



The Leatherback Trust

"Their future is in our hands"

5736 Kinlock Place, Fort Wayne, IN 46835



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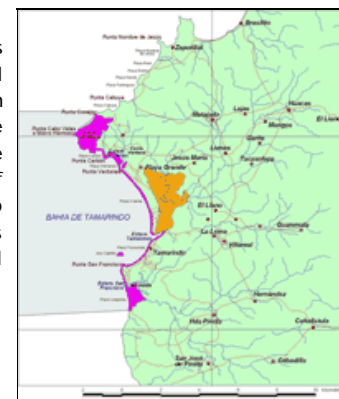
The continued survival of the leatherback seaturtle depends upon the preservation of the beaches where these incredible creatures build their nests and lay their eggs. Current real-estate development plans in Costa Rica threaten one of the leatherback's major nesting colonies.

Playa Grande

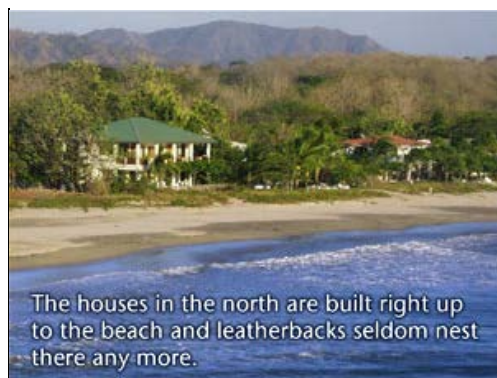
Playa Grande is a 3.6 km long white sand beach just north of Tamarindo in Guanacaste Province Costa Rica. It is the site of a world famous surfing beach and home to the last major nesting colony of the critically endangered leatherback turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, in the Pacific Ocean.



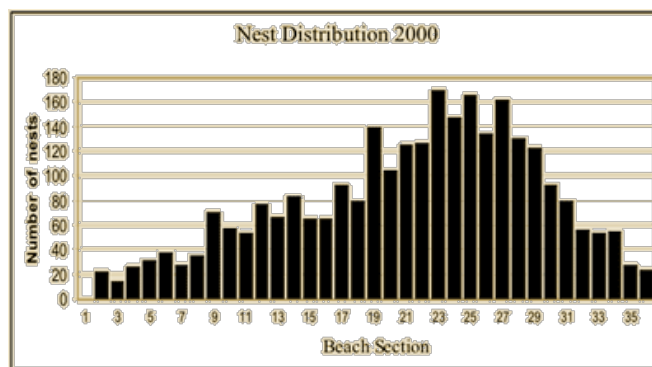
The beach is included in a national park called Parque Marino las Baulas which includes the beaches of Playa Grande, Playa Ventanas and Playa Langosta and the land behind them up to 125 m above the high tide mark. It also includes the mountain to the north, Cerro el Morro, the Tamarindo Estuary that winds behind Playa Grande, Playa Carbon to the north of Playa Ventanas and the San Francisco Estuary to the south of Tamarindo. The land behind Playa Langosta called Isla Verde on the map is also part of the Park. The Park was established in law in 1995 and has been verified by the Attorney general and rulings by the Constitutional Court.



The difficulty is that there has been increasing development behind the beaches both in the north and in the south. Land owners are confused because the government has not yet paid them for their land. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court has ordered that no one can build inside the park and has put a temporary ban on building within 500 m of the park.



Leatherbacks nest primarily in the center of the beach where the land is open and where new development is planned. Open land is essential for leatherback nesting to reduce human disturbance. Leatherbacks used to nest on other beaches in the area such as Playa Flamingo and Playa Tamarindo. However, these beaches have been fully developed and the human disturbance has driven the turtles away.



Most leatherbacks nest in the **center** of the beach

New Constitutional Court Rulings protect the Park

The Constitutional Court (Sala IV) has made a series of rulings in 2007 and 2008 that protect the Park. It has ruled that the Municipality of Santa Cruz cannot control building in the Park nor make zoning regulations affecting the park. It has ruled that construction in the park must stop. It has ruled that the Minister of the Environment must complete the expropriation of lands within the park and it has decreed a 6 month moratorium on building within 500 m of the park. These rulings protect the park and the turtles.



These rulings are of tremendous importance because if development is allowed to continue within the park and excessive building next to it these beaches will be lost to the leatherbacks and this species will go extinct in the Pacific Ocean. Extinction is forever and no development, no short or long-term human profit justifies such a fate for this wonderful turtle, or any other species.

Changes

There is no doubt that there will now be changes at Playa Grande and the other beaches. The government will acquire some structures to protect the beaches. Other structures will remain and owners will have to follow the conservation measures required by the law. Lights will have to be turned off at night or covered during the nesting season, trash will have to be picked up, access to the beach will be through controlled entrances.

However, conservation minded owners do not have to fear loss of their homes if they follow the rules of the Park. Surfing will continue at Playa Grande. In fact it will be even better because instead of riding the waves into a beach filled with big houses and hotels you will be riding toward the same natural beauty that you have for many years.

The park is a win-win situation for both the leatherback turtles and surfers. Both will have a natural beach on which to land and both will continue to enjoy this special place for all time.

Before You Buy

Many developers are selling land to unwary foreigners. Small water front lots, large parcels behind the beach and land on the hills overlooking the beach are for sale. **Be aware that construction in the park is not allowed and construction on lands outside the park are restricted by the management Plan for the**

park.

It is illegal to cut the vegetation in the park. It is illegal to place structures in the park. It is illegal to enter the Park except in designated locations, especially at night. If you buy a lot along the beach you will probably lose it to the government through the process of eminent domain.

If you buy an existing house or other structure you will have to revegetate the zone between the house and the beach and cannot use the public zone for your personal front yard. You can live in harmony with the turtles but you will have to follow the rules, both those now in existence and those that will come with the new Law. It is not clear if the government will acquire all houses within the park.


Before you buy any land in the area of these beaches you would be wise to meet with the Director of the Park and find out what the current rules are and what the future holds for the land in which you are interested. If you do not take this precaution then you may be very disappointed.


There are many beautiful beaches on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, but there is only one area where the leatherback turtle nests in large numbers, that is the area of Playa Grande and its nearby beaches. **You can help to preserve this area or you can make a bad investment.** The choice is yours.

You Can Help

You can help save the leatherback turtle from extinction. If you are thinking of buying land behind these beaches don't do it. Buy land somewhere else on another beach. Wonderful opportunities are available south of Playa Langosta. If you now own land at Playa Grande you can coordinate with the Park Director to see how you can best protect the beach and avoid harming the turtles.

If you are from the US you could even donate the land or sell it at a fair price to **The Leatherback Trust** a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that is helping to preserve the Park. Finally you can make a donation to The Leatherback Trust. Any amount will help.

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