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## Recommendations While Staying at Casa Gavilán de Arenal

Welcome to Casa Gavilán! Our guests often ask is what is the meaning of “Gavilán”. “Gavilán de Pescador” is Spanish for “Osprey” – the first time we visited the house, looking for a place for eventual retirement, an Osprey was hovering over the house. The breathtaking view, location and amenities combined to make us purchase the property literally on first sight.

In my childhood, I lived in England for many years (I have family there from my mother's side living in the Lake District). On my first visit to the Arenal area, I took one look at Lake Arenal and thought immediately of all the happy years I had enjoyed living in the Lake District as a boy. The atmosphere here, the lake, the rolling hills, the friendly people... it all took me back to the England I loved in the 1960's. It's like stepping back in time, without the horrible English weather, with much more wildlife, luxuriant vegetation, and fresher air! ✍

Of course, we have all the mod-cons at the house too, like internet, satellite TV and so on. I have left a movie collection there for rainy days. But if you spend your whole stay watching television, you will miss out on what makes the Arenal area a very special place.

I have listed "things we love to do while here" which I encourage you to examine. I haven't even mentioned waking up to toucans roosting in a tree visible from your bedroom window (without even raising your head from the pillow!), or the sound of howler monkeys at the foot of the garden. As you will see, we've developed our garden into a wonderful set of three terraces, where you can walk amongst butterflies and hummingbirds, enjoying the serene beauty of the lake view, and the surrounding rainforest jungle. Sit on the lower terrace and read a book, or relax on our deck, feasting your eyes on the trees, flowers, birds. You may never want to leave.

### Where shall we dine today? Breakfast, lunch or dinner out near Casa Gavilan...

I recommend you dine at least one evening at Gingerbread – Eyal, the owner and chef, creates quite simply the most wonderful dining experience I have ever encountered. If you don't eat there at least once during your stay at Casa Gavilan you'll be missing something rather special. Lonely Planet's 2009 edition praises his deserts especially! Here is Eyal's web site: <http://gingerbreadarenal.com/>

Our favorite place for breakfast is just a few minutes from our front gate: Lucky Bug Gallery. Monica, the owner, is VERY nice and her shop sells unique art and gifts, as well as serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. Or simply sip a coffee and admire her private lake and tropical rainforest setting. Monica is also the nearest “go to” place to book tours! <http://www.luckybugcr.net>

Maya's Place, Arenal: This wonderful little pizza place is located opposite the gas station in Nuevo Arenal. I recommend their Hawaiian pizza. A quiet little place with great ambiance.

El Establo, Arenal: Our favorite place for “comidas típicas” (typical Costa Rican food). A hearty Tico breakfast of eggs, gallo pinto, plantains and fresh homemade cheese with coffee will set you back about four bucks. Open for lunch and dinner as well.

La Rana: Located on the road to Tilaran on the left hand side as you leave Casa Gavilan, maybe a mile at the most. Great bird watching during the day!!!

Equuis: Located on the road to Tilaran on the right hand side, an open wooden building with a lighted sign that says “Equuis 8”. You can watch the chef climb up the stone stairs to the roof over his rooftop wood-burning stove, where he actually grills your food!

Dos Bocas: Located on the way to Neuvo Arenal on the right hand side just after the bridge. Great local food – a meal for 3 cost \$13!!!

Café Macadamia: Beautiful place on the left hand side of the road from Casa Gavilan to Tilaran. Great food, local art and fantastic views! Breakfast and lunch are served daily. In an effort to lure in expats, they have recently started offering weekend dinner specials. For about \$10 per person you can get 3 courses cooked from scratch and very yummy!

On the road to La Fortuna from Casa Gavilan, there is a steakhouse named “La Mirador” on the left hand side just before Montana del Fuego Hotel, where we go when we want to enjoy a steak dinner while watching the volcano erupt! AMAZING! I recommend their Chateaubriand:

<http://www.restaurantesteakhousemiradorarenal.com/>

### **Where shall we go today? Local places easily reached from Casa Gavilan...**

There is an Eco-lodge minutes from our gate, too - they offer rainforest hikes, canopy tours, and horseback riding. We ride their horses at least twice a week when we stay at Casa Gavilan. Amazing views of the volcano!!! Very reasonably priced. They also offer zip line canopy adventures, kayaking, rain forest hikes, guided nature walks, yoga classes, massages and a nice restaurant.

<http://www.ecolodgecostarica.com/>

“Desafío”, in La Fortuna, is the place I recommend for horseback riding to the volcano itself. They also do the BEST whitewater rafting! They have a selection of rapids available, Class II/III and IV all within reach of Casa Gavilan! While we were there they phoned the reservoir and ORDERED several million tons of water to be released, within minutes our river was white water and we were ready for our adventure. Where else in the world can you find someone who orders rapids on tap? <http://www.desafiocostarica.com/>

On the way to La Fortuna, you must not miss the “Arenal Hanging Bridges” – this is a one of the greatest ecotourism projects of Costa Rica, with the exuberant primary rain forest where you will find a great biological diversity with an incomparable scenic splendor. <http://www.hangingbridges.com/>

We also love to visit the “Sky Tram”, a slow and comfortable cable-ride up to the upper reaches of the rainforest canopy. They are particularly famous for their zipline canopy tours – definitely an adrenaline rush as you fly through the upper levels of the rainforest!

<http://www.arenal.net/tour/skytram-skytrek/>

There is another canopy tour I have not tried, but is recommended by one of our guests, named the ecoglide canopy tour; I have been to Selvatura in Monteverde, which was fantastic, and I am told that the Ecoglide in La Fortuna is almost as good, with 18 zip lines.

## Where shall we go today? Further afield but still reachable from Casa Gavilan:

If you plan to visit Cano Negro or other local attractions, we highly recommend you visit Monica at the Lucky Bug – she is able to set up many tours locally and at a significant savings from the commercial tour providers in Fortuna. Alternatively, you can try Aventura Arenal – the guides are great, funny and knowledgeable, lunch is delicious, bus ride to the area is about 2.5 hours but the roads are good.

If a visit to the Monteverde area intrigues you, I recommend the Monteverde Lodge or the Trapp Family Lodge.  
<http://www.monteverdeinfo.com/monteverde-lodge/?gclid=CO-x1JOe-5YCFQRhswodbQYdZg>  
<http://www.trappfamilylodgecr.com>

You can arrange a horseback ride in Monteverde; we arranged a wonderful ride through Monteverde Lodge, where you could ride to the sunset and view the Pacific Ocean from a mountain ridge in Monteverde Reserve! I also strongly recommend “The Frog Pond” where you can see some of the many Costa Rica species of Poison Dart Frogs! If you visit the Frog Pond during the day, they allow you to return and night for free to see the little frogs move around, as they are much more active at night.

If a beach visit is on your “must do” list, one of our guests discovered a beach that takes a little over 2 hours to get to, named “Playa Ocotal”, which appears to be the closest beach on the Pacific. Ocotal is a small beach, not a tourist spot, and the sand is pure black – amazing! There is a parking right on the beach for only \$2 with a guard to watch the car, and a nice little bar and grill right there named “Father Rooster’s” – good food!  
<http://www.govisitcostarica.com/region/city.asp?cID=19>

Another beach is Samara on the pacific coast, a beautiful beach area providing everything you would expect from a beach resort:

<http://samarabeach.com/>  
<http://www.nicoyapeninsula.com/samara/>  
<http://www.govisitcostarica.com/region/city.asp?cID=114>

## What a great day we had today! But now we want to be pampered and relax...

One of our favorite places is The Springs Resort and Spa, [www.thespringscostarica.com](http://www.thespringscostarica.com) – by far the BEST hot water volcanic springs with 18 separate pools, all with stunning views of Arenal Volcano. Be sure to also check out their SUSHI restaurant and one of their many quality restaurants. A day pass there is available where you can enjoy all of their amenities even though you aren’t spending the night there. If you feel the need to be pampered, they boast a 14,000 square foot, world-class spa offering manicures, pedicures, massages, facials, body wraps – the works! As of this update, they are also working on a casino, riding stable and on-site wildlife rescue and rehab center. We love to go and soak in the hot mineral pools while enjoying an incredible view of the volcano. This is a perfect place for families with children!! The pools vary in temperature from cool to hot and are very safe. They offer a children’s menu at the restaurants and one of the mineral pools even has a slide! It is a pleasure to see the kids darting from pool to pool and the resort is so large, it is easy to find more private, secluded areas if you prefer a more romantic, child-free zone. The price for a day pass is one of the best deals in town – since they opened we have stopped going to any of the other springs in the area. They are also well away from the government’s designated volcanic danger zone. Believe it or not, many springs are located directly within areas of high volcanic risk!

If you discover something in the area we haven’t yet mentioned, please let us know and we will add it to our list. Whatever you do, or don’t do, you are sure to enjoy your stay. Pura Vida!