

Nine of Cups – 45' Liberty Cutter – 7' draft – April 2004
Subject area: **Update on the Galapagos**

A 5-day motor-sail due west from LaLibertad, Ecuador and we arrived mid-morning into Puerto Ayora, Academy Bay, Santa Cruz, Galapagos. We had heard that a boat had been turned away, but we had no problems, nor did we have to make up any stories about why we were there. The Port Captain took our zarpe paperwork, cordially welcomed us to the Galapagos, gave us 20 days for our visit and explained we were not to go anywhere else. This is in keeping with previous information we had regarding visiting either Wreck Bay or Academy Bay as ports of entry, but not both. (This did NOT prevent us from visiting Isabela or Floreana though in truth we didn't ask for specific permission to visit these additional ports.)

Santa Cruz/ Academy Bay/Puerto Ayora

Approach & anchorage: Straightforward into Academy Bay. We were met on arrival by a panga that offered to show us to the anchorage area (no charge). We anchored at 00°44.903S/90°18.476W in about 25 feet, good holding in sand. The anchorage is roly and somewhat crowded primarily with tour boats coming and going at all times of the day and night. A stern anchor is advisable.

Formalities: Immigration costs were \$30 per boat (\$15 in/\$15 out) payable on arrival at the Police Station. Port fees payable on departure at the Port Captain's Office were a complicated tabulation of lights/buoys, anchorage, radio fees, etc. and were based on gross tonnage. At 18 GT, Nine of Cups paid \$121.00 which was comparable to fees paid by several other boats. Your onward zarpe is issued after the fees are paid. The parks fee of \$100 per person was never mentioned or requested.

Services: (Get free maps for Santa Cruz, Isabela and Cristóbal at the Tourist Info Center or shops & hotels along Avenida Darwin.)

- **Fuel:** There are three "official" pangas cruising the anchorage which also can provide diesel, water, propane, laundry services and information. This is supposedly set up to prevent cruisers from being harassed, but in truth, it fixes the prices on services provided. Diesel: \$1.50/gallon (\$1.03 at the pump in town); water: \$1.20/5 gallon jug.
- **Trash:** A panga stops by every day or so picking up trash bags (\$1.00/bag); or you can dispose of them in trash bins on the malecon (waterfront).
- **Laundry:** There are several lavanderias in town. ~\$1.50/kg wash/dry/fold; same day service.
- **Banks:** Banco del Pacifico has an ATM which accepts Master Card only, however, inside they will accept VISA cash cards at no charge with a copy of your passport.
- **Water Taxi:** Operates ~0500-2400 daily; 50¢/pp; hail them on VHF Ch 68 "Taxi Marino"; tie-up facilities for a dinghy at the dock are not particularly good.
- **Medical:** Small clinic/hospital in town; we found it adequate for a crew member's ear infection. Lots of farmacias.
- **Provisioning/Supplies:**
 - Proinsular Market right across from the malecon is fairly well stocked for basics, liquor/wine and some frozen meats/chicken; predictably prices are 30%+ higher than the mainland and best selection is after the weekly supply boat arrives.
 - a fresh market "Feria Libre" is held on Saturday mornings
 - Lots of tiendas (small stores) for picking up basics
 - The hardware store next to Proinsular has some boat supplies as well as a reasonable assortment of fishing supplies; several other ferreterias in town.
- **Communications:**
 - Lots of internet and phone access locations; also scanning, copying, printing, etc.
 - Post Office – Near the Proinsular Market, they had no stamps for postage to the U.S. when we were there, but the jewelry store next door did (go figure!).
- **Transportation:**
 - Island bus to and from the airport runs throughout the day
 - "Camionetas" – small, white pick-up trucks act as taxis; ~\$1 most places in town

- Inter-island transportation via ferry, tour boats and small plane

Things to Do & See:

- Lots of restaurants, boutiques and shops
- Darwin Research Station – a MUST! Open daily 6am-6pm; no admission; get up close and personal with the giant tortoises; also birds, marine iguanas, lava lizards and land iguanas
- Lava tunnels – several locations for these; check with a tour company or ask a camioneta driver if he'll take you there and wait for you.
- Diving – lots of dive shops in town and interesting nearby dive sites
- Island tour and trips to other islands are easily arranged via a multitude of tour companies
- Walks/hiking:
 - Tortuga Bay – Beautiful, easy walk to a protected beach with lots of bird and marine life along the way
 - Las Grietas (the crevices) – Easy walk past a salt pan to overlook of deep chasm with surreal turquoise waters below. Lots of birds.
 - Highland hikes to the twin craters, Los Gemelos via tour or camioneta

Isabela/ Puerto Villamil

Approach & anchorage: A bit tricky as the anchorage is surrounded by reef, but easier since navigational aids were in place at our visit. Approach in good light and use Cornell's waypoints of 00°59.12S/90° 57.30W. We anchored at 00°57.90S/90°57.80 in about 16 feet, good holding in sand. Dinghy landing on the beach near the Port Captain's office to the right of the large, modern boardwalk and also at Henry's Beach Bar.

Formalities: There is no immigration office at Isabela. Port fees payable on arrival at the Port Captain's Office (near the Malecon) were about \$7.00. Your zarpe is issued on arrival and you merely check out with the Port Captain via radio when departing. We were given 14 days. The staff is cordial and efficient.

Services: (Get free maps for Isabela in Santa Cruz or Cristobal; we didn't find any on Isabela)

- **Contacts:** Richar (no "d") and Josef both speak excellent English and were licensed guides. They also were able to obtain most anything else available on the island for us.
- **Fuel:** There is a gas station near the airport with erratic hours for pumping diesel. Your best bet is to ask Richar or Josef for help in obtaining fuel at \$1.42/gallon. They can also obtain water for you. Propane was available through Henry's (beach bar/restaurant), but you need an unregulated Ecuadorian tank valve and a hose to fill U.S. tanks neither of which he has.
- **Trash:** You can dispose of it in trash bins near the Port Captain's office, near the park or in a large bin near Henry's restaurant.
- **Laundry:** We found two lavanderias in town: one near Henry's at \$1.50/kg wash/dry/fold; the other through Dora at Ballena Azul Hotel for \$1.00/kg wash/dry/fold; both overnight service.
- **Banks:** None – bring enough money with you.
- **Medical:** Small clinic/hospital/lab in town; we found it adequate for a crew member's ailment. Dispensing farmacia is at the hospital.
- **Provisioning/Supplies:**
 - Several small tiendas in town with basic supplies only.
 - Fresh market in town has tomatoes, squash, melon, etc. Ask Richar or Josef to get you "green" produce for the long passage to the Marquesas or Easter.
 - There are 2 small hardware stores in town, but limited boat supplies.
- **Communications:**
 - Two internet locations...one of which was free while we were there. Also phone access
 - Post Office – Irregular hours
- **Transportation:**
 - "Camionetas" – small, white pick-up trucks act as taxis; negotiate rates

- Small airport
- Ferry (fast open boat) to Puerto Ayora frequently

Things to Do & See:

- Horseback riding tour to the volcano – Outstanding...even in the rain! Contact Richar or Josef.
- Walks/hiking:
Isabela has several great marked trails and lots to see. None of these require a guide or admission fee.
 - Wall of Tears – 8km west of town. We had a camioneta drop us off early in the morning and took several hours to walk back into town exploring all the marked trails and overlooks along the way. Lots of birds including pink flamingos.
 - Darwin Research Station - Well marked footpath with lots of birdlife leads to breeding center for tortoises.
 - Las Senteras – Approachable by dinghy only, this little reef island has a well marked path with white tipped sharks and rays visible in the tidal pools. Lots of sea lions and penguins en route.
 - Note: A small booklet with map is available in English from Dora at Ballena Azul Hotel for \$3.00 and provides lots of good information about Isabela.

Santa Maria/ Floreana

Approach & Anchorage: Large open bay; we anchored at 01°16.59S/90°29.53W in 50 feet in a fairly calm anchorage. We were the only sailboat there.

Formalities: The Port Captain in Isabela showed Easter Island as our next port of call on our zarpe, but called ahead to the Port Captain in Floreana to ask permission for us to visit. We specifically asked to be able to go to Post Office Bay, but were told we had to check in at Puerto Velasco Ibarra first to get permission. On arrival, the Port Captain was not there, but we were told he'd be around the following day. We saw him the following day and were told politely, but firmly/ that we were not allowed to go to Post Office Bay...only tour boats could go there. He could arrange for us to go on a tour for \$200. We begged off. We were never required to pay port fees though if we had stayed longer, I think they would have been comparable to Isabela. No immigration at Floreana.

Things to Do & See:

- There isn't much on Floreana if you remove Post Office Bay from the options. There is one small trail off the main road in town to a beach with seals and it is marked "Sentero".
- We visited the hotel where Margaret Wittmer originally lived and met her daughter and granddaughter. Wittmer's book "Floreana" makes good reading and gives excellent background on the island and its history. They keep a big book with boats that visit and ask you to sign it. There is a trail into the hills which is touted to be quite scenic, but we didn't try it.

Services:

- There isn't much although we were able to pick up 20 gallons of diesel in jerry jugs at \$1.00/gallon...cheaper than the mainland even. Ask at the hotel.
- Fresh produce is sometimes available; ask at the hotel.
- Meals, with advance notice, are available at the hotel.

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