

Nine of Cups – 45' Liberty Cutter – 7' draft – May 2006
Subject area: ***Cruising the Coast of Peru***

After more than a year experiencing Ecuador and refitting at the Puerta Lucia Yacht Club, we finally set off in early July 2005 for points south. Two days out, we discovered a leak in the shaft seal, the new depth meter was not working properly and the windlass died. The sail back to PLYC was a quick one, where the manager, Galo Ortiz, arranged a quick haul-out to evaluate the problems. All were quickly sorted out, handled and we were back in the water within a few days on our way south once again.

We had the luxury of following in the wake of the yachts Mist, Pen Azen and Breila, of all which had clearly documented their travels south in SSCA and OCC bulletins. We hugged the coast as suggested, avoiding some of the strong Humboldt Current and large waves, but it was a beat to wind and weather the entire way and we motor-sailed almost continuously. We had planned to stop along the way, but none of the anchorages we evaluated were suitable with existing wind/wave conditions. The terrain is low and sandy and you can see traffic edge along the coast highway. Whales, seabirds and oil platforms abound on the northern Peruvian coast. The area around Cabo Blanco was by far the worst part of the trip with large waves, strong current and confused seas.

Once entering Peruvian waters, we checked in with Tramar (Peruvian maritime authority) twice daily via email. We contacted an agent recommended by Breila and copied the agent with our position as well by email.

After 10 days and 1060nm, we arrived in early morning at the Yacht Club Peruano in LaPunta, next to the commercial port of Callao. A Finnish boat, Serenada, answered our hail and directed us to the mooring next to theirs. The yacht club staff stopped by soon after we moored to welcome us to Peru and YCP and contacted our agent, Cosmos, for us.

The agent, along with four Peruvian officials, came aboard around Noon to check us in. Several problems occurred. First, we were given 2-week shore passes rather than passport stamps which limited our mobility to the Lima/Callao area. Second, a sanitation certificate for the "ship" was required which we, of course, did not have. Third, the agent asked that we provide "gifts" for the officials before they left. Since the fellow was "our" agent, we complied with the gift request though we felt it was inappropriate. He promised to work on the passport stamps and certificate requirement and get back to us.

The Yacht Club Peruano is the oldest yacht club in Peru dating back to 1926. Never have we been more welcomed to a port. Other than fuel, there were no charges for our month-long stay at the yacht club including 24-hour launch service. We were wine, dined, interviewed, photographed, chatted up, shown around and generally treated like royalty. We were invited to a Toastmaster's luncheon, birthday parties, factory tours, picnics, a vineyard tour and holiday celebrations. We were asked to sign the yacht club guest book and were proud, but certainly humbled, to add our names to the likes of Tristan Jones, Jimmy Cornell, the Roths and numerous other renowned yachtsmen. We were only the fourth foreign yacht to have called in 2005.

We had visited inland Peru by bus from Ecuador in 2004, but had missed the Amazon area. Our agent finally managed to exchange our shore passes for passport stamps in order for us to go. We left the boat for 10 days and booked a flight to Iquitos on the Amazon River and spent several days at a jungle lodge.

After a month's stay at YCP, we contacted our agent once again to check us out. Our plan was to stop at Paracas, an overnight trip down the coast where an outstation of YCP was located, and then head on to Chile. Our agent arrived on the morning of departure with the appropriate officials in tow. They completed all the paperwork for checkout and left. Our agent provided us with an un-itemized invoice for \$238 for services rendered which we paid in US dollars. He informed us that

his counterpart in Paracas was expecting us. Though expensive, Breila had informed us of their costs and this was in keeping with what they had paid.

The overnight (120nm) to Paracas was fair, but with southerly winds. We motor-sailed most of the way arriving around 0900 at the anchorage in Paracas. After a hail, the Cosmos agent appeared with port officials from Pisco to clear us in. The yacht club, though not as grand as its La Punta sister, was pleasant enough, offering hot showers, a small restaurant and a launch service. Paracas is a Peruvian national park located on a peninsular. The little town is touristy with no yacht services, but lots of restaurants, crafts and tours through the park as well as to Islas Ballestas for viewing of birdlife, sealions and Humboldt penguins. A few fresh veggies and fruits as well as bread were available. Otherwise, it's necessary to take a bus or cab into Pisco, about a 30 minute ride.

After a pleasant week meeting new friends and meeting up with old friends, we contacted our agent once again for checkout. We were asked to come into Pisco to pay our bill and were absolutely aghast when the bill presented equaled \$650...\$300 of which was the "sanitation certificate" once again. We argued (politely) that we were under 25 tons and therefore not required to have the sanitation certificate. They politely showed us the "new" ruling which went into effect January 2005, which stated that all foreign boats, regardless of size, were required to have the sanitation certificate. The additional \$300, were "miscellaneous" port and agent's fees. To add insult to injury, we were informed that there was no Immigration in Pisco and we would have to return to Callao to check out or have the agent's handle it by courier for yet another fee.

Our very good friend, Gonzalo de Rávago, a fellow cruiser and member of YCP, came to our rescue. With patience, insight and persistence, he made innumerable phone calls. He managed to contact a Cosmos manager in Callao to explain the situation and inquire about the extraordinary charges. In the end, Gonzalo took our passports back to Lima for checkout and drove 4 hours roundtrip to return them to us. He convinced Cosmos to cancel all of their fees and was able to exempt us from the sanitation certificate altogether. Without his help, however, this could have been a small and very costly disaster.

Once checked out, we thought we were free and clear, but a sandstorm (Paracas translates to sandstorm in Spanish) descended upon us preventing us from returning to the boat for 6 hours. When we finally managed to convince the launch driver to take us back to the boat, we found it covered with fine brown/pink sand from stem to stern...3 inches deep in some areas. A day to clean up and we hauled anchor early en route to Arica, Chile.

After 5 hours of beating into a stiff wind, waves and major seasickness, we headed back to Paracas for a night of calm waters and tried again the next day. We made it as far as Bahia de la Independencia where we hung out for 4 days while winds of over 50 knots blasted us from the south. We were reminded by Gonzalo in an email that Bahia de la Independencia was the location that Peruvian patriot, San Martin used to plan the revolution to overthrow the Spaniards. We took consolation in the fact they we were anchored in historical waters. In all, it took nearly 9 days to travel the 514 nautical miles from Pisco, Peru to Arica, Chile including the days we waited out the wind.

Despite sailing to wind and weather and despite Peruvian bureaucracy, we would not have missed our time in Callao for the world. YCP is a most hospitable yacht club and heartily welcomes international sailors. Yacht club members are working to alleviate the problems with officials. We believe that since not many foreign yachts visit, there are no provisions for handling them separately from large commercial vessels. Contact the yacht club prior to your arrival to check out current rules and regulations (yacht.operaciones@infonegocio.net.pe). As a "thank you" to YCP for their hospitality, we put together a "Port Guide" to be provided to subsequent visiting and local cruisers. We have attached it as a supplement to this article.

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