

Refugio de Los Angeles Site Evaluation

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Quebrada Grande de Nandayure
Guanacaste, Costa Rica



Project Summary

Refugio de Los Angeles (RDLA) does not fit the mold of most moderately sized, rural, Costa Rican farm properties. A typical farm property in Costa Rica is often very remote and has access that can be severely limited by seasonal weather and/or rugged terrain. The typical farm also features just a few productive areas that have been cleared out of much larger areas that are mostly wild or overgrown. If you have ever considered investing in land in Central America, or specifically in Costa Rica, I'm sure this description sounds familiar. It is rare to find a farm like RDLA that is organized under a single plan, with goals in place that determine the patterns that dictate maintenance and development. RDLA, however, is not the typical property on the Costa Rican market. For nearly twenty five years, this forty hectare farm has been managed primarily for conservation and wildlife preservation. Features of the farm include amazing vistas in three cardinal directions; a modern primary house and guesthouse, both with full utilities; easy access just off a well-maintained national gravel highway and easy access throughout the property; many areas suitable for infrastructure expansion; plentiful spring water; and tremendous potential for commercial development.

Property Description

RDLA is at once both a rural farm property, and an impressive example of conservation practices emphasizing the regeneration of indigenous trees. The owner has never worked RDLA as a commercial farm. However, there is an abundance of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers that provides much of the needs of the current residents and these endeavors could easily be expanded. Because the farm's management has always revolved around the idea of conservation and the regeneration of the forest, the majority of the forty hectares contains mature trees creating a forest canopy that provides plentiful shade with minimal overgrown areas.

Additionally, one of the most distinguishing aspects of the property is the extensive network of trails that crisscrosses the property and offers access to every corner of the farm. Without having much cultivated area to manage, the local farm workers have created exquisitely maintained trails, punctuated by scenic views and shady spots to enjoy a glance at the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Gulf of Nicoya to the east, or the broad valley that extends to the south. Wide trails offer foot or vehicular access to even the highest sections of the farm, meaning that anyone, young or old, can enjoy the natural beauty that exists throughout the property. With conservation as the core of the management strategy, the owner managed a vision for the property that has created natural habitats for birds, animals, wildlife, and a wide variety of local tree species. With over two decades

of conservation management techniques, RDLA has developed the look and feel of a public park or arboretum, a testament to the success of conservation work.

Located in an area that is within an easy drive to the Pacific Coast, it is at an elevation that extends to 900 meters, providing an ideal year round climate. The micro-climate established by the elevation and the Pacific slopes creates an area conducive to commercial food production and the further development of comfortable living accommodations.

The rural area around RDLA is mostly comprised of cattle grazing operations and teak farms, neither of which offers any threat of development that might encroach upon the tranquility of the property. There is also very little vehicular traffic, meaning that the entire property enjoys peace and quiet regardless of the time of day or season—a real plus for anyone who treasures the sounds of nature. The farm itself is a conglomerate of four contiguous properties, each with its own access, roads and trails, and all managed under the same conservation principles. The farm spans both sides of the national highway, creating the potential for easily dividing the property for distinct uses or development.

Benefits

To sum up the property in a few brief points:

- Distance to the airport is manageable, and the drive to the beach is simple and scenic.
- Relative location is excellent—far enough from city centers to offer comfortable isolation, close enough to be within striking distance. The beach is a short drive. Tourism centers to the south are easily accessible for a day or weekend trip.
- Access to the farm is easy, and access by foot or vehicle within the farm is top notch while still maintaining a natural feel.
- RDLA is a turn key operation. Infrastructure and access are in place and in good repair.
- Buildings, water, power, and internet are all up to date.
- A well-restored workshop and storage space is in great working order with many possible uses.
- Water is plentiful, clean and sufficient for future development.
- Sites for potential development within the farm are already well defined and accessible.
- There are already areas under cultivation producing fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants for personal use.
- The potential for development is high, whether for farm or business; this property requires very little to move forward.
- The upside for development of the property combined with its current condition and location make it an particularly valuable piece for the price.

Background of the Writer

Sam Kenworthy is one of the co-founders and lead designers of Porvenir Design, a landscape design and consulting business based in Costa Rica. He has lived and worked in the tropics for nearly a decade, primarily focused on sustainable development work. Sam's current work revolves around appropriate land use planning, design for productive landscapes, and

education around sustainability and permaculture. He lives on the southwest side of the Nicoya Peninsula and can be reached via the Porvenir Design website: porvenirdesign.com.



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