I've been working on completing a cycling trip from the top of North America to the bottom of South America. This guy would complete most of my desired trip in 2 years. I should quit work and complete the ride! I continued cycling north and just before Jaco I stopped at a view point and talked to some people from the USA. One of the guys was

from Raton, NM and the other 2 guys were from San Diego, CA. They were impressed with my bike ride. In Jaco the first 2 motels I checked out had no rooms available. Then I found a rundown motel with a swimming pool and locals staying in the motel. The guy whom ran the motel did not speak any English and it was tough telling him I wanted a room for the night. He was able to rent me a room for the night and I stayed there. I wasn't sure how much it cost in US dollars and gave him \$40.00 he wanted more so I gave him another \$20 US and he gave me 10,000 CR in change. I think he made a mistake since 10,000 CR is about the same as \$20 US. I biked around town and bought Groceries. I watched a lady Bungee jump and then I wanted to film her friend Bungee Jumping, but her friend chickened out. I cycled back to the motel and put away my groceries. Then I cycled back to town and ate dinner. The bill for dinner seemed higher than I expected, either the guy overcharged me or the tip was included. Since I was not sure I still tipped him \$2.00 US. Maybe the exchange rate was high, I was expecting the bill to be about \$3.00 US less than it was. The motel where I stayed did not provide a towel for my cold shower. (Walked 2 miles; Bike miles 52.41 miles; total bike trip miles 362.03 miles)

Day 15, Saturday, 01-01-2011

I cycled to Puntarenas to catch a ferry to Playa Naranjo. Just north of Jaco started the biggest uphill of my trip, there was about 3 miles uphill climb. Since I only have one working gear, I pushed the bike all the way up the hill. I came across a bridge with a bunch of people parked and looking into the river. When I got on the bridge, I looked to see what everyone was looking at and saw large alligators in the river. These alligators were much larger than the ones I had seen in Puerto Jimenez. In fact, the only places I saw alligators on this trip was on this bridge and the swamp in Puerto Jimenez. I came across a part of the road that had to be accessed through a toll booth. They charged me a lot and I'm pretty sure it should have cost about 1/10th of what I paid. After paying the toll I cycled around the corner and a sign said no bikes on the highway. I figured I already paid the guys so I started biking quickly, I do not think there was an alternate route. I felt better when another guy on a bike started following me. You could see signs at all the highway on ramps indicating that bikes are not allowed on the highway. Good thing no police were on the road while I was biking, the shoulder on the road was very good and I wasn't affecting the traffic at all. When I arrived in Puntarenas, I accidentally got the wrong ferry ticket (to Paquera), I went to get on the boat and they said I had the wrong ticket. I went back and found out there were 2 places to buy tickets and I got the wrong one. A lady and man that spoke good English told me the lady had her pack stolen on a bus. She had all paper work including passport in the pack. Sounds like a real bummer losing the passport. They told me where I should have bought my ticket and watched my bike while I got the correct boat tickets. I didn't have time to try returning the wrong tickets and gave the tickets to someone in line for free. I ended out getting on the boat and a Vietnam vet



that had been living in Costa Rica for the past 4 years invited me to sit near him. He asked me if I noticed all the women dressed very sexy and I told him they seemed very sexy, but I felt that women in the southwestern US state also dress sexy and look as good as the one's in Costa Rica. I will admit that it seems like almost all the women in Costa Rica have good figures. He also told me that over 14,000 people from the US now live in Costa Rica. The man told me how he was shot and ended out getting a plastic knee due to injuries he got while in Vietnam. I asked him about Vietnam, but he wanted to change the subject so we did. He spoke very good Spanish and was humoring all the locals. My hat blew off and he made fun of me, he said something about the Gringo (me). The locals all laughed. The guy was very out spoken and said a lot of stuff in Spanish and then all the locals laughed. He asked if I knew what he said and I said no. Then he told me they were laughing because he said he wants to die naked in bed with a lady. The guy was 61 years old and very energetic. He was trying to pick up on this sexy lady that was about 25 years old and with her boyfriend. I kept thinking the boyfriend was going to get mad, but he did not seem to care. The lady was getting free beers from the Vietnam vet. I ended up seeing her with the boyfriend the next morning waiting for a bus while I was biking towards Santa Cruise. The Vietnam vet was getting wild and dancing dirty with a lot of the women on the boat. Everyone was enjoying his entertaining behavior. Some of the attractive ladies on the boat started dancing together and I was thinking about joining them. I could not get up my nerve and ended out just watching. It was a fun boat trip. The Vietnam vet told me that Puntarenas was a very dangerous town at nights. In the day the town is very safe, but at night if you go out by yourself groups of kids will mug you. He said it was always several kids that gang up on you, never just one guy. The ferry arrived in Playas Naranjo around 4:00 PM. The town is very small and what looked like the only hotel did not have rooms. They told me to go down this one road, it sounded like I would need to bike several miles to find a motel. I thought he said it would be 10 kilometers to the nearest hotel, luckily about ¼ mile down the road I found very nice ocean front motel with rooms available. The price was very good and it was on a very nice secluded beach with a nice swimming pool. The motel sign advertised \$35/night for the rooms, but I had one with an ocean view so it cost \$40/night. The room was very nice, but it did not have a TV and I found ants in the room. The hotel even had hot water, but no shower head. Overall, I would say it was the nicest place I stayed in during this trip to Central America. The beach was very nice and only a few people. There were a lot of neat birds, a lot like the birds I had seen in south of Acapulco, Mexico with Andrea. (Walked 1 miles; Bike miles 53.32 miles; total bike trip miles 415.35 miles)

Day 16, Sunday, 01-02-2011

A little ways out of Playa Naranjo the road became a dirt road, it was slow and luckily was only for about 3 miles long. The map made it look like the road might be dirt for

about 20 miles. The scenery was OK, but not as good as other parts of my trip. It was hot and felt like it took a long time to get to Santa Cruise. The town of Santa Cruise was not a tourist town and looked a little scary. The hotel I stayed in looked nice from the outside, it did not have security gates like a lot of the hotels I had stayed in. The motel did not have AC or hot water. The ceiling fan in the motel worked great, so it really did not matter that there was no AC. When I was looking for a hotel, it was the best one I could find in this town. Walking around the town seemed interesting, there were a number of pool halls and a few of the bars had rows of pinball machines. The pinball machines were quite a bit smaller than the ones in the US, I have never seen the small pinball machines like that before. (Walked 2 miles; Bike miles 61.06 miles; total bike trip miles 476.41 miles)

Day 17, Monday, 01-03-2011

I cycled around Santa Cruz one last time and left town by 7:00 AM. The biking was OK, it seemed like a lot of traffic and no interesting scenery. When I was about 10 miles from Liberia, I started getting head winds and as I approached the international airport, I kept seeing rental car agencies. I figured I would wait until I arrived in Liberia and then see about getting a rental car. I figured I was very close to Liberia and the bike still only had one gear that worked. I ended up stopping and getting a National Rent a car. I did not bike all the way to Liberia, I was about 7 miles short of town. The rental car was very expensive, but I figured I can afford it and I am on my annual vacation. I live for my annual vacation. The funny thing is they only charged \$5.00 for the full tank of gas. He said they normally charge about \$55, not sure why they only charged me \$5.00. At the end of the trip, I noticed they actually charged me \$55 for the tank, but the guy told me \$5 and that is what he added to the original quote. I think he was playing dirty and overcharging me. Once in the rental car I drove to the Nicaragua border, I wanted to bike to it, but the drive was very hilly and would have been a very tough bike ride with only one gear working on my bike. I was a little tired of biking anyways and I feel good about covering over 500 miles on a bike that is broken. On the way back from the Nicaragua border I went through 3 check points. The first one waved me through and the other 2 checked my passport and let me go. I then headed to Santa Rosa National Park. It was a very dry park, as I was driving down the road one of the white nosed Coatis (long nosed raccoon like animals) crossed the road. I tried to get a photo, but a car was on my tail. I drove ahead and then let the car pass. That was the only real animal I saw at the park. I saw some neat birds and big spiders at the park. The park has cactus and to me is a lot less desirable than the rain forests. I biked a few miles down the dirt road towards the beach. Then I hiked/ pushing my bike down a dirt trail to some pools of water in the mostly dry riverbed. At the pools I saw some neat birds and a large spider. From the photos I saw of the beach it looked very nice, but it was 11 miles on a 4-wheel drive road and I only had about an hour before sunset. I biked back to my rental car and

loaded my bike in the car. Then I walked around the campground and toward the park office. As I was working my way back to the car at dusk, I noticed something small chasing me, so I quickly skipped away. Then I noticed it stopped I used my camera with the flash to figure out what it was and found it was a tarantula. I must have stepped on it. I don't think they normally chase people. I then drove the rental car to Liberia and looked for a motel, they all looked risky for leaving the rental car outside and there was one with a security guard and barbed wired fences. I checked that one out, it was very expensive, but I wanted to keep things safe. Best motel yet, nice pool, hot water and no bugs. I went through all my stuff since my biking was down and then I washed most of my real stinky cloths in the sink and hung them out to dry on the shower curtain. The only thing that did not work in this hotel was the TV remote control, the TV worked by manually pushing the buttons on the TV. (Walked 1 mile; bike miles 35.20 miles; total bike miles 511.61)

Day 18, Tuesday, 01-04-2011

In the morning I took my time, since I was in such a nice motel. I biked around town and saw some neat old buildings. Most of the buildings look like historic monuments, but I think they are still in use. Not much in the way of a tourist town, a little scary almost all the houses have bars on the windows and around the yards. A lot of the houses even have barbed wire around the top of their homes and fences. The motel I stayed in had a high fence with barbed wire along the top and an all-night security guard (I think all the motels have all night security). As I was biking in town, I saw a couple on bikes loaded with camping gear. I asked them where they started and they started at the same place I started Boquete and they said they first climbed the volcano (like I did). They were headed all the way to Canada. They saw the guy from Switzerland, but never talked to him. They also thought they had seen me going in the southern direction. It was probably the other guy touring on a bike Friday, the guy from Switzerland showed me a photo of a man he camped out with near Jaco that was touring on a bike that looked like my bike. I got a breakfast to go at McDonalds, put it in my car, packed my stuff in the car and then checked out of the hotel. I was on the road about 8:00 AM. The new batteries that I had just put in my GPS were already giving me a low voltage warning, usually I use them for 3 10-hour days before getting a low voltage warning. The GPS did work all day. They looked like good Panasonic batteries, the package had a picture of a digital camera, and those batteries probably would have only taken one picture with my camera before going dead. When I arrive in Tronadora I followed the main road out, but the signs indicated a place that I could not find on my map. Using my GPS, I realized I was on the wrong road. I went back to Tronadora and found the correct road with the help of my GPS. The drive around Laguna De Arenal was very nice. About half way around the lake the forest turned into a thick rain forest. The majority of the road had huge potholes. It was a slow drive making sure I missed the pot holes. I came around a corner and found a large

herd of the white nosed coati (raccoon like animals with long snouts). People were feeding them and they were staying near the road. It's neat to see the animals, but it's wrong for people to feed them. Later I saw a single White nosed coati on the side of the road with cars stopped to take photos, but I figured I could not beat the photos I already had so I did not bother stopping. When I arrived at the turn off to Volcano Arenal the mountain was mostly covered with clouds and I decided to go to the sky tram. I was supposed to have reservations, but they said I could go on the next tour. I wanted to do the sky walk as well, but it was closed. They asked if I wanted to do the zip line and I said no. When I boarded the tram everyone except me was equipped to do the zip line down from the top, I did not know that the tram was used to take people to the top of the zip-line. I started wishing I would have signed up for the zip-line, but it was too late the tram was about to take off. On the tram ride up we could see and hear Holler monkeys in the trees. When we got to the top one of the girls from Toronto, Canada that was signed up and equipped for the zip-line chickened out, so I took her place. Good deal I was able to zip-line for the price of the sky tram. This zip-line was slower than the one I did on Panama, had brakes at every platform (in Panama most of the platforms (except the first 2 platforms) you had to use the provided padded gloves to stop yourself, the one in Costa Rica was less stress on the arms) and the view was of dense jungle (in Panama it was over a neat river). I stopped at a bridge and I saw 2 cats (could have been Kinkajous) on an island they got spooked by me and tried jumping across the river to get to the other shore. Both cats only made it half way across the river and quickly swam to shore. The river was moving rapidly, I've never seen cats get in the water. They looked like they were regular house cats, but they looked a little wild. One was black and the other one was brown, neither one had a collar (on the last day of my trip in Costa Rica I saw something that looked like these cats at La Paz waterfall park). I continued down the road and saw a tour van stopped with people looking in the trees. I stopped to check it out and they were looking at Toucans in the trees. I tried getting photos, but the birds were too far away, even further than the ones I saw on Oso Peninsula (which I could not get good photos of either). I continued on the paved road and saw another tour van pulled over and people looking in the trees, so I stopped again to see what they were looking at. I could see Holler monkeys in the trees. As I was looking at the Monkeys another tour van pulled up and the guide showed them a sloth in a tree, I didn't notice that. I imagine since the Sloth almost never move all the tour vans know to stop there. I think the monkeys were just luck, but they were high in the trees so it was hard to get a good photo. I pointed them out to the guy in the tour van and he showed the monkeys to his group. I continued to the town of La Fortuna and found the hotel the people from Montreal (guy with his girlfriend on the zip-line tour) recommended. I drove through town and ended up going the wrong way on a one-way road. It was tough getting out of that mess, I really held up the traffic at that intersection for a couple of minutes. Some people on the side of the road warned me

when I first entered the one-way road. I went back to the recommended hotel and was able to get a nice room for \$25.00. It was cheap because it was one of the only rooms, they had that did not have a view of the mountain. The mountain was covered with clouds any ways, so who cares. I unloaded my car and walked into town. There were lots a great souvenir shops in town, so I did most of my souvenir shopping for this trip in La Fortuna. Then I had a great fish dinner and returned to the hotel. I used the hotels free internet to work on my journal and research the area a little more. I do not have very much Costa Rica money (colons) and I was able to use US money all day long. It seems like everything is working at this hotel and they have free internet. (Walked 1 mile; bike miles 9.23 miles; total bike miles 520.84)

Day 19, Wednesday, 01-05-2011

I woke around 6:00 AM and went biking to look for Futuna Falls. I was told it was about 3 km down this one road. I biked for about 7 miles without seeing it and then biked back to the motel. The bike was losing the chain again, I put it back on and pressed the chain to the front cluster, it fell off again and the second time it stayed on for my full 14-mile ride. On the way back from the ride I found the place where you entered someone's property to get to the falls. From their property it was 3 km to the trail head then you had to hike down a trail. I wanted to check it out and figured I would need to stay at the same hotel for a second night. So, I went back to the motel to tell the owner that I wanted to stay for a second night, I left my pack in the office and when I went to get it I saw the people from Montreal that recommend the hotel I was in and we talked for a few minutes. Then I got my pack from the office and went back to my room to get my bike. I then rode back to the Futuna falls trail entrance and paid to check out the park. They told me that I would not be able to go to the other side of the fall's stream due to it being private property. I pushed my bike most of the 3 km to the trail head. It was very steep and lots of big rocks on the road. Not great for the bike Friday. About half way up the mountain I visited the Maleku village; it was a reproduction of a Cost Rica native village. There are only 4 actual villages of this tribe left in Costa Rica. They have their own language and a man interpreted the Maleku lady's conversation to me. The lady and her kids were dressed in closes make from tree bark. I was able to take a lot of photos at the village. After the village the road got very step, before the village the climb was gradual. At the top I found out it was a zip-line road, a tractor pulling a trailer full of people doing the zip-line passed me just before I reached the top of the hill. I looked at the equipment they were using on this zip-line and it was the same setup that was used in Panama, gloves for brakes. I liked the setup they used on my previous days zip-line tour better (Sky tram at Arenal). It was raining all day and at the top it started raining harder and did not let up until well after I returned to the hotel. It was a wet, miserable and muddy ride. At the top the hike to the falls seemed pretty far and went over a neat swinging suspension bridge. The trail was very well maintained. On the other side of

the river, you could see the no trespassing signs and there were people and a trail to the falls from that side of the river. The other trail ended with a better view of the falls and it would have been preferred to hike to the falls from the other person's land. Biking down the hill was not very easy, big boulders and very step-down hill. There were people on horses in front of me so whenever I started catching them, I would stop and let them get further ahead. I did not want to spook the horses and I did not want them on my tail since I often had to dismount my bike when the boulders on the road got too big. Once at the bottom I checked out the gardens and butterfly house. The butterfly house had a lot of the big purple butterflies and other neat butterflies. Too bad my camera was not working well. It was very neat, but my camera lens was staying fogged up and I could not get any good photos. The camera has been a real problem. By the time I left the waterfall park I was soaked and when I got back to the motel, I hung all my cloths to dry. I ate a few sandwiches and then went to look for the hot springs. I stopped at the Arenal spa and lodge. I asked the parking lot guard and he told me to go the main road and drive 1 km, turn right and go another 3 km. I went where the guy said and the 3 km it looked like a bad dirt road to another lodge. I decided not to go down that road. Then I found the correct lodge, but did not stop. I stopped at a visitor center and they told me that lodge I passed was the correct lodge, but they charged \$60, they had a deal with another spa for \$33.00 which included dinner. I decided to go to that other spa, Baldi Hot spring resort. I'm not real sure why I was going, it was recommended by the couple from Montreal as well as my brother, Greg. The problem was that I did not have a bathing suit and my biking shorts have a big hole in the rear. It was a very nice setting with the cloud covered volcano as a view from some of the hot springs as well as the restaurant where I got my buffet dinner. I ate my buffet dinner and like usually I way overate on the buffet. I felt lousy for a while due to my overeating. It was getting dark and when I went to one of the pools with about 10 other people, I decided to take off my shirt, sweat shorts and put my valuables in my back pack. I then only had on my ripped biking shorts, since they are black and have two layers, I think no one noticed they were torn. They got torn on the zip-Line tour I did in Panama. The water was very nice, I spent about 20 minutes in the water and then returned to my hotel. It had not been raining since about an hour after I completed my bike ride. I changed into dry clothes and then went to type my journal into the internet (I e-mail the typed journal to my home and work e-mail addresses) (walk 1 mile; Bike miles 25.35 miles; total mile miles 546.19 miles)

Day 20, Thursday, 01-06-2011

I started the day with a very wet 7-mile bike ride. Then I packed the car and drove towards the Caribbean Ocean. I had a very tough time finding the correct roads and finally ended up on the Pan-American Highway. I was trying to take a short cut that would have bypassed San Jose, but could not navigate well enough with my hand-held

GPS. I was always stopping and looking at the map and zooming in and out with the GPS. There was a neat church in Zapota. After checking out the church I ended up on the Pan-American Highway. I went by the airport and decided to see if I could find where I needed to go to return my rental car, no luck. I got tired of looking and continued to San Jose, somehow, I got turned around when I first got into San Jose and decided to go back towards the airport and look one more time for the rental car return. I had to ask 3 people and it took me about an hour to find the rental car return area. I flagged it on my GPS and confirmed with the man at the desk that was where I was supposed to return the car and that I was near the correct airport. He said yes to returning the car there and they could shuttle me to the airport which was on my airline itinerary. There are 2 airports in San Jose. Then I continued towards the Caribbean, it took me about an hour to get through San Jose. I would have never figured out where to go without my GPS. On the way to Limon my GPS batteries died again, it was the seconds set of lousy Panasonic batteries that had died. I've found that the quality of batteries in foreign countries is not that good, the same thing happened to me in Mexico a few years back. I then changed the batteries with my Camera and put new batteries in my Camera. The new batteries did not work, not even in the GPS. These were new batteries from home, they should have been very good. Maybe the wet got them discharged. When I got close to Limon the truck traffic was horrible, in fact the whole road from San Jose to Limon had very heavy truck traffic. It was already dark by the time I arrived in Limon and I continued to Puerto Viejo. In Puerto Viejo I spend a long time looking for a motel. The first 2 motels were full, the third one was very nice with a guy that watched his gate. The town is a neat town with a lot of Anglos. The town had a bunch of hippies and it felt like I went back to the 60s. I walked around town and had chicken Shish Kabobs for dinner. I had arrived in town around 7:45 PM and walked around until about 9:00 PM. I then send e-mails to Linda and my Dentist. Then I worked on my journal until the internet Cafe closed at 10:30 PM. I arrived too late at the Internet Café and only had one half hour left before they closed. (Walk 3 miles; Bike miles 7.16 miles; total mile miles 553.35 miles)

Day 21, Friday, 01-07-2011

It was a noisy town and I could hear music until late. In the morning I could hear people in front of the motel talking. I did not have a great night of sleep. I also had gotten a couple of mesquite bytes in the motel that night. However, I wanted to get up early for a bike ride. A big part of the reason I had come to this place was the Lonely Planet suggested biking to Manzanillo, so I did just that. I left the hotel around 6:00 AM and there was some light on/off rain throughout my ride. I really did not get very wet, just a little annoying. According to the Lonely Planet book the road was paved in 2003. Considering that was only 8 years ago the road was not looking great. Lots of large pot holes and in places it appeared to be a dirt road. Some parts of the road

appeared to have new Pavement. Overall, it was a great ride with almost no traffic. I saw a lot of neat birds on the ride and in the town of Punta Uva there was a very fancy beach front resort. The resort looked like it probably did not make much money I only saw about 3 people around. My guess is that it was about 5% full. It seems like places like that would go out of business, but I think they somehow can survive in Costa Rica. I left my motel in Puerto Viejo around 10:30 AM and was planning on checking out the Caribbean beaches on my way back. I really did not see anything to check out and before I knew it I was in the town of Limon. I walked around the town of Limon and it seemed like a very poor port town. I felt people were looking at me. One man that was missing a leg tried to bum money. I didn't give him anything and decided to get out of that town. I parked near the waterfront park and was worried that it was a no parking zone. A sign near where I parked said "No Parque", the sign looked hand written. Other cars were parked there, but there was a sign that appeared to say no parking (not good enough with Spanish to know what the sign actual said). I continued driving towards San Jose. The highway dumps out into the busy part of San Jose and I figured since I already went through San Jose one time that I would have no trouble getting through again. Well, I was very wrong! I looked at my GPS as I entered the traffic and it looked like I would need to go 4 blocks before heading north. There was too much traffic and no place to pull over for me to look at the GPS while driving. A car GPS would have been great, but the hand held one is limited in the view. I ended up going a few extra blocks to make sure I did not turn too soon. I then headed in the direct I expected to find the airport. I saw signs for an airport and when I finally found it. I realized the signs were for the local airport. I knew the basic direction to head, but all the roads seemed to dead end and the neighborhoods looked very poor. I could not find a good place to stop to look at the GPS. I finally found a place that looked safe for looking at the GPS. I had to zoom in and out and scroll the map to try figuring out how to go. It looked like the city airport was between 2 river and there was no road towards the international airport. I ended up putting flags on my GPS map so I could work back towards the Pan American Highway. As I was parked looking at my GPS some kids knocked on my window and wanted money. I said no and then tried getting out of that part of town. I finally found the Pan American highway. It took me about 2 hours to figure it out. When I rented the car I could have rented a local car GPS, next time I will rent the GPS! When I found the airport, I decided to drive to Volcano Poás. I had to take a dump and stopped at a gas station. I really had to go, but they did not have toilet paper. I had to clean the hole with water. By the time I arrived at the park entrance it had been closed for a long time, the park closes at 3:30 PM. I then started Heading down the mountain trying to find a place nearby to stay. The first lodge had a sign that said 4-wheel drive road, so I backed up to reenter the highway and continued down the mountain. The next lodge I found had a closed gate and I had to back up a long distance to get back on the highway. I continued down the mountain to the 4th lodge and it had no vacancies. The



next lodge, Poás Lodge, was right on the highway and had vacancies. It was a little expensive, but I ended up getting a room. My room had a great view of the city and valley. They also had a restaurant with a great view. The man who ran the lodge spoke very good English and was from South Africa. This lodge was very nice and had hot water. The hot water was a separate valve in the shower. The room did not have AC, but since the motel was at 7000 ft in elevation it was cool and did not need AC. In fact, it was a little cold. They had internet that I could use, it was very slow and kept dropping out. I used it for a short time and thought it was included in the cost of the room. It turned out I was charged for the internet, which I noticed when I got my bill when I checked out of the lodge. I only had one more full day left in Costa Rica so I made 8 tuna sandwiches for the next day so I could use up my bread and last 3 cans of tuna. (Walk 1 mile; Bike miles 21.76 miles; total miles 575.11 miles)

Day 22, Saturday, 01/08/2011

I woke up around 6:30 AM and got ready for the day. Then I drove to Volcano Poás. I was the first car in the parking lot, it opens at 8:00 AM and I arrived around 8:10 AM. There was a tour bus and a couple of cars in front of me, not sure where they parked. I went to check out the crater and it was all clouded up. I then hiked to the smaller crater and the lake in the small crater was partially visible. Then I hiked back to the main crater and a lot of the clouds had lifted. There were also tons of people then, Volcano Poás is the most visited park in Costa Rica. There are not many places like Volcano Poás in the world, where you can drive up to the active volcano and look in. I then hiked back to the small crater most of the clouds had also lifted. I hiked back to the main crater again and it had cleared out even more. It still was not as clear as it is in the tourist brochures, but it was the clearest it has been for the few days according to a tour guide. I went to the gift shop and bought some AA batteries and miniature liquor bottles. I spent about 2.5 hours at the volcano and then went back to the lodge where I had stayed the previous night to pick up my bike (I had all my other gear already). Then I drove to La Paz Waterfall Garden. It was a long drive from the lodge and required 2 left turns. The gardens were very nice, they had a butterfly farm building, aviary with neat birds, lots of humming birds at their humming bird feeder, frog room, snake room, replicated farm house, great trails with 3 big waterfalls, orchid buildings and a trout lake with no fish. I asked about the maps for the garden when I paid my entrance fee and the guy said everything was marked and I would not need a map. I figured they did not have maps, but noticed a couple of other people with the maps. Maybe they had to buy them, it seems like they should give everyone a map, it's expensive to get in the park, but well worth it. There were a lot of signs in the park, but the only maps were at the reception desk and some people had them. After I thought I had seen everything I went back to the reception desk to make sure I did not miss anything. Looking on the map I realized I missed the snake room and one of the open trails to get a better view of the first waterfall. I went back

and checked out those things and then left the park. I spent about 4 hours at the waterfall gardens and then drove to a waterfall that you could see from the waterfall park (La Paz). I then started driving back towards the airport so I could find a place to stay for the night. I got to the end of the road and took a left and the road was much worse than I remembered. Then I remembered there were 2 lefts from the lodge. I should have taken a right at that road. After driving a long distance, I saw a sign for Alajuela (the town with the international airport) and turned. The road was narrow and had a lot of traffic. A kid on the side of the road would not get out of the way and the car behind me was honking. I slowly went between the kid and the traffic coming towards me. I was inches from the kid and it seemed like no big deal to him. A little farther down the road I came across some sort of horse ride. The horses were marching down the road; some of the riders had numbers on. The horses were really lifting their legs and I was concerned one might kick my car. Well, I made it passed the horses and continued to Alajuela. The traffic was heavy in the town and I didn't see any hotels. I decided to drive towards the airports and found a few hotels. Most of them looked pretty bad or too expensive. I picked one that looked safe. It looked like it was locally owned. It was expensive and I would have rather stayed in town. I figured why not keep it safe and decided to take the room. When I'm on the bike I don't worry as much as when I have the rental car, I would hate to have something happen to the rental car. After unpacking I noticed the motel was so close to the airport that the planes over head were noisy. I figured I would have trouble sleeping with all the noise. It turned out that I did not hear any planes after 8:00 PM. I guess they do not fly in and out all night like the airports in the US. It's probably the biggest airport in Costa Rica, but it is very small compared to US airports. The motel was a good place to get ready for the flight home. They had a hose so I was able to wash my bike before folding it and placing it in the suit case. It took about an hour to put the bike away and I got it ready in the motel parking lot. The lady that ran the hotel and the parking lot security guard both watched me pack the bike and both commented on how neat it was that I could put it in the suit case. They seemed impressed how I skillfully packed the bike in the small suit case. In order to get it in the suit case I had to remove the handle bar pack mount, peddles, seat from seat post, trailer wheels, loosen the handle bars and fold the bike in 2 places. It's not easy getting the bike in the small suit case. The good thing is that I could check it as regular luggage and did not have to pay the expense of shipping a bike. However, I would have rather paid the extra and taken my full-sized bike. However, the previous year they would not allow me to fly with the bike during the luggage embargo period, which is from November 23rd to January 23 rd. That night I went through all my stuff and packed all the remaining stuff and got rid of my junk. I ended up stubbing my toe really badly on the leg to the bed. I felt like I broke it and it hurts for several days after that. (Walk 4 mile; Bike miles 0 miles; total mile miles 575.11 miles)

Day 23, Sunday, 01/09/2011

The first plane I heard fly over the motel in the morning was around 6:20 AM. I drove into town and tried to find the church I could see from my motel. I found a couple smaller churches, but could not find the one I could see from my motel. I felt I did not have a lot of time so I went back to the motel and loaded my gear in the car. I then drove to the place where I returned my rental car and they gave me a ride the hotel. I arrived at the airport with plenty of time to catch my flight; I should have spent a little more time looking for the church. I just don't feel comfortable running late when I need to fly, so normally I have over 2 hours to spare when I arrived at an airport for a flight home. I bought souvenirs at the airport and then caught my flight home. I arrived home late and Linda picked me up. The next morning, I went to work. (Walk 3 mile; Bike miles 0 miles; total mile miles 575.11 miles)