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THE REPUBLIC

OF

COSTA RICA:

A

HOME FOR IMMIGRANTS.



COSTA RICA:

A HOME FOR IMMIGRANTS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE object of this pamphlet is to place before intending emigrants the advantages of Costa Rica as a home, in a plain and concise manner.

SITUATION.

Situated in Central America between the 8th and 11th degree north latitude, and therefore within the tropics, Costa Rica is, on account of its mountainous character, eminently adapted to receive immigration from the United States and Europe. The climate and soil are second to none in the world.

The boundaries are :—

North	.	.	The Republic of Nicaragua.
East	.	.	The Atlantic Ocean.
South	.	.	The Republic of Colombia.
West	.	.	The Pacific Ocean.

SIZE AND POPULATION.

The size of the country is a little more than half that of Portugal (about 54,000 square kilometres or 21,000 square miles), with a population so small that it is altogether out of proportion to the natural resources of the land. The population is estimated at 253,040 souls, of whom about 7000 are foreigners. A number of Italians are employed on railway works and mines. The Atlantic coast is mostly populated by negroes from Jamaica for agricultural work in the "hot zone," *i.e.*, the lowlands near the sea. The population includes 3,000 Indians, who live in separate villages in three distinct parts of the country; they are very peaceful, and for the most part Roman Catholics. The same creed is held by the vast majority of Costaricans, who are descendants of Spanish colonists with some admixture of Indian blood.

CLIMATE, SOIL, AND PRODUCE.

The "hot zone" begins at sea-level and reaches to a height of 3,000 feet, with an average temperature of from 22° to 28° centigrade (72° to 83° Fahr.). The "temperate zone," between 3,000 and 9,000 feet, with a thermometer ranging between 14° and 20° centigrade (57° to 68° Fahr.), is topped by the so-called "cold zone," between 9,000 and 11,500 feet; the latter height being that of the loftiest mountains in the country, where the temperature throughout the day averages 10° centigrade (50° Fahr.), while it is not uncommon to see the tops covered with hoarfrost in the morning. Snow is very rare even at this altitude.

The seasons are two in number, the "rainy" and the "dry," called respectively "winter" and "summer," although

there is hardly any difference in the average temperature. These seasons are most marked west of the Central mountain range, or on the "Pacific side" of the country, where it rains more or less from May to November and is dry from December to May. It must be understood, however, that the rule is not hard and fast. During the greater part of the rainy season, in the forenoon and part of the afternoon there is generally sunshine, or at least no rain falls; while during the dry weather occasional showers refresh land and atmosphere. The conditions on the east or "Atlantic side" are not so well marked, and regular observations are wanting here, on account of the bulk of the towns being situate west of the central range. The average of twelve months' observations on the Atlantic side (where the rainfall is notoriously heavier than on the Pacific side) gives:—

Dry days per month	15
Wet „ „	8
Half wet (dry in forenoon, rain in afternoon, or <i>vice versa</i>)	7
	<hr/>
	30
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The greatest number of dry days occurred in November (24), February (20), April (22). The greatest number of rainy days in December (22, of which 11 were half wet), January (19, of which 7 were half wet), March (22, of which 12 were half wet), June (19). The conversion of primeval forests into arable land will of course greatly influence the rainfall, and tend to make the seasons more regular.

From the point of view of healthiness, the country compares favourably with European countries. Death-rate in 1893 (population 253,040) 23·8 per 1000; if children under 10 years of age were excluded it would reduce this percentage

to half. The extraordinary death-rate among children under 10 years of age has nothing to do with the climate nor with poverty, which does not exist; but is wholly owing to the absence of knowledge on the part of the parents, who neglect the very A B C of hygiene.

Epidemics are hardly known. Once only the cholera made its appearance (1857). Cases of pernicious malarial fever are entirely confined to the swampy coast. Ague, of course, is common in the lower parts, as in all tropical countries; but by no means general even there, and is of a mild type, easily combated by a dose of quinine, and can almost always be prevented by attending to general health and avoiding unnecessary exposure. As soon as any elevation is reached all these evils are left behind, except perhaps isolated cases of a little ague as a necessary consequence of recent clearings, which we know is the common experience in all climates and countries of the world under the same conditions, but which soon flies before the industrial axe and plough.

The principal product of Costa Rica is coffee, world-famed for its excellent quality. The produce of coffee in 1883 was 10,000,000 kilograms of \$2,000,000 gold value; in 1897, 13,605,939 kilograms of \$4,101,680.37 gold value.

There is abundant room for extending this culture, between 1000 and 5000 feet altitude, without any fear of over-production. Owing to its excellent quality the coffee of this country will always be in demand in preference to that of other countries; while now, with the improved means of transport, competition even at reduced prices will easily be met. As to all the other products of the soil, apart from bananas, which are also largely cultivated, labour only is required to convert the primeval forests into rich fields of

rice, maize, sugar-cane, cacao, etc., etc., for which there is a large demand, while the cultivation of oranges on a large scale will undoubtedly prove a great success, the great enemy frost being entirely absent. The quality of the fruit is far superior to that of Seville oranges.

The present population is almost entirely concentrated in the interior highland, between 1,000 and 5,000 feet above sea-level; but vast tracts of land remain at the same and higher altitudes uninhabited, and only await the advent of the agriculturist to produce even richer harvests than are obtained from land now under cultivation — although even these raise wonder, especially when reminded that many parts have been cultivated for 300 years, without once having received any artificial or stable manure.

The land having been covered for ages with the luxuriant growth of the tropical forests, the surface of the rock has been overlaid with an as yet unascertained thickness of vegetable mould; but there are indications that it does not stop short of twenty feet in many places. The presence of many extinct and semi-extinct volcanoes is another explanation of the extraordinary fertility of the soil. Two harvests a year are the rule for many agricultural products, to which of course the equable climate (which in any one zone hardly varies a few degrees throughout the year), and the abundance of rivers and smaller watercourses, which never dry up, contribute.

As showing the facility with which things grow under these conditions, it is curious to note that stakes supporting the iron wire fences, etc., begin to sprout a short time after having been put in the ground, and soon form a natural hedge, hiding the wire itself from view.

Vegetation is luxuriant. The forests contain an untold wealth of most valuable timber, dyewoods, medicinal plants, orchids, etc., etc. To the cultivable plants and cereals the only limit is the number of species, as all the climates of the world are represented, and the soil does not actually require even to be "scratched" to yield as it were by miracle. The present chief products are—coffee, bananas, sugar-cane, maize, beans, rice, cacao, potatoes, wheat, yuca, (kind of sweet potato and valuable for the starch it contains), onions, garlic, tomatoes, fruit and vegetables of all kinds, to which may easily be added the vine, spices, vanilla, tobacco, indigo, etc., etc. The cultivation of rubber trees has recently been encouraged by Government premiums, as, owing to the wholesale exploitation of the forest trees of this species, the exportation of caoutchouc has been reduced to an insignificant quantity.

Maize and beans with rice are the principal articles of food.

The animal kingdom in Costa Rica, owing to its geographical position between North and South America, is exceedingly well represented by specimens occurring in both continents, fortunately, however, with the practical exception of those dangerous to human life.

In the way of game, there are wild turkeys, mountain hens, and various other fowl, wild hogs and other animals and fishes good for the kitchen, among which may be mentioned the "bobo," a very palatable fish found in the rivers on the Atlantic side. As to the plagues of life, mosquitoes, and other vermin, they are relatively rare, and seem to thrive only in the swamps in the lower country.

The country is very rich in minerals. The Spanish settlers from the beginning worked many gold mines, and

recently much activity has been observed in working new lodes. Every indication is present that in the near future this branch of industry will develop itself to the full extent warranted by the richness of the deposits.

ROAD, RAILWAY, STEAMSHIP, TELEGRAPH, AND CABLE COMMUNICATION.

The railways and principal roads are:—

217 kilometres of railway from Port Limon on the Atlantic Coast to San José, the capital of the country, including a branch from La Junta to Carrillo on the western slope, from which a railway is projected right on to Nicaragua. A cart-road of 42 kilometres connects Carrillo with the capital.

21 kilometres of railway on the interior plateau, connecting the towns of Alajuela and Heredia with the capital.

22 kilometres of railway from the Pacific port of Puntarenas to Esparta.

72 kilometres of cart-road between Esparta and Alajuela, which thus connects the capital with this Pacific port.

The Government are now constructing a new line connecting San José with the new Port of Tivives, on the Pacific Coast, which, when finished, will give Costa Rica a Transcontinental route.

Apart from these, several district roads exist. Until the completion of the railway connection of the Interior with the Atlantic port, which only took place in the latter half of 1890, visitors to this country found it a hard task to reach the inhabited central plateau, and agricultural settlements away

from this centre were an impossibility. The railway has now opened up large tracts of valuable land, the products of which will be able to compete successfully in the foreign market.

It is to these regions along the new railway, situated at an altitude where summer heat and winter cold are practically unknown, that immigrants are invited. The success of the banana plantations along the railway from Port Limon to Carrillo illustrate what can be done in this line. The exportation to the United States which stood at 110,800 bunches in 1883, had reached in 1897 the number of 1,965,631 bunches.

The Atlas Steamship Company run a weekly steamer from New York to Port Limon, and besides this there is a weekly service from New Orleans to Port Limon, and during the coffee season extra steamers are put on. Coasting steamers also run from Limon to Bocas del Toro, Colombia, and from Greytown up the San Juan, San Carlos, and Sarapiquí rivers.

Steam communication with Europe is kept up by Spanish steamers of the Compañía Transatlántica, which sail monthly from Liverpool, and touch at Havre, Santander, and Coruna, reaching Port Limon from Coruna in thirty days, after calling at several West Indian ports, as do all the other lines; and by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company from Cherbourg in France, and Southampton in England, twice a month, one steamer going to Port Limon (Costa Rica) direct in twenty-two days, and one *via* Colon, in Panama, to Port Limon. The French steamers of the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique also leave twice a month for Colon (twenty-one days), touching at Santander (Spain). The connection with Port Limon is now complete by this route.

All the chief towns and villages are connected by telegraph lines, and the telephone connects the principal towns of the interior. A concession has been given to a company to make a cable connecting Costa Rica directly with the United States.

Mr. H. W. Bates, in his *Central and South America*, says: 'We are assured by Dr. H. Polakowsky that Costa Rica may be considered as decidedly the richest of the five central (American) States; and what is more to the point, inhabited by the most industrious and cultured population in this division of the New World.'

STATISTICS.

Politically, Costa Rica has never been disturbed like any of the other Spanish-speaking countries of America. Independence was achieved in 1821 without bloodshed, and sanguinary revolutions are practically unknown. What were called civil wars in bygone times were no more than riots, in which, perhaps, a couple of lives were sacrificed. The country is very peaceful, and its democratic Government is very popular. Militaryism is unknown. The army in time of peace is not allowed to exceed 1,000 men. All Costaricans in time of war, between eighteen and fifty years, are liable to be called upon. Public elementary instruction is free and obligatory from seven to fourteen years. No land and ground taxes are paid, except the contributions for the maintenance of the roads, which are very small.

Why, with all these natural and other advantages, has this country never until now been made known as a desirable home for emigrants? Two batches of Canary Islanders have found their way hither during the last fifteen or

twenty years, and they have been absorbed among the general population, and are doing well without exception. About 1,200 Italians were brought to Costa Rica during the construction of the Railway; of these a number remained in the country on its completion, and many are now independent.

The answer is, that until a few years ago, Costa Rica was practically shut off from the outer world for the want of communication with the coast. It was a toilsome, difficult, and expensive journey to reach the healthy inland plateau. Since the construction of railways and cartroads the country has developed astonishingly. In 1883 the value of products exported was \$2,421,633, while in 1897 it had increased to \$12,537,231, or over five-fold in ten years. Part of this increase is no doubt due to the rise in the price of coffee.

The value of imports for 1897 amounted to \$12,505,562.92.

It will be convenient to mention here the ruling prices of the necessaries of life in San José. As a rule the prices in the country are from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. lower than in San José, but a good many things will of course be produced on one farm or another, and prices which are now high will be reduced considerably. The reason they are high now is, that the present agricultural population does not produce more than is consistent with their very poor notion of what constitutes a good day's work, keeping themselves alive and happy on very little—beans, maize, and rice; whilst on the other hand merchants import just enough and no more from abroad, so as not to lower the ruling prices of the home market.

Bacon per lb.	U.S. Currency	\$.20
Beef	„	.12
Salt Beef	„	.10

Ham	U.S. Currency	\$.20
Bread	"	.15
Cheese	"	.22
Lard	"	.10
Codfish (salted)	"	.05
Beans	"	.05
Rice	"	.02
Sugar	"	.05
Flour	"	.05
Onions	"	.08
Maizemeal	"	.06
Salt	"	.02
Coffee	"	.12
Fowls, each	"	.30 to .40
Eggs	"	.02

Pigs can be had for \$4 to \$5, fat hogs, \$25 to \$35, lean cattle from \$16 to \$20, saleable after six months' feeding on three-quarters of an acre of land for from \$35 to \$40. A pair of oxen and cart cost about \$150. Small horses (jacas) and mules can be had for from \$40 to \$80. All prices U.S. gold. The oxen of the country are fine animals for all traction purposes, exceedingly docile, and clever under harness. Cows are indifferent, owing to the indiscriminate mixing of the kine with young bulls in the fields.

The money in use in Costa Rica is a small silver currency up to pieces of 50 cents, and paper, with an insignificant amount of nickel. Weights and measures, according to the metrical system, were put in force in 1888. As usual the old units are still to be found side by side with it, namely:—

The "Pound" equal so the Spanish pound of 460 grammes.

25 lbs. = 1 arroba.

4 Arrobas = quintal = 46 kilograms.

CUBIC MEASURE.

- 1 Fanega = 4 hectolitres = 24 cajuelas
- 1 Cajuela = 4 cuartillos.

SQUARE MEASURE.

- 1 Manzana = 10,000 square varas = 1.70 acres
- 1 Caballeria = 64 manzanas = 45.4 hectares.

CONCLUSION.

The development of the country is limited by the number of its inhabitants. A certain number of hands can only work a certain number of acres. Hence when railway concessions were granted provision was made for the introduction of agriculturists from other parts, and as an outcome of this The River Plate Trust, Loan and Agency Company, Limited, London, E.C., have now to offer to intending immigrants 400,000 acres of titled land which they are prepared to sell at a ruling price of \$5 per acre, except on the railway, where the price is somewhat higher. Five years are allowed in which to pay the amount: 20 per cent. to be paid down on signing agreement, 20 per cent. yearly, with 6 per cent. interest until the balance is paid off.

The planters already established on the Company's lands in the Tuis Valley are well satisfied with their lands, the country, and the future outlook, and no doubt would be willing to show anyone the fruit of their efforts in coffee culture.

By the Constitution of the Republic "foreigners enjoy
 " all the civil rights of a citizen within the Costarican
 " territory; they can freely engage in industry and commerce;
 " possess ground property; buy and sell freely; navigate

“coasts and rivers; enjoy freedom of religion; be witnesses;
 “and marry according to the laws of the country. They are
 “not obliged to be naturalised, nor to pay extraordinary or
 “forced contributions.”

From this short description it will be seen that Costa Rica offers to the emigrant exceptional advantages in every respect. Men who can realise a few hundred dollars will be able to find here not only a healthy comfortable home, but will also be able to lay by yearly sufficient to extend their holdings, and find themselves, in a short time, in a position to look old age placidly in the face, certain of being able to rest before they are broken down, and to leave their children with a start in life.

Men with larger capital are offered advantages of investment in virgin soil such as are seldom to be met with in any other part of the world. Large capital or small capital, however, it must not be imagined that *work* can be dispensed with. A man who fancies that all will be smooth, that no difficulties will have to be overcome, at the start especially, had better stay away. Neither wealth nor competency must be expected without genuine industry and without the heart being in it; but with these two help-mates work in Costa Rica rewards the toiler with a tenfold interest.

NOTE.—If after reading this pamphlet and carefully considering the question anyone intends to make Costa Rica his home, it is advised that he should come out first and establish himself, then send for his family; the distance from New Orleans to Costa Rica is so short, and the journey so rapid in weekly steamers, that it will be obvious to all the advantages of this advice.

BRIEF PARTICULARS OF THE LAND FOR SALE.*(For the situation of the Blocks see Map.)***Block No. 1.—TURRIALBA, 37,663 Acres.**

Extensive Coffee, Rubber, Cacao, and Banana Plantations are now being made in the district, and large Cattle and Banana Farms are established. Part of this land is on the Railway.

Block No. 2.—REVENTAZON, 36,309 Acres.

Fronting the Railway, with old road from the interior to the Atlantic Coast passing through it. Contains good Banana and Rubber Lands, and is well watered by the Rivers Reventazon and Pacuare.

Block No. 3.—MORAVIA, 13,419 Acres.

Situated on an elevated valley. Splendid lands for Cattle raising and Coffee Farms.

Block No. 4.—TUIS AND CABEZA-DE-BUEY, 13,724 Acres.

First-class Coffee Lands. The Farms on this block are proving very successful. Land well watered.

Block No. 5.—SAN RAMON, 48,733 Acres.

Well watered. Situated in the interior. Extensive cultivations in the district of Coffee, Maize, Rice, Beans, Pasture, &c.

Block No. 6.—GUANACASTE, 75,982 Acres.

This block is considered one of the richest, both on account of the fertility of the soil and its rich gold-bearing veins, which at present have not been worked. Contains a large amount of cedar and dye woods.

Block No. 7.—TENORIO, 20,185 Acres.

Splendid land can be found for Coffee, Rubber, Cacao, and pastures. Well watered.

Block No. 8.—NICOYA, 137,332 Acres.

Well adapted for a large Colony, has an outlet on the Pacific Coast, lands fit for cultivation, full of game, and abounds in valuable timber.

For any further information desired application should be made to

London:—THE RIVER PLATE TRUST, LOAN AND AGENCY COMPANY, LIMITED,

52, MOORGATE STREET,

LONDON, E.C.

Costa Rica:—G. M. STAINFORTH, Esq.,
Assoc. M. Inst. C.E.,

SAN JOSÉ,

„ or MESSRS. LYON & COX,

SAN JOSÉ.

