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Muchas Fiestas

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I had the opportunity to enjoy the desfile de las bandas and the desfile de los boyeros the following day. Leading up to the Día de San Ramón/Day of Saint Raymond (St. Raymond Nonato is the city's patron saint and namesake) there are a number of desfiles (parades) and the park located near the Catholic church in the center of town is full of people, bingo games, and stands selling authentic Costa Rican food and desserts.

The desfile de las bandas (parade of the bands) was amazing. The music was so loud it occasionally set off car alarms along the street. It could be heard all over town. Short of including an audio clip, I have no idea how to convey how cool it sounded. My two year old and I were mesmerized. That night we enjoyed more music in front of the church. A Mass was held and then bands played outside in the park. Many people joined in singing and dancing. I had wanted to sit back and enjoy a spectator role but my toddler wasn't having it. I danced, too. The desfile de los boyeros was equally awesome. Boyeros are those that tend to bueyes (oxen) and boyero after boyero brought their livestock and gorgeously painted carretas (ox carts) through town. It was primarily oxen, but we also saw the occasional buffalo and goat.

On the Día de San Ramón there is another enormous desfile called the entrada de los santos (entrance of the saints). This celebration stems from the tradition of alms collection for the building of the temple. I swear San Ramón's population must have tripled for the event. The streets were packed with people, many sporting the color red. The anticipation was intense. For the parade itself, individuals representing various businesses and/or districts of towns carried statues of their respective patron saint on platforms, floats, carriages, or wagons decorated elaborately, most often with bright flowers. Much of the parade was boisterous with accompanying music and shouts of "Moncho!" (a nickname for the citizens of San Ramón).

Some of the saints on platforms swayed wildly while the people below them danced. The parade ran for about three hours before the saints finally arrived at the church in the center of town. There they are ceremoniously placed inside with San Ramón/Saint Raymond as the leader. At the conclusion of the parade, things settled down some, but the central park remained packed as people enjoyed the cuisine available and the live music.

Outside of the town's fiestas, my toddler and I also made a brief day trip to Puntarenas to see the beach. The weather cooperated and I enjoyed the smooth sand (not a rock or barnacle to be seen!) and the warm water. I didn't venture to swim but we threw coconuts in the water. The bus ride there was inexpensive and not overly crowded. Car sickness down here though...

Siena