

## CRUISING YACHT GUIDE TO THE COOK ISLANDS

### PORTS OF ENTRY

- **Rarotonga:** Avatiu Harbour - 21° 12' South, 159° 47' West
- **Aitutaki:** Arutanga, - 18° 51' South, 159° 49' West
- **Penrhyn:** Omoka – 08° 51' South, 158° 03' West
- **Suvarrow:** Anchorage Island – 13° 15' South 163° 06' West

### FORMALITIES

#### Clearance

- For clearance, the captain must present the passports, clearance from the last port, crew list, as well as a general declaration and details of the yacht.
- Yachts may not visit any other islands in the Cooks than those mentioned as ports of entry without permission from Customs and Immigration. At all these islands, the captain should check in with Customs and the Resident Administrator, if present.

#### Immigration

- If entering in Rarotonga a permit for up to 31 days will be given on arrival. This can be extended, on a monthly basis, up to three months maximum. Fourteen days before the permit expires one should apply for any extension. Proof of adequate funds may be requested for extensions.
- In Aitutaki and other ports of entry, a 31 day permit will be given on arrival. Extensions have to be obtained in Rarotonga. If crew disembarks from the yacht, they must notify Immigration and provide evidence of a means of departure from the Cook Islands.

#### Customs

- A list of firearms must be produced on arrival and these will be impounded until departure.
- Animals have to be confined on board until eventual clearance to land by the Quarantine Officer.
- Agriculture: Animals, plants and fruit will be inspected as the Cook Islands are free of serious diseases and pests, and their economy depends very much on agriculture. Fruit and meat may be confiscated, so it is advisable not to arrive with a lot of fresh supplies. Fortunately good local fruit is available.

#### Health

- Yachts must leave the "Q" flag up until cleared by Port Health, who will visit the yacht and provide pratique.

#### Fees

- Port dues are payable at the Ports Authority in Rarotonga prior to departure and are assessed on the length and type of vessel. The fees are:
  - Monohull Yacht NZD 2.00 per metre per day
  - Multihull Yacht NZD 2.75 per metre per day
  - Motor Yacht NZD 2.25 per metre per day or NZD 0.50 per Gross Tonne per day (whichever is greater)
- There is also a mooring fee of NZD 5.00 per day at Aitutaki.
- All persons departing the Cook Islands are required to pay departure tax of NZD 25.00 per person (NZD 10.00 for children under 12).
- Visa extension fee amounts to NZD 70.00 for 3 months per person.

### **General**

- Local time is GMT- 10.
- The official currency is the New Zealand Dollar (NZD).
- Business hours are 0800-1600 Monday to Friday and 0800-1200 Saturday. Banking hours are 0900-1500 Monday to Friday and 0900-1200 Saturday.

### **Restrictions**

- Cruising yachts are not encouraged to remain in the islands during the cyclone season, which is from the start of November to the end of March.
- All anchorages are weather dependent as are the harbours and depending on forecast weather vessels may be required to clear the harbours for their own protection.
- To visit Suwarrow Atoll National Park, one should obtain permission from the resident Park Administrator.

### **AVATIU, RAROTONGA (CHART NZ 9558)**

- Avatiu is the principal port in the Cook Islands. Beware of out-of -date guidebooks that still recommend Avarua Harbour, which has not been used since the hurricane of 1987.
- Berthing instructions can be obtained from the Harbour Master who can be contacted on VHF Ch 16, or through the Coast Station Radio Rarotonga (Call sign ZKR), which maintains a continuous watch on VHF Ch 16 and also on HF SSB 2182 and 4125 KHz.
- Yachts should fly their quarantine flag until cleared by Port Health. Customs and Immigration formalities can be attended to at the Harbour Master's office. Documents required are:
  - clearance from the last port,
  - the vessel's Registration Certificate, and
  - passports for all on board.
- Any firearms must be declared and deposited with the Police for the duration of the vessels stay.

- A permit for 31 days will be given on arrival. This can be extended up to 3 months by application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.
- Water is available on the wharf. Diesel fuel can be delivered. LPG bottles can be filled.
- There is no slipway, but yachts up to 15 tons can be lifted out by crane, but cradles are not available.
- Yachts are not encouraged to stay in the harbour during the cyclone season from December to March.
- Fresh fruit and imported goods are in plentiful supply. Chandlery supplies are very limited, but can be obtained from overseas within a week if required.

### **Public Holidays**

- New Year's Day
- 2 January
- ANZAC Day: 25 April
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Queens Birthday: 1st Monday in June
- Constitution Day: 4 August
- Gospel Day: 26 October
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day 26 December

### **Telecommunications**

- Telecom Cook Islands is open 24hrs daily for long distance calls.
- Phone cards are available.
- Telecom uses the GSM mobile system.
- Numerous Internet cafes are available.

### **Air Travel**

- Air New Zealand flies to Auckland, Fiji, Tahiti and Los Angeles.
  - Aloha flies to Pago Pago and Honolulu (until 20 November 2004).
  - Virgin Blue flies to Christchurch and Sydney (from 20 November 2004).
  - Air Rarotonga services most outer islands on a regular basis.
- About 150 yachts call at Rarotonga each year.

### **AITUTAKI (CHART NZ 955)**

- Vessels drawing up to six feet can negotiate the long passage into the small boat harbour in Aitutaki lagoon. Larger vessels can anchor in 10 fathoms outside the reef; but this is not recommended in westerly weather.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables and imported goods are in plentiful supply.

### **PENRHYN: (CHART NZ 945)**

- There is good anchorage outside Taruia Passage. Large vessels can enter the lagoon and anchor off the village of Omoka, but it is advisable to employ a local pilot as there are numerous coral heads in the lagoon. It is possible to lie alongside the wharf at Omoka, but there can be considerable surge in south-easterly weather.
- The village of Te Tautua on the eastern side of the lagoon is worth a visit and provides a sheltered anchorage in easterly weather.
- Being a lonely atoll, supplies and facilities are very limited in Penrhyn. Water can also be in short supply at times. There is satellite communication to the outside world. Air Rarotonga flies in once a week. Pearl farming is the main industry on the island.

#### **SUWARROW: CHART NZ 945**

- This atoll is a national park and nature reserve and is uninhabited except for a Ranger/Administrator on Anchorage Island.
- Anchorage is inside the lagoon on the western side of Anchorage Island. Yachts calling at Suwarrow without first clearing at Rarotonga, Aitutaki or Penrhyn will be charged a fee of USD 50.00 for a visit.

#### **OTHER ISLANDS**

- Pukapuka, Nassau, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Palmerston, Atiu, Mitiaro, Mauke and Mangaia
- Prior to visiting the remaining islands in the Cook Islands, vessels have to clear at a port of entry and advise Customs and Immigration of their intention to visit one of the other islands.
- There are no harbours at any of these islands and all vessels are required to anchor off. Good holding can be found off most islands, but the anchorages are very dependent on the weather and a vigilant watch should be kept.
- All the islands are friendly and welcoming of visitors. If departing from Rarotonga expect to be asked to carry supplies to some of the islands.

#### **LINKS**

- The following web sites will provide more information on the Cook Islands in general and cruising in particular:
  - Cook Islands Tourism <http://www.cook-islands.com>
  - The Cruisers Global Website <http://www.noonsite.com/>

#### **GUIDE BOOKS**

- Jimmy Cornell World Cruising Handbook
- Landfalls of Paradise, Earl Hinz
- Charlie's Charts of Polynesia, Charles Wood
- The Pacific Crossing Guide, Michael Pocock
- South Pacific Anchorages, Warwick Clay
- [Tahiti Handbook, David Stanley](#)