



Passages s/v Nine of Cups



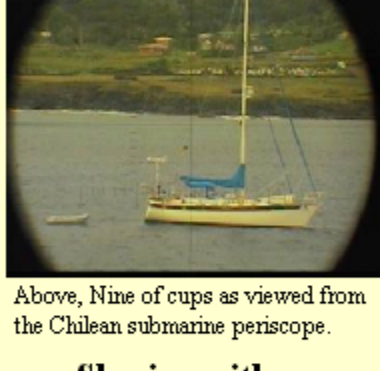
Volume 3
Holiday 2004 Edition

A Holiday Newsletter from Sea

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Letter from the crew...

2004 was another year of exploring South America and venturing into the South Pacific. This newsletter allows us to share with you some of the highlights of our inland trips in South America and our long passage to the Galapagos Islands and Easter Island.



Above, Nine of cups as viewed from the Chilean submarine periscope.

Sharing with a Submarine

As if visiting Easter Island wasn't exotic enough, we were hailed by the Chilean Submarino Simpson advising us that they planned to anchor next to us.

Was it OK? Let's see now... a Navy submarine with torpedoes in their own territorial waters vs. Nine of Cups, a visiting 45' yacht...Hrrm, sure it was OK! Be nice... maybe they'd invite us over for drinks later! And you know what? They did! They not only invited us for drinks, but came to get us in the Navy launch, provided us with a great tour of the sub and gave us two terrific bottles of vintage Chilean red wine as a gift. Most times life is good, but sometimes it's even better!



From the very beginning, we have documented our trips extensively with photos, a journal called "Passages" and long letters home. Even now in our fifth year aboard, each place has its own allure and it's hard to determine what's the best when it all seems "best" while we're experiencing it.

We're happy and healthy, older, but not necessarily wiser. After two years in South America, we look forward to finally heading west to Polynesia and New Zealand in 2005.

We wish all of our family and friends health, wealth, love and happiness in 2005 and the time to enjoy them all.

We love hearing from everyone so please...keep in touch:

nineofcups1@yahoo.com

Highlights of 2004:

- ★ Wondrous Galapagos
- ★ Mysterious Moai
- ★ Stairway to Inca City
- ★ Bolivia's Witch Market
- ★ High on Lake Titicaca
- ★ Peeking at Penguins
- ★ Chilean Sub Invasion
- ★ Bone Chilling Tour

Detailed stories follow



Penguins Surround Boat; Crew Unafraid

We all have our fantasies of what a place will be like, but never could we have prepared ourselves for the enchantment of the Galapagos. Our favorite island, Isla Isabela, was less visited by tourists and thus, we could observe the native animals in their own element right in the anchorage.

Sea lions and tiny Galapagos penguins swam unafraid around the boat. Blue-footed boobies made suicide dives from 50' above into the water for their breakfast while huge frigate birds soared overhead. One early morning we were awakened by coughing sounds outside the boat. Pirates? Just sea lions coughing, hacking and sneezing after a 3AM swim.

Loving South America

We thought "South" America was just that continent south of "North" America: thirteen dangerous 3rd world countries we'd never really heard that much about except maybe Colombian drug runners and Rio de Janeiro nightlife. Oh, how wrong we were! South America is every bit as diverse and beautiful as its northern sister. The people are charming, warm and friendly. We've found it safe and economical to live and travel. We're hooked on the place.

Our travels have included several months each in Venezuela and Colombia. We've used Ecuador as our base for over a year for forays into the Pacific and for inland travel excursions, including 6 glorious weeks in Peru and Bolivia this year.



Another year in South America or time to head West?

The crew of Nine of Cups is spending the holiday season in the U.S. with family and friends, hoping desperately to see and talk to everyone and knowing there's not a snowball's chance on the Equator that they will. Our total cumulative distance to date is 21,472 nautical miles; 6,805 nautical miles this year. Our long passage this year was a circle trip from Ecuador to the Galapagos Islands and then to Easter Island and back to Ecuador. We've lived aboard for nearly 5 years now, having moved aboard in April 2000. We've crossed the Gulf of Mexico, spent two seasons exploring the U.S. Eastern seaboard and Maritime Canada, traveled extensively in the Caribbean and transited the Panama Canal to the Pacific. Since 2000, we've visited 26 countries. Nine of Cups and Jelly are waiting in Ecuador for our return in early January.

Where to next? Our plan until mid-November of this year had been to spend another year in South America, but much discussion and time away from the boat convinced us it was time to move on. We will spend another couple of months in Ecuador refitting Nine of Cups with new electronics, rigging and canvas...a few more inland trips interspersed, we hope. April/May 2005 is the time to head west to Polynesia with an ultimate destination of New Zealand by next year at this time. A circumnavigation is still the ultimate goal, but there's so much to see. We originally said it would take 10 years and now, five years into it, it may take yet another decade to complete.

But after all, it's all about the adventure, now isn't it!

Dive-bombing Boobies

We'd seen boobies before, but never like this. These blue-footed boobies dive from 40+ feet in the air becoming more aerodynamic as they descend, hitting the water at breakneck speeds. All that effort to catch a fish for breakfast.



Up Periscope!

I've always wanted to say that and aboard the Submarino Simpson, I got my chance. The friendly Armada crew let each of us check out the harbor with their periscope and play with all the buttons! We noted that the sub did carry several torpedoes, but were relieved to know that none of them was aimed at NOC.

Boat Work Never Ends



Even while on passage, boat work never ends. In fact, it increases substantially. "Cruising" is defined as working on your boat in exotic places and so it is!

Tropic of Capricorn... Red?

After discovering firsthand that the Equator was yellow, we were dying to cross the Tropic of Capricorn (23 degrees south of the equator) to see if it, too, was yellow. (We crossed the Tropic of Cancer in the Bahamas during the night, so we never noted its color.) Though we could barely make it out on a very overcast day, we can state without hesitation that the Tropic of Capricorn was definitely red, not yellow, a surprise to all aboard. We crossed this line on May 9, 2004 on our way to Easter Island from the Galapagos.

Meandering Midst Moai



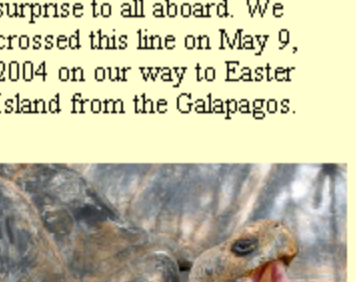
Hiking amongst the hundreds of Moai on Easter Island was awesome. Carved centuries ago to honor ancestors and gods, these giants stand sentry on the island, their backs to the sea. All were knocked down by warring factions on the island and have been re-erected by archeological groups from around the world. Most of the island is an open-air museum and part of the Chilean National Park system, PN Rapanui.

Stairway to Machu Picchu



Walking in the footsteps of the Incas along parts of the Inca Trail was like living history. Thousands of well worn stone steps led the way up, up to Machu Picchu. We climbed neighboring Huayna Picchu (the steep mountain in the background above) early one morning to watch the fog lift and unveil the sacred city below. Without a doubt, it was the most exhilarating, awe-inspiring moment of our Peru experience.

Goin' Slow with Tortoises



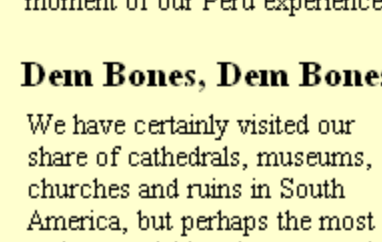
You certainly don't need to be fast to catch up with these guys. They give a new meaning to the word "slow". We caught them at the Darwin Research Station on "food" day (twice a week) and so they were particularly animated... we got to see their jaws move to chew and yawn! We wonder if Jelly might not have a bit of tortoise blood in her lineage?

New Weight Loss Program

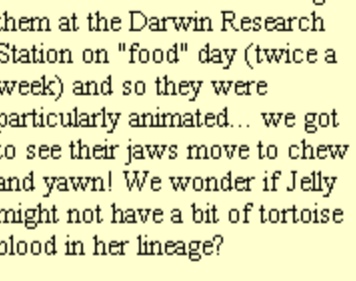
The Nine of Cups crew lost about 15 pounds each on their roundtrip passage from Ecuador to Easter Island. Of the nearly 120 days spent on this voyage, about 80 were spent at sea. The crew speculates that living for 4 months at sea, on a heel, without drinking liquor and eating only minimal snacks and sweets may have contributed to the weight loss (you think?). Even Jelly lost a pound!

Dem Bones, Dem Bones

We have certainly visited our share of cathedrals, museums, churches and ruins in South America, but perhaps the most eerie was visiting the catacombs of the San Francisco monastery in Lima, Peru where more than 70,000 people have been buried.



Bonita Gordita Gatita



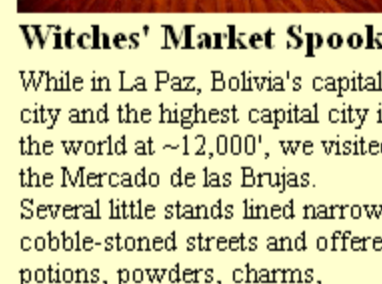
That means pretty fat little kitty and though she's dieted, she still weighs in at 11 pounds. Jelly turned 4 in March 2004 and continues to be a sassy, savvy ship's cat. She's wooed the Latins, nipped at Customs officials, kept the boat furr-free and shed enough cat fur to allow us to knit another cat if the need arises. Her favorite pastimes: chasing a string, exploring any open locker or floorboard and rummaging around David's work station for new toys.

Anakena Beach

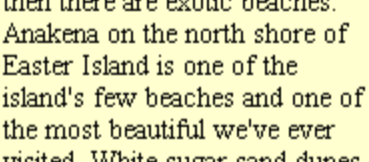
There are exotic beaches and then there are exotic beaches. Anakena on the north shore of Easter Island is one of the island's few beaches and one of the most beautiful we've ever visited. White sugar sand dunes and palm trees guarded by ancient Moai standing in a row.

Witches' Market Spooky

While in La Paz, Bolivia's capital city and the highest capital city in the world at ~12,000', we visited the Mercado de las Brujas. Several little stands lined narrow cobble-stoned streets and offered potions, powders, charms, totems and talismans guaranteed to bring luck, love, money or ward off evil spirits. We saw llama fetuses, desiccated toads, whole dried armadillos, ocelot skins and lots of unidentifiables. Hard to make a choice!



Lake Titicaca

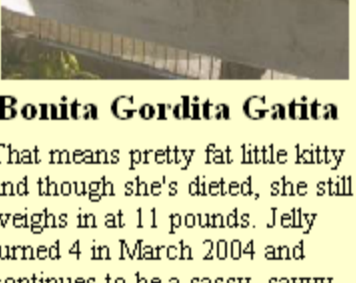


The world's highest navigable lake and the largest lake in South America, Lake Titicaca borders Peru and Bolivia and is home to the floating islands of the Uros people. Constructed totally of layers of the local totora reed, walking on these floating islands is akin to walking on a waterbed. The highlight was taking a ride on the blue, blue lake in one of their reed boats.

Bussing it in South America

Air travel in South America is very expensive. However, since most folks don't own cars, bus transportation is economical (~\$1/hour of transport), convenient (a relative term) and amusing (also a relative term). Video movies with Spanish subtitles and loud Latin music (usually played simultaneously) were the order of the day along with the ever-present holy pictures (we needed all the luck we could get). On our Peru/Bolivia trip, we traveled on buses well over 100 hours for a total of about 4,000 miles.

New Crewmate Wows Jelly



John Santic, a cruising friend and liveaboard from Maryland, joined us in Ecuador and made the passage with us to the Galapagos and Easter Island. In addition to being a fine sailor and engineer, John was also tops with Jelly. She had him trained in no time!

Diversions



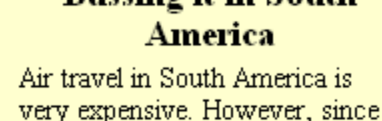
Marcie's travel writing has been paying off...in pennies...however, the cruiser's monthly magazine, *Caribbean Compass*, has published nearly 20 of her articles and photos including a front cover spread on Curacao. David's pet project, Provident, a slow systems diver, is moving slowly ahead, often hampered by fixing the systems that he one day hopes to monitor.

Merry Christmas Happy 2005!

Marcie, David & Jelly

Where in the world is NOC?

Visit our website: www.nineofcups.com and click on "Where are we?". Type in our call sign: AA1ZL for a map with our up-to-date location.



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