



Costa Rica's Hidden Beach

Patti Morrow, August 26, 2011



A mere 10 km/6.2 miles south of the popular tourist beach town of Tamarindo, Costa Rica, is a pristine beach that is loved by Tico's... and those tourists who can find it.

Playa Avellanas is an oasis at the end of a long warren of dusty, bumpy dirt roads. There are no souvenir shops here, no high rise hotels, not even a village. What you will find is arguably the most beautiful beach in Nicoya, perhaps in all Costa Rica. The inviting cerulean blue, white-crested ocean is framed by a white sand beach dotted with coconut palms and wild-looking trees sporting intertwining crooked limbs extending in every direction.

At the center of Avellanas is an outstanding beach bar simply called "Lola's," named after the owners' gigantic, mischievous pet pig whose beach-bathing antics and shaded snoozes provided years of entertainment. After paying your respects to Lola's successor, Lolita, you'll find a variety of activities – or non-activities – to spend the day.

Take a laid-back approach under the rustling palm fronds on one of the stylish and comfy umbrella-shaded wooden lounge chairs while you partake of any of their legendary treats – fresh fruit smoothies, thin-crust pizzas, seared tuna, or Belgian fries; read a book gently swaying in one of the hammocks, or gaze at the ocean seated atop a colorful cushion – all steps away from the beach. The aromas, accommodations and views can captivate you from early morning until the glorious sunset, dispelling all lingering stress or cares.

Want slightly more activity? How about a massage or yoga? Both are available here.

Lola's is known for its great service, but be sure to bring cash because they don't take credit cards.

For a more athletic vibe, try a surfing lesson. Playa Avellanas is known for drawing surfers from all over the world, so naturally my adventurous spirit was intrigued. I signed on for a lesson along with my two teenagers, and, my-oh-my, what a humbling experiencing it was! The kiddos caught on immediately, but apparently there are some recreations women "of a certain age" should just let pass, although I likely would not have listened to such a warning. Even so, the surf at Avellanas was the perfect spot to give it a try, so aside from slightly bruised knees and vastly bruised ego, no regrets.

Whether the goal is family fun, romance or athletic pursuits, Playa Avellanas is a soul-refreshing kind of place. If you find it impossible to leave, then don't! You can find 7500-square foot lots about 3 blocks from the ocean in Playa Avellanas on offer for \$39,900, just reduced from the original price of \$59,000, residential usage only. From a second floor dwelling, it's even possible to have an ocean view.

For more hustle-and-bustle, a variety of restaurants, bars, spas and shops, and beaches better suited to people-watching, Tamarindo is just a short drive away.