City driving

It doesn't take long to realize that there is a different code of the road in Costa Rica. The first clue will come when you notice the behavior of drivers at intersections. Check out a few cars at a few corners and you soon catch on that traffic signs carry one less level of authority here. For example the octagonal red sign with "alto" printed on it translates as stop, and in some places that's what drivers do when they encounter one. In Costa Rica however this sign means slow down, proceed with caution, in other words the same thing that a yield sign means in the rest of the world. In a similar fashion a red traffic light means pause then proceed if there is an opening. Sound suspiciously like a response to a stop sign in the rest of the world. Oddly the government seems to conspire in this behavior; they have even invented a new traffic control that is used all over the country. It is a traffic light with a stop sign on the same pole. The combination of devices seems to carry a higher level of authority. When the light is red, and there is a stop sign present, drivers stop and wait for it to turn green before proceeding.

Parked cars are not necessarily a reliable clue to allowed directions of travel since you can be on a two-way street and still see all of the parked cars facing you. Parking is allowed on either side of the street.