

ATENAS TODAY



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***ATENAS TODAY** is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 350 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.*

Compositions from back issues are archived by category on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then [Atenas Today](#) on the business page.

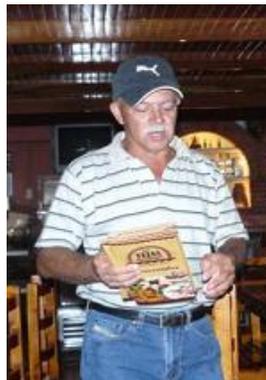
Las Tejas Restaurant

by Martin Lively

Thinking of a restaurant where one can get the freshest and best prepared shrimp generally leads down to the shore not up into the mountains. But allow me to point you up out of Atenas on the Palmares Road. When you reach Zaragoza turn left at the Restaurant La Lira (a good one too, but later...) and drive about a mile until you see this sign on the left hand side of the road.



Everything on the menu is delicious, but the shrimp either deep fried or sautéed with a spicy sauce (named Mexican on the menu, the sauce is more creole) are the best I have encountered – and that is true everytime! Fresh, fresh and still possessed of a little snap when cooked and NEVER overcooked. Yes, I really like their shrimp.



I also like the bubbly little waiter “Mr. Black.” He greets everyone like a long lost friend and he really does remember them. He also delights in telling you that Las Tejas does not serve coffee. I tell him that that is sacrilege, and he throws his hands in the air as if there is nothing that can be done about it, and that coffee has not been served so long that it is a firm tradition, and he sort of likes it being “el unico.”

There may or may not be dessert available. If it is flan de coco, get it!

Worth the half hour drive from Atenas now and then, but be careful the road is windy and steep in places.

The Botanical Orchid Garden

by Atenas Today staff reporter

In La Garita just past the Fiesta del Maiz restaurant (heading toward San Jose) there is a road that leads one kilometer to a magical place called the Botanical Orchid Garden. Formerly a large private residence, this property has been converted into a place for breeding and raising orchids of infinite variety. The owners are dedicated to supporting national orchid conservation in Costa Rica.

A guide will tell you all about the various plants and how they are cultivated. Trails lead around a large pond and through beautiful tropical gardens. There is also a gift shop where you can buy many different types of orchids.

Perhaps the major attraction of this place for many is the fact that you can enjoy a delicious lunch at its Vanilla Café. The food is different and several people have been heard to exclaim that it was the best lunch they had in Costa Rica.

The Garden is open from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Tuesday thru Sunday. Admission is 3,000 colones for residents, and 6,000 colones for non-residents. Because they want to encourage us locals to visit often and bring our visitors, the Garden is offering a membership plan. For a fee of 10,000 colones you can purchase a one year membership entitling you to free admission and a 25% discount off the admission fees for your guests.

A visit to the Botanical Orchid Garden is a perfect half day outing for us Ateniences.

Being Alive

by Diane Holman

I love being alive. I love waking up and hearing the birds sing. I love seeing the way the sun dapples the green of my backyard. I enjoy summoning up the will to get out of bed, my bamboo bed with its elegant lavender sheets.

I love knowing how the day will go: how at 10:00 a.m. I will watch the television show Clean Sweep, watch as host Peter cudgels and coaxes homeowners into throwing away the clutter that has taken over their lives. After that, I will spend some time deciding what to have for lunch and then I will enjoy eating lunch.

Throughout the day I will take care of the odd duties that present themselves to me: rescuing the machete that José has tossed between the roots of a massive old tree, removing the burr embedded in Hecate's coat, doing battle—armed with a broom—with the spider webs that proliferate behind my back.

LIFE—simply the pulsing of it, the ongoingness of it, the wonder and the dailiness of it, the getting up and the sitting down, the walking from room to room. The going to town and returning home, sighing with pleasure upon reaching Calle Zacatal. And above it all, the breathing. Someone—a musician, I believe—has said: “I spend a lot of time breathing. I love air”.

Yes, exactly

Atenas Today Interviews Ray Acers

The Entrepreneur Who is Bringing Wireless Service to Atenas and the Central Valley

AT: Are you surprised about how excited people in Atenas are about getting high speed internet?

Ray: It has been incredible. People are literally begging me to do their neighborhood next.

AT: How many installations do you have so far?

Ray: We have ten customers up and running—five in Roca Verde and five in other areas.

AT: As one of those customers I can testify to the fantastic improvement over my old RACSA dial up connection. I am now downloading information at about 1000 Kbs instead of 50 Kbs, which is twenty times faster. My upload speed is about 100 Kbs, which is more than adequate. And your service it is costing me less per month than I was paying RACSA and the phone company.

Ray: Yes, and in the near future our speed is going to be even faster. My goal is to provide the fastest internet connection in Costa Rica within the next six months, and we are developing a system that will do just that.

AT: Before we get into the details of your new business I would like to ask you about your prior life. Where and when were you born?

Ray: I was born in Philadelphia in 1960. My father was in the Navy so we lived all over the place. Most of my early years were spent in California and Nevada.

AT: Were you involved with electronics and computers as a boy?

Ray: Very much so. After the Navy my father owned and operated several TV repair shops. I worked with him and he taught me a lot.

AT: That's a great way to start a technical career. Where did it lead?

Ray: No where for a long time. When I was 13 we moved to a very rural part of North Dakota and my father got religion in a big way. He became a preacher and taught at a local Bible College. He was a very strict parent; I was not allowed to do anything except study and work. Socially I was an outcast. It was a very tough time for me.

AT: What happened next?

Ray: When I was seventeen I graduated from high school and rebelled—strongly. I left home, moved to town, and got a job as a welder. Before long I was making more money than my father. I spent my free time hunting at night for deer and foxes with my friends. We would give the meat and pelts to the poor farmers in the area. And I partied a lot.

AT: Not exactly building on your electronics experience.

Ray: No. And my next job was completely different. I became a “doodle bugger.”

AT: What the heck is that?

Ray: Doodle buggers are people who search for oil by setting off explosions and taking seismic measurements of the earth formations. For two years I traveled all over the middle of the U.S. working twelve to sixteen hours a day for companies looking for oil. Then at age twenty-one I got married.

AT: End of wild life style.

Ray: Pretty much. It was 1982 and satellite TV was just being introduced. With my electronics experience I thought I could get into that business. I bought several big dish systems and proceeded to try to sell them. Unfortunately at the time I

was in an area of Utah that was heavily Mormon, and they were against satellite TV because it provided R rated movies. My business really never got off the ground, so I later went back to the oil field.

AT: At least you learned something about satellite communications. What happened next?

Ray: I got involved in delivering water to oil rigs. My employer had big tanker trucks whose pipes would freeze in the cold weather, and I designed insulation that solved the problem. The company promoted me, but I was bored and decided to buy a bucket truck and provide tree trimming services. That worked for a while.

AT: Did you have children?

Ray: Yes, I had a daughter in 1985, and a year later, a son.

AT: Where were you living then?

Ray: I was back in North Dakota but I was getting tired of the cold. So I decided to move to Colorado and look for work there. A few years later I went through a divorce and retained custody of my children.

AT: That must have been hard, finding a job and taking care of the kids.

Ray: It was, but fortunately I got a good job installing satellite TV systems. I even went to college for a year and studied computer science. Eventually I started my own company, called Ray's Satellite, which grew to have six employees. But my personal life was a disaster.

AT: What do you mean?

Ray: One day I was installing a system for a woman and she seemed more interested in me than the system. The next day she called the company and said the system was broken and demanded that I come back to fix it. I suspected she wanted to start something with me and I should have sent someone else. But I didn't and we began a stormy relationship that lasted 9 years and caused me untold grief.

AT: Sounds like the old story of a rebound relationship with the wrong person.

Ray: Exactly. Finally the man whom I had worked for when I first came to Colorado convinced me to leave her and move to Oklahoma to work for him again. It was there that I first heard about Costa Rica.

AT: When was this?

Ray: It was 2003. I met a guy who wanted me to move to Puntarenas to help him sell and service diesel boat engines. I was ready for a complete change and did it. The boat engine business didn't work out, but I got a job in an internet café and gradually made some friends, one of whom was Linda, the Tica who is now my wife.

AT: How did you end up in Atenas?

Ray: Over time I developed a business doing web sites and linking them to Google in unique and beneficial ways. I could do this work anywhere, and Linda and I were tired of the beach life. We first moved to the hills above Santa Anna, but kept looking for the ideal place. Linda did a lot of research and eventually found this ideal apartment in downtown Atenas. We moved here last January.

AT: How did you go from doing websites to installing wireless internet systems?

Ray: I did some work for a wireless company in Colorado, working from rental house in Santa Anna. It taught me the technology and they ended up paying me by giving me the hardware for 30 wireless systems. After researching the area I could tell right away that Roca Verde was an excellent location for an antenna to provide wireless networking to the valley below. Rick from the café got a hold of Jean Luc's phone number for me and then things just started to fall in to place. Linda and I went to work and established the business based out of our apartment.

AT: How does your system work?

Ray: Our service comes from a high speed connection to the internet that communicates via microwave with our relay station on the top of Roca Verde. The relay station then allows us to connect with anyone who is in direct line of sight from the top of Roca Verde.

AT: I am fortunate that I can see Roca Verde from my house in the San Isidro section of Atenas, and therefore I am able to get your service. What about people who cannot see Roca Verde?

Ray: We have to install other relay stations around Atenas to be able to reach everyone. The next two stations are going in next week, one in Estanquillos and one at the top of Vista Atenas. With these stations we should be able to service most of the homes in Hacienda Atenas and Pica Flora, as well as some in Vista Atenas and other places.

AT: And after that?

Ray: We are looking at other potential sites for relay stations. Our plan is to have 200 customers within 18 months. However we don't want to expand too fast and sacrifice quality of service.

AT: What does your service cost?

Ray: The basic equipment is a one time cost of \$350. That includes the antenna, the control box, wiring, and a standard installation. If the installation requires extra time or materials, there would be an additional charge.

AT: What is the monthly fee?

Ray: We are charging \$60 per month, regardless of how much you use the system.

AT: In my case I wanted to have a wireless system within my house so that laptops could connect anywhere, and I wanted two Ethernet connections in my office. You installed everything for a total of \$460. Shown below is a picture of my antenna, pointed at Roca Verde.



Ray: Your installation demonstrates another advantage of our system over dial up—several computers can be connected to the internet at the same time, and you don't tie up a phone line.

AT: Do you guarantee satisfaction?

Ray: Absolutely. If you are not happy in the first 30 days, we will remove the equipment and refund everything you have paid.

AT: My guess is that you are going to be swamped with orders. How can people get on your waiting list?

Ray: If you contact us we will come to your location and determine if we can provide you service at your location. Then based on our order backlog and our plans for putting in new relay stations we will give you an installation date. If you give us a \$200 deposit, we will put you on the schedule. If we are not able to install your system on or before the date we gave you, you may ask for and receive a full refund of your deposit.

AT: That sounds fair. How should people contact you?

Ray: Send us an email at info@crwifi.com and give us your name and phone number. We will contact you.

AT: Thanks for coming to Atenas, and good luck.



Ray



Linda