

## NOTES FROM PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO SOUTH TO GOLFITO, COSTA RICA

I've put together this information for the people that I know that are heading south out of P.V. to Panama. This is just my personal information that we gathered while traveling during the months of March thru July in 2000. Remember everyone has different opinions and experiences along the way.

### Part I from Puerto Vallarta to Hualco:

Some of you may have already visited these anchorages so you can just skip until you get to the part that you want.

**Ipala:** described as a roly anchorage and to be used as only a rest stop is just that. We'd pass it by next time or spend the time to set a stern anchor. Be prepared for kids swimming out and soliciting "donations" of clothing, t-shirts, food y mas. Kinda set me off as the boy that swam out to our boat, asked if he could climb aboard half way up our boarding ladder and then was a bit pushy asking for more. He then swam on to the other boats in the anchorage after he'd told us that he was alone at the age of 11 with his little sister. When he was "done" a panga roared out to the last boat where he was and picked him up with his booty. Didn't sit well with me.

**Chamela:** very nice. Double anchoring in the Northern anchorage makes for a very comfortable night's sleep. There's plenty of room there. White sand beach was shut out when we were there because of the swell direction as well as the anchorage on the inside of the islands there as the swell was wrapping around the islands and creating a washing machine effect. If the swell is right, the spot inbetween the islands looked really nice.

**Careyes** is not to be missed. It's in between Chamela & Tenacatita so if there's no room in Careyes you can keep going and make either anchorage (depending on the direction in which you're traveling) easily by dark. One suggestion we'd like to share is plan on arriving in there about mid-day as many people who are leaving won't be leaving until then and you may miss out on one of the few anchorage spots there. Anchor in the middle cove. The cove in front of the Club Med has poor holding, rocks and pebbles. You must double anchor here. The Club Med allows you to "buy" priviledges at their facility. Basically, they're 145 pesos/ unit, if you will. 11:30am-6pm which including lunch is one option, 6p-2am (dinner and the disco and nightly entertainment) is another, and the last one is 290 pesos for breakfast until 6pm (which gives you breakfast & lunch). All options include use of all their beach facilities, work out room, swimming pool and whatever else you'd like. It's the Hotel Careyes (formerly Hotel Bel Air) where we loved. They welcome cruisers as long as you purchase drinks or food at the hotel bar or restaurant and ask that you not run your engines on your dinghies past their swim barrier. A small thing to ask once you arrive and see what the hotel has to offer! Sipping cocktails in their overstuffed lounges on the edge of the cove, munching on their house specialty of camarones Hotel Careyes and watching the sunset made us think that this

is what we'd been looking for! Don't miss it! The anchorage can get tight and roly; but it's worth it.

**Barra de Navidad:** You've got a couple of options here. Melaque is a roly anchorage and beach landings are tricky. Barra has *Marina Puerto de la Navidad* resort and marina. \$1/ft/day or \$14/ft/mo

e-mail: ofmar@coll.telmex.net.mx

web site: [www.islanavidad.com](http://www.islanavidad.com) *Grand Bay Hotel* is even nicer than Paradise Village. Believe it! Complete with a 3 level swimming pool connected by water slides to the bottom one that has a swim up bar and small little wading pools around the edges for you to soak in and get out of the heat. You have full use of the facilities including a pontoon boat that leaves from the marina and takes you to the town panga dock. You have to pay for a ride home (4 pesos!) but they take you right to your boat. Free shuttle to the *golf course restaurant*, or if you stay in the lagoon take your dinghy to the taxi (panga) dock and walk up the hill to the restaurant. Really super breakfasts for cheap! like \$2-\$3! and don't miss out on their fresh fruit drinks. Dinners are just as inexpensive and good. The town of *Comilla* is inbetween the panga dock by the golf course and the marina. The tienda at the top of the hill has fresh veggies on Sundays and Thursday and the gal will fill special orders for you also.

The restaurant at the bottom of the hill is great! Seafood dripping in garlic or anyway you like for \$5.

You can take your dinghy and tie off in front of the *Hotel Sands* but make sure you use a stern anchor to keep you off the sea wall.

Port Captain's office is super nice! Simply drop your paperwork off and then come back when you're ready to check out. No hassels at all!

In town: *Seamaster* great seafood overlooking the water *French crepe restaurant* upstairs on corner of Veracruz (?) is a little expensive but has excellent crepes and salad.

Laundry in town on right side of main street is very inexpensive and good. *Mango Bay* across from them is art studio and has computer internet access in the back.

Net on channel 22 at 9am, maybe 8:30 (I think)

There's a panga that you can hail on 22 who'll panga you water and fuel.

**Manzanillo:** If you anchor outside of *Las Hadas* you can pay about \$10/night and have use of their dinghy dock and all facilities. The harbor master at Las Hadas will do your check-in/check-out paperwork as long as you aren't checking in or out for international ports.

The place is starting to fall apart but it's very convenient to use their dinghy dock particularly if you're going to do a big provision and take a taxi back from the Commercial Mx. There's a small mall inside of where the Commercial

Tell the taxi driver that you want to be taken down to the marina and he can almost drive you right to your dinghy. The hotel has internet access if you bring your own laptop. It was a little complicated until we figured it out, then it was great! Go to the front desk and leave your credit card as a deposit and then they tell you to go to the end of the lobby and hook in. Well, go to the house phones and make a right, go to the first pillar and look at the bottom by the floor of the side that's facing the windows, you'll see a phone jack that's labeled "internet". Bingo! Make sure you bring a phone connector. Use your aol or compuserve to dial in and make the connection. Verify with the front desk if you have to dial a 9 to get out, I think you do. We used the connection for 45 minutes and went back to the desk to check out when done. I told her to leave it on the credit card and she looked at me in shock. From the look on her face I thought, Oh my god, this is more expensive than our credit limit on our card. But really she was in shock as it was only 15 pesos and she couldn't understand why I didn't want to pay in pesos! What a score. Taxis to town have posted rates at the front door about 30 pesos. Bus is 4 pesos each. If you go into the old town make sure you stop at *Bar Social*. It's a gas and not to be missed!

**Zihuatanejo:** Everyone has all kinds of info on here suffice it to say that *Rick's bar* is the place. He's a super nice guy and does all kinds of stuff for you. Right behind the fuel dock. You can tie up inside by the seawall again, use a stern anchor to keep you off.

**Acapulco:** I have to say I called it "Ack-ah-pulco" as it's a big, bussling, dirty city. But it's great for a big provision before heading out of the land of plenty (read: Mexico). Lots of surge in the harbor. They're gonna need a traffic light on a buoy in the channel if any more cruise ships come in and disgorge their passengers. There's at least one, if not two ships a day!

Now, I'm going to be very frank here. The *Club de Yates* Acapulco is a nice facility but it's seen its day. The other marina is worse. Snr. Marquez runs the Club de Yates with an iron hand...and I'm not too sure if it's a slippery one too. Cause the fees that he charges yachters for check-in are expensive, but less than if you do it yourself. I have a hunch he's kinda got a scam going here as I'm not sure that all the funds you give him get passed on to the proper places. We opted to do our own check-in cause he was going to charge us close to \$60 and we couldn't imagine that it really cost that much! Immigration (open 8am-2pm) was way downtown and you can only check-in (and they were very fussy about the paperwork), then you go to the port captains office (open 9am-2:30pm) near the cruise terminal, then to the bank and pay one fee, then API to pay another, then back to the port captains office. We paid an API fee (60.50 pesos/day anchored PLUS 15% tax on the amount!) that was more expensive than anywhere we'd been in Mexico and it was based on the num-

ber of days you stay. The Tax is also the most expensive ever. Now, I ask you, how can Snr. Marquez (he's never called by his first name) charge a flat fee that HE says he simply passes on to the proper authorities when it's almost 1/2 of what you pay to the offices themselves? But you are forced to check-in if you stay at the Club de Yates as he asks for a copy of the paperwork when you're done! I suppose he does this, as we found out that most of the people that anchored out opted to by pass the whole paperwork cha-cha, momba and rip off completely...and you know what? I don't blame them as this place was just plain 'ole highway robbery! Until Acapulco, I've always gone with the flow and never complained about the process, ever changing as it might have been in Mexico; but after we were done checking in ourselves, I felt like I was taken. So be advised. You make your own decisions on how to play this.

Buses are 3 pesos or 4 pesos for the yellow airconditioned ones. Well worth the extra 10¢!

There's a *Sam's club* and *Wal-Mart* that's got pretty much everything you'd need. Wal-Mart is on the main drag and open 24 hours a day. You could bus it and cab back but we heard about hiring a cab on the hourly basis and split it with another couple and boy was it great!

*Enrique (Henry) Gomez*

Cell Phone: 04474370307 or home: 4400385

Taxi number 186

Call him and make an apt. to have him come pick you up. Tell him you want to do provisioning. I think he charged 140 pesos/hr and it included more than just his driving you around, he comes into the stores with you and translates if you need it and helps find items for you as he shops at Wal-Mart and knows where everything is. Believe me that's an asset. That place is huge!

*Internet:* Hidalgo #26 Local - 2 Centro, Junto A Estafeta 30 pesos/hr by the Zocalo on the corner of Felipe Valle & Hidalgo

Loads of restaurants in town. Ones off the beach are a little pricey-er.

Walking distance to Playa Caleta is a restaurant called *La Cabana* overlooking the Playa. Good food. Couple other little palapa type places right down the street there in Caleta. There's also a little grocery store for small items if you don't want to go all the way into town for the Commercial.

**Huatulco & area:** We were going to go to *Puerto Angel* from Acapulco but the swell was running right into the anchorage and we opted out after circling the anchorage. Big rollers running in and causing a great deal of backswell in the smaller anchorage on your left. It may/should/could be totally different conditions when you travel so it's worth a shot but you should know: Plan on being boarded by the Mexican navy and it's drug dog as every boat that we spoke with that anchored there was boarded. Also, you must check in with the port captain there but there aren't any banks in the village to pay your API fees, so you have to take a bus to the closest

town about 10 miles away, pay your API fee and return to the port captains office to complete the check-in/check-out procedure.

We anchored in *Maguay* for a couple of nights and found the water clear and a pleasant anchorage with the prevailing swell at that time. It's now got a bunch of palapas and day boats come and drop people off to swim, snorkel and use the beach every day. It's pleasant at night, but not the secluded anchorage that Rains describes. Be so advised. *Huatulco* itself is a nice little town. In the spring of 2000 the port captain was exposed for pocketing fees and so you can't go into the office to check in. But we experienced no problems in our check-in and check out. He gave us the Mexican weather forecast daily and made us pay our minimal fee to the bank in town (there's only one). There are minimal facilities in the town of *Huatulco* itself. *Ve El Mar* is a nice restaurant right on the beach but we thought it was a bit pricey. We ate at the restaurant all the way around the beachfront for lunch and it was good. Plenty of options there. The "marina" is pretty non-existent. It's inside the inner harbor and there's not really any openings as they're filled with local pangas. The town of **La Crucecita** is where you can get almost anything. Taxis are regulated and the fares are listed at the taxi stand at the square in *Huatulco*. You tie your dinghy up inside the dock where the tour boats are inside the harbor. Don't forget the tides are getting larger and plan for high and low tide with your painter. You have to jerry jug fuel but the cab drivers are all very good about pricing the rides fairly if you negotiate BEFORE you make your trip. Ask them how much it would be for your whole itinerary with all the stops you plan on making. The girls went to *La Crucecita* and dropped laundry and stayed there, the boys went and did a fuel run and then back to meet us and then he waited while we all had lunch and took us back to the dock. It was very reasonable I can't remember how much. **Laundry** is done for you in 24 hours and it's reasonable. Take advantage of it, as this may be your last laundry stop for quite some time!

**Internet:** at Chocco-latte Internet Cafe in the Hotel Mision de los Arcos on Av. Gardenia in *La Crucecita*. The owner Sherry McLeod is an american and very nice. The internet cafe is very nice and when Sherry heard we were cruisers she went and got all kinds of american magazines and gave them to us. Lots of restaurants and shops in *La Crucecita*. **Open market** in between Gardenia & Bugambillas on the North side of the Plaza (closer to the bus station) has great selection. Load up as this is the last you'll be seeing of good veggies & fruit y mas if you don't stop in Pto. Madero for quite some time.

We opted to by pass **Pto. Madero** and check out of the country in *Huatulco*. Migration is at the airport in both places (*Huatulco* and Pto. Madero). We first went to the Pt. Captain's office where he started filling out the necessary paperwork and told us to take it to Migration at the airport which is 15 miles away. The bus was inexpensive but stops many times along the way and runs only every hour. We negotiated a good round trip taxi fare. We were

in and out of Migration at the airport in minutes.

**IMPORTANT: make sure you get an exit stamp in your passport! Costa Rica can be sticky and make you return to your past country and get an exit stamp if you didn't get one. I certainly didn't want to have to repeat that trip just cause I forgot the exit stamp in each passport!!!!**

When we returned the port captain had our international zarpe prepared.

## **PART II FROM HUATULCO THROUGH GUATEMALA:**

A couple of additional notes on:

**Acapulco** was the only place, bar none (including Cabo), that we actually had two close calls with other vessels! It seems that they have a real attitude here with respect to "rules of the road". *They* are the privileged ones if they're locals! On our departure from Acapulco it was a really nice day and we set sail as we left the bay only to have TWO excursion boats nearly run over us! I kept asking Joe if we should alter course as it appeared that the large excursion boats were bearing down on us on a collision course. He kept saying that they'd alter course shortly but we had to make radical course changes to avoid collision though we were sailing. Moral of the story: When in Acapulco, don't assume that the excursion boats will be courteous and give way!

Didn't mention the other marina in Acapulco. "*La Marina de Acapulco*" (VHF 16) was severely damaged in a hurricane about 5 years ago and they've just never repaired the place. So, many of the fingers on the slips are broken or damaged. It's a little rough but hey, it's a good opportunity to "transistion" out of the posh Mexico we've all come to expect and love. The one advantage of this marina is that they do your check-in and paperwork at NO CHARGE. We didn't stay there, so I can't vouch for this info but we spoke with a couple of people who stayed there and they confirmed that it was the case. Perhaps verify when you arrive and check availability. It's a hike UP to the road to catch the bus and it's a hair closer to town but if you need dockage you could use it while you provision and then anchor out. Just one more option.

**Fuel:** Acapulco Yacht Club has a nice fuel dock and they ask that you make reservations for fueling as most of the boats are power yachts that take on large amounts of fuel and this way they don't have boats idling in the fuel dock area waiting for people to finish. Really quite civilized. Because we didn't need that much, we found it just as easy to jerry jug, as if you're berthed there the dock staff will usually recognize you and take your jugs once filled on a trolly back to your boat and squeeze you inbetween larger power yachts fueling. It worked well for us.

**Huatulco:** Mision de los Arcos has Chocco-Latte internet cafe. Gardenia #902, *La Crucecita*  
Phone: (958) 701-65 Fax: (958) 711-35  
e-mail: losarcos@huatulco.net.mx

**Crossing of the Gulf of Tehuanepec:** From all the reading we'd done on the crossing, it appeared that THE best time to cross was the middle of May or the very early part of November before the Christmas winds built in the Caribbean. Rains hates **Puerto Madero**, but our friends stopped there and found it OK. Sure there's theft, but it's not from the fishermen. It's when cruisers aren't smart and leave their dinghys in the water or their outboards unlocked that things get stolen. While we were passing by the grapevine reported there were two dinghy thefts and one outboard theft. They were the result of lazy actions on the part of cruisers. Our friends used the Catalan brothers who usually contact the boats in the anchorage and offer their services at reasonable rates. Our friends said that the Catalan Brothers rates weren't set and that they told them "to decide how much to pay them". The anchorage is always in need of dredging and the entrance was a bit treacherous when they went through making us glad we by passed it. Fuel is jerry juggled unless you need a large amount and that's arranged through the Catalan brothers. *Tapachula*: is the town up the road with a modern shopping center (the last you'll see of those) and it's on the way to the airport for migration if you need to check out.

There is a good article about transiting the Gulf and Papagayo in the February 2000 issue of Latitude 38 pgs 142-144. From the reading we decided the most difficult part of the crossing would be from 27 miles outside of Salina Cruz at Boca de San Francisco (16°13'N /14°45'W) and Puerto Arista and we wanted to make that crossing during the daylight hour so that required that we depart Huatulco in the afternoon and night sail to arrive at this point at early early first light. Once you reach Puerto Arista, just after Barra Tonalá, it's been said that the wind pretty much dies. There are light towers that are visible during the daylight and marked on the charts to verify your progress. Rains said that "if the wind is blowing at all, it will howl with increased fury at these entrances. When you move offshore to pass them, you will temporarily be exposed to greater wind and wave action. Once you are past them, move back close to the beach for protection."

One other thing that you have to watch out for in the crossing that makes it more advantageous during the daylight hours is the black fishing flags with nets that hang from them. Make sure you keep the flap upwind of you but there are lots of them so keep your eye out. Also, friends have commented that at different times of the year, shrimp boats are working at night not deviating their course for you and also fishing boats without lights on. Radar would definitely help if you make this crossing at night. We planned on making the crossing close to the full moon. Unfortunately it was overcast and it limited the light during the nights.

If you've checked out of the country and are bypassing Pto. Madero, plan on being boarded or approached by the navy for an inspection. They were courteous and provided us with a document certifying that we'd been inspected that we were to provide to any other

Naval vessels should they want to board us again before we crossed the border into Guatemala.

### **Bye, bye Mexico. Hello Guatemala.**

It was pretty much a crummy ride into Puerto Quetzal. The seas were very, very confused and at times we were making no forward progress. We tacked one way and then another, and after pretty much a whole day of exhausting slow progress we decided to tack out to sea a bit to just get some rest. We had read sufficiently about Quetzal and studied the charts enough to decide that the harbor was well enough marked to come in at night. We were a little hesitant about all the commercial traffic. We arrived exhausted and beaten up at 1:00am into the harbor. What a joy to see the well marked harbor. The anchorage for cruisers is in front of the Base Naval. In the channel and then left, down the end of that one, once again well marked, until the amber bouy and we anchored between the last and second to last green bouy. In the morning we hailed "Capitania de Puerto Quetzal" on Ch. 16. Rains says Spanish only, I started in Spanish and then he switched into English. He'll ask you where you came from, where you're located, where your boat is registered, and where your next port is. He then asks you to wait and calls the Pt. Captain of the Naval Base and Immigrations to see when they're going to come and do the check-in on your boat. He comes back and advises you about how long before the authorities will arrive. All very civilized.

The Pt. Captain and immigrations rep arrived right on time and were nothing but welcoming. We actually asked them all kinds of questions as we had close to no information on Guatemala. They told us how to catch the bus from the base into Pto. San Jose to get money changed — Bus fare: 1 Quetzal per person Exchange rate: (7.5 Quetzals /dollar at the time we were there).

We actually bought some Quetzals off the Pt. Captain at a little less of an exchange rate just to get money to get to the bank in town. The Pt. Captain, Juan Carlos Pineda-Paiz (Pineda on his name tag) was very accommodating and filled us in on all kinds of general information on Guatemala. They were very proud of their country and glad to have us there. The Pt. Captain said if we had any laundry he had someone on the base that could do it and would take it to her. I gave him a small amount and he delivered it back to us in a couple of days. I thought it was a little pricey but turns out it was done by hand and the lady ironed EVERYTHING, right down to your skivies. As there's plenty of water available on shore I preferred to do our laundry ourselves and spend the money elsewhere.

There's a commissary (sodas, beer & ramen noodles) and pool at the top of the hill. Pool is about \$5/per person per day to use.

As of May, 2000 we paid the following: \$100/boat for 5 days in Guatemala. After that it's \$20 per day additional. Plus \$10 p/p for immigrations in and out (paid at check in time). The Pt. Captain is very accommodating and

if you go to his office he'll give you the NOAA weather print outs from the internet daily.

You can tie your dinghy up at the floating dock of the naval base. Just make sure you plan for the big tides you're now dealing with. Walk through the gazebo area and take the road to the left and then your first right then left and walk down to the end where you'll see the entrance gate. Cross the street and wait for the bus that's marked Puerto San Jose. Smush yourself onboard and you'll know you've arrived at Puerto San Jose when the bus makes a left and passes a Shell and Esso gas station. Stay on board until it stops right next to the town square where the open market is. You can't miss it.

There are a couple of *banks* to change your money. No ATM machines. The exchange rate really doesn't fluctuate and there's no commission charged. The grocery store does not take credit cards, only cash, so plan accordingly. There's one bank almost across the street from the Esso station and another one on the back side of the square across the railroad tracks and to your right **Restaurant(s):** The only restaurant I'd suggest eating at in the town is inside the *Hotel Martita*. From the square, cross the railroad tracks, make a left on the road (open market on your right—only marginal produce—pretty tired), and down about 5 blocks. The meals include small hor d'oeuvres, yummy soup, and your meal. It's pretty reasonable and their fruit drinks are very refreshing on a hot day.

We met a gal who was married to a Guatemalan who owned a restaurant and fishing operation in the lagoon on the other side of Pto. Quetzal. Tamberly invited us to come out to their place for lunch one day. We made arrangements with our cab driver we found and enjoyed the lunch there immensely. They're famous for their ceviches and were reasonably priced. We had thought there'd be a town to walk around and then after a while we'd stop at the Restaurant, but that's not the case, so if you want to eat there, just plan on going to the restaurant and coming back. *Restaurant El Capitain* at Buena Vista, Ixtapa Lagoon phone: 881-4403 can be reached by bus or taxi and it's a nice excursion. Tamberly Kerr & Ricardo (her husband) her e-mail: sailfish@quetzal.net

There's also a section on the beach (roughly described) in Pto. San Jose with lots of restaurants. Neither I, nor my stomach, were adventurous to try them except for the *Beach Club Restaurant* owned by Edward Perez. He was written up in the *Forgotten Middle* as an agent to handle fuel and other items for cruisers. He actively sought us out as we were traveling with a power yacht that he was anxious to get fueling business from them if they needed it. I have to be honest that he was a bit negative about the Naval Base and the services they were providing to cruisers and I didn't get a good feeling from him. Turns out as the conversation continued that he was in the process of sinking moorings that he was going to rent out to cruisers for \$10/day. The locations of the moorings were across from the commercial harbor and I feel that the Naval Base provided much more security than what he was going to be offering. It seemed he

was involved in a political spitting match between the Navy and himself was a little too free to share his opinions on the whole situation. We had lunch at his Beach Club Restaurant and had a delicious burrito but it wouldn't be something that I would suggest you search out unless you happen to be in the area. We were looking for an internet connection that he said we could use if we stopped by. Turned out it was in his office upstairs from the restaurant and only made it available if he was around (and perhaps felt like it). No luck for us as he was out of town.

**Internet Connection:** As I said previously Edward Perez *might* let you make a connection IF he's around but there's no set time that he's open. I asked the Pt. Captain at the Naval Base if I could use his connection for 10 minutes but due to security reasons (understandably) he couldn't. I'd pretty much advise you to forget internet access if you're just staying at Pto. Quetzal and using Pto. San Jose. I was desperate as I had a customer that sent some files to me for work and was persistent in my search to fanagle my way into a 10 minute connection at a computer store off the square but it appeared to be an exception to their service and not a normal occurrence.

**Taxi/Fuel:** We met Raphael when we were in San Jose the first day. He told us about Restaurant Martita and gave us his cell number to call for him to pick us up. We made arrangements at that time to have him pick us up the next morning and do our fueling run. He charged 20 quetzalles each way to go into the Esso station and fill our jerry jugs, drive us back to the dock, wait for us to dinghy out the jugs, empty them and back again until we were full. He charged the same amount to take us to El Capitain for lunch. He has a little Kia van and jerry jugging was easy with his help. He was on time and very nice. He didn't speak any english, but we got along fine with our spanish. Diesel was reasonably priced at the Esso station.

**Taxi driver:** Raphael Leiba Cell #: 412-5975

**Groceries:** The only decent grocery store is *Despensa Familiar* about 2 blocks before the town square on your left. It's small but surprisingly enough it had a really decent selection of groceries and booze. Right down to real Pillsbury flour! No credit cards accepted. Quetzalles only.

**Travelling inland:** Raphael would have been happy to take us inland to Antigua but we just weren't comfortable leaving our boat alone at anchor overnight. We're glad we made that decision as one of the nights a squall came through and blew to 47 kts with tremendous lightning. Holding was good in the anchorage. With the recent election of a new president in Guatemala they've improved the roads immensely and we were told the 3 hr ride to Antigua (by car, not bus) now can only take 1 1/2hrs. Travel across the country to Rio Dulce has also been cut in half.

**Checking Out:** The day prior to departure (M-F) you should bring a despachio (crew list) and your passports to the Pt. Captain at the Naval Base. He'll prepare your International Zarpe. You can zarpe to Panama if you want with puntos intermedios, just like your crew list can be

also. It takes him about a 1/2 day to prepare your international zarpe so make sure you check with him in advance of your anticipated departure.

**Important: make sure you always get an exit stamp in your passport for every country you leave! We've been told that Costa Rica in particular, has refused entry to people without an exit stamp and have forced them to return to that country to receive the proper stamp!**

### **PART III FROM GUATEMALA THROUGH EL SALVADOR**

#### **Guatemala to El Salvador —**

We planned on going directly to Bahia del Sol or Barillas but ended up getting pounded and decided to seek refuge in the commercial port of **Acajutla, El Salvador** for the night. There was little information on the port but the charts indicated that there should be ample protection to rest. Rains said the harbor was fouled with all kinds of trash and was filthy dirty and not to be considered as a stop. I had an article I'd clipped from Lat 38 that indicated that someone had gone in and had "reported" that they could take a mooring for \$10/night. We decided to make the attempt to anchor for the night. Upon arrival in the anchorage the large commercial shipping area is on your right and to your left is a cluster of rusted old fishing boats that look like they're about ready to sink and foul the bottom of the harbor further. Head to the back of the anchorage and circle to the left of the police boats that are moored. As you approach, hail "La Torra de Acajutla" on channel 16 to request permission to anchor for the night. They'll tell you it's \$10/24 hrs and even where to anchor. He'll ask you if you want to go ashore. If so, he'll have to make arrangements for immigrations to come to your boat. If you just want to rest, the Captain of the El Salvadoran Coast Guard (a division of the El Salvadoran Navy) will come out and take your zarpe and check you into the country. At the time we were there (May 2000) it was Fernando Aguilar. He spoke excellent english as he was on a US Coast Guard exchange program for 2 years in the States. He'll then arrange for a panga to come out the next morning (as we arrived at 7pm) to take you ashore and pay your port fee of \$10. We were a little concerned about getting our zarpe before our departure as it was a sunday afternoon; but he came out and delivered it just before we left. As we departed one of the panga drivers chased after us and asked for money for fuel for their panga for the trips they made. They asked for \$10, we gave them \$5 and seemed content. I wouldn't plan on doing anything other than resting in Acajutla, but it's nice to know it's there and you can get a nights sleep. We did pull up some kind of old metal contraption with our anchor when we left. Pretty funny and I suppose appropriate for the harbor.

**There are two options for stopping in El Salvador — Bahia del Sol & Barillas Marina Club.** We tried to stop at both but only ended up at Barillas. Our plan was to arrive outside of the entrance to Bahia del Sol early enough in the morning that if they were unable to accom-

modate us or the surf at the entrance was untenable, we'd be able to make the 35 more miles and still get into Barillas by night fall. We didn't have a phone number for Bahia del Sol to check out rates and availability and when our friends arrived outside of Bahia del Sol they opted not to pass the entrance as the surf was extremely daunting and would necessitate a fast boat. If you decide to stop, call **Bahia del Sol** when you reach coordinates:

13°16.412N 088°52.805W on Channel 12 or 16 for someone to escort you in. Telephones: Oficina Costa Del So: (503) 338-0001 (503) 338-0002 Oficina Central: (503) 264-4955 or 264-4949 Moorings are free of charge.

**Laundry** is expensive and we've been told by a number of cruisers that did stop there that the restaurants were very expensive too. ie: 4 shrimp cocktails and 4 beers \$90. Yup, that's expensive. It's also very remote and they don't really cater to transiting cruisers as it's condos which are mostly vacation homes or resort package accommodations. Two boats had to go to Libertad to do their own check in and another moved on to Barillas, knowing that they'd be processed there. (Probably the better idea rather than travelling all the way to La Libertad.)

**Barillas Marina Club:** Barillas is about 1 1/2 - 2hrs up river once you clear the boca so plan accordingly and if you're there when there can be surf at the boca high ebb tide will be the most advantageous crossing time. There were a number of various coordinates listed in the e-mails but the Bahia de Jiquilisco is well marked on the map and the marina has good reception on the VHF so hail them well in advance on Channel 16 to let them know you're coming. It only takes a panga driver 15-20 minutes to zoom out and get you. We marked the entrance of the boca as:

13°08.236N 88°24.641W

Visit their website and get a detailed map with coordinates including the official waypoint for rendezvous. Get their e-mail from the website. [www.barillasmarina.com](http://www.barillasmarina.com)

Perhaps the reason that these coordinates vary so much is that the rendezvous waypoint changes with the swell and wind conditions. Here's the waypoints they list on their website but they really do want you to use their free panga guides.

Waypoints:

#01-13 07.126 N 88 24.977W  
#02-13 07.855 N 88 24.680W  
#03-13 08.578 N 88 24.623W  
#04-13 09.053 N 88 25.077W  
#05-13 09.669 N 88 26.121W  
#06-13 10.567 N 88 26.978W  
#07-13 11.460 N 88 27.126W  
#08-13 12.351 N 88 26.611W  
#09-13 13.744 N 88 27.028W

"Please follow our panga. The operator is experienced and will safely lead you to the marina. In case you'd feel more comfortable, follow the waypoints as explained; After #9, just stay in the center of the channel for three miles."

If you hail the marina they'll give you the rendezvous waypoint and then request that you hail them when you're 1/2 hr from there so they can send the panga to guide you through. Juan has been trying to get a bouy at the boca entrance to make it easier to rendez-vous. If any of you have sailmail you could e-mail them to advise them of your possible arrival date to:  
info@barillasmarina.com

**Contact info:**

Hierberto (marina manager)

79 Av. Nte. No. 616 Col. Escalon

San Salvador, El Salvador, C.A.

Phones: 263-3572; 264-5339; 264-1277

**Checking in:** The customs and immigrations authorities will come out to your boat and process your paperwork when you arrive at your mooring at the marina. They'll stamp your passport and take your zarpe and despachio. Marina info: Moorings are no charge for the first three days and then \$5/night after that. (update 12/00) The marina runs a shuttle van into Usulután where there are 2 grocery stores, open markets, oil and automotive stores, propane fill, ice blocks, farmacias, post office, internet access and more. There is an ATM machine at the ESSO station on the way in as well as ATM machines inside the La Despense de Don Juan (conejo store). At the time we were there the van was free of charge. Good provisioning is available at Usulután.

**Exchange rate** May-June 2000: 8.58 Colones to the dollar.

**Laundry** is done by them and you can do it yourself. Phone lines for internet connections are right at the marina for their guests. (update 12/00) There's a club house where breakfast, lunch and dinner are available. Many times the staff will check to see if anyone is going to have dinner at the clubhouse and if not, they'll close by 7pm. You open an account at the Club House and the Tienda and charge as you go. This is a perfect spot to tour the country of El Salvador. Your boat couldn't be safer! Ask Amerita for information on tours they have a tour company that they work with that offers a number of different excursions around the country. Amerita is the head of the clubhouse and couldn't be more helpful. Make sure you check HOW you're to pay for the tours — U.S. dollars/Credit Cards and if there's a surcharge for the use of credit cards.

(update 12/00) The swimming pool is now complete and the bungalows are close to being finished.

If you're going inland for a period of time and you want to shut your reefer down, the Club house will let you put your items in their freezer and refrigerators. All they ask is that you put them in plastic bags and label them. Then you can shut off the reefer and don't have to worry about power consumption while you're gone. Mail drop: Juan has a Miami mail drop address. This is for personal mail only NOT parcels. Ask him for the address. When it's couriered from Miami to his office in San

Salvador, he'll deliver it out to the marina for you. We had our alternator rebuilt and Juan handled everything right down to putting the cost on our marina account! There were a number of cruisers that needed parts shipped in. Juan is working on a smooth way to bring them in as each person is allowed \$500 duty free into the country. He should have sorted this out by the next season.

**Sightseeing info:**

Barillas has set up a tour desk for booking your tours. We had quite a time finding information about El Salvador, it's history and what to see and how to get around. We finally found a pictorial history of the country and in the back it listed a short chronological history of the country. We also bought On Your Own in El Salvador (small yellow pocket size guide) by Jeff Brauer, Julian Smith and Veronica Wiles. Published by On Your Own Publications. ISBN# 0-9643789-0-6 \$14.95 You should be able to find it at any local bookstore. It was the *only* tour book out when we were there and ironically enough, it was written by americans. We felt that a little reading on the history of the country really helped us understand the country and what we were experiencing. The reasons and results of the war.

*The Princess Hotel* in the Zona Rosa in San Salvador is really super! Smack in the middle of everything and goes for \$140/night during the week. On Fri-Sun it's \$85 including a massive buffet breakfast. Big score. They take credit cards and the business center has excellent internet access. Avenida Las Magnolias y Boulevard del Hipodroma, Colonia San Benito, San Salvador Phone: (503) 298-4545 Fax: (503) 298-4742 e-mail: hotel-princess@ejje.com web site: www.hotelprincess.com *The Marriott* (formerly El Presidente) is a couple of blocks away from the Princess and has better rates on the weekdays if you book it with the person that you do your inland tour. I think we paid \$90/nte on the weekday at the Marriott. They also had a business center with excellent internet access. Final Av. La Revolucion, Col San Benita, San Salvador Phone: (503) 243-4444 fax: (503) 243-2020 e-mail: sansalvador.marriott@salnet.net Reservations phone#: (503) 243-2011

We really enjoyed our *tour guide*: Jorge Martinez who was in the process of going to work with Alberto of El Salvador Adventures from being an independent tour guide. He was very informative, educated in New Jersey, and spoke excellent english. Prices really ended being about the same in the end — \$45/per person/per day. It was a couple of dollars less if you had 10-12 people.

**Places we saw:**

**San Salvador:**

*Laguna Botanical garden "Jardin Botanico La Laguna"*: Set in the bottom of a volcano in San Salvador. About 17 acres all broken down into sections with winding paths filled with indiginous plants. Very interesting. Inexpensive entrance. The ticket booth will call a taxi for you when you want to leave.

*Árbol de dios*: Fernando Llort's gallery Don't miss this!

Wonderful souvenirs of hand painted note cards, note pads, matching envelopes, hand painted wooden boxes and his lithographs are also on display and for sale. It's a small gallery but well worth the stop. The staff will call a cab for you once you're done.

*The National Theatre and the City Hall:* Just OK.

*Zona Rosa:* area filled with restaurants, even a Tony Romas, and one small little arcade with 6-8 shops that they call Basilea Shopping Center. *Punto Literario* is a nice bookshop with cafe and terrace about 4 blocks from the Princess or Marriott. *Cafe Latte* (?) at corner of street where Princess hotel and main road meet. Great lattes and quiches We etc. We really liked *Restaurant Basilea* located inside the arcade by the same name. Excellent variety of food, great salads, sandwiches, fish, meat and much, much more. Phone: 279-0056 You sit on a peaceful terrace outside with plants small water fountains. Has scrumptious dinner at *Los Rancheros*, not far from the Zona Rosa (take a cab).

*Hilasal towel outlet—Divesa:* These towels are manufactured in El Salvador and you'd recognize many of them that are sold with Walt Disney Characters and Star Wars characters in the States. They also make exquisitely colorful ones with parrots, jungle scenes and Llort designs. They're a score. Stock up on them! They make great gifts when you get home! If you're going to load up on them, go here as the savings is pretty good. We paid 100 Colones each for the same towels that were 150-216 Colones elsewhere. The outlet is located at: Iva DL 296 RG#440-5 Tele: 289-3060

#### **West of San Salvador—**

*Joya de Ceren* — Pompeii of the Pacific — El Salvador's archaeological jewel, a Maya village buried in volcanic ash 1,400 years ago. Interesting

*Lake "Lago de Coatepeque":* — scenic and interesting  
*Cerro Verde:* 3 volcanos called the lighthouse of the Pacific — scenic but the day we were on top we were in the clouds so didn't have as scenic of a view as we could have. Bring a jacket as it's cold up in the clouds.

*Santa Ana:* old colonial town with beautiful old cathedral and the theatre is being restored to its ancient beauty. It was fascinating to see and should be exquisite to see once the restoration has been completed.

#### **East of San Salvador—**

*Illobasco:* famous for its ceramic miniatures. Would probably skip in the future.

*San Sebastian:* Where they still weave with the old wooden foot looms exquisite cloth. A friend of ours got a magnificent queen bedspread with colorful baskets full of flowers on one side and the other side was the same pattern with different colored flowers! Exquisite all for @\$19 USD!

They also sell yards of this fabric if you're a sewer, you'll never find such beautiful hand woven cloth anywhere like this.

*Suchitoto:* Another old colonial town with one of the most beautiful views in the country from the restaurant's terrace.

*Perquin:* We took a full day excursion to what used to be

the headquarters for the guerillas during the war. We had lunch at *Hotel Y Restaurante Perkin Lenca* — Caserio Arenales, Canton Casa Blanca, Km. 205, Perquin Morazan, El Salvador, Phone: (503) 225-9627 and 226-2094 e-mail: perkin@netcomsa.com — owned by Ronald Brenneman, a U.N. Aid worker during the war who met his wife, a commander in the guerilla force. They now run this hotel and restaurant. One of the better meals we had in the country. Ron went with us to the *Museo de la Revolucion* and translated and discussed the war with us. His presence added incredible insight to the whole visit and should not be missed. It's a long day but very worth it.

Checking out: At the time we were there we had to arrange to be taken over to El Triunfo to check out but Juan has told us that the office for immigrations and Pt. Captain is now complete at the marina, so my guess is that you'll be able to check out right from the marina.

### **PART IV FROM BARILLAS SOUTH TO COSTA RICA:**

#### **Couple extra notes on El Salvador:**

Another waypoint we had for **Bahia del Sol** was:

13°18.11N 88°53.55W

I'm inclined to say this one is more accurate than the previous one listed in Part III e-mail.

#### **Barillas Marina Club:**

Right next door to the marina is one of the largest shrimp facilities in El Salvador & Nicaragua. Archie Valdacchi (of the florist shop in S.F.) owns the facility and Juan has encouraged him to solicit the cruisers for haul outs. While we were there 3 boats hauled and had work done. Mostly it was doing their bottoms. One boat hired a crew of 3 to paint his hull for \$30 for all three for the day. If you plan on doing this, make sure you bring your own paint as all the yard has is what they use on the shrimp boats. The problem was that they give priority to the shrimp boats as that's what the facility has been built for. It's not a hoist, it's ways but they do a good job blocking the boats (from what we saw, and were told). Juan is considering purchasing his own hoist for the cruisers if Archie's facility is unable to haul the transiting cruisers successfully.

**Radio Nets:** By the time you're in Zihuatenejo you should be able to tune into the *Amigo Net* it was on 8.122 with an alternate of 8.119 at 7:00am (I think). This gets a little tricky as there are a couple of time zone changes along the way. First one is in Guatemala in Puerto Quetzal. The *Panama Pacific Net:* 8.143 at 14:00Z. This net was excellent as it was much more than a VHF net with the standard format. I know that the nature of the nets vary with the controllers and participants as they change rapidly as they pass through the area. We were able to get pretty good reception from Barillas on down. This net emphasized passing specific information that others would find helpful when they were in the area. I suppose the non-VHF (for a lack of a better description) was due to the fact that this Net covered a large area — from Barillas to some-



times as far as Cartegena. Imagine all the places and information inbetween! It's interesting to note that there's a *Panama Breakfast Club Net*: 8.107 13:30Z that caters more to the caribbean coast and it's definately a VHF net. People just check in with their boat name and if they wish to be listed for traffic. No location report, no local information shared. The *Manana Net*: 13.342 (ham) at 1900Z is also good. Jerry usually provides weather on this and you can usually hear it OK until you get further south into Costa Rica. The *Pacific Maritime Net*: "Ralph's Net" (Ham) 21.402 at 2200 Zulu (4pm Costa Rica time) is really a good net. If you're a ham you should use this one as Ralph in Portland is incredibly helpful. The weather that's provided is OK if it comes from "Willy" down in Panama, but better if it comes from Jerry or another guy in Arizona (maybe TX). Now, this is my personal opinion on Willy the weather man, who comes up on the various nets in this area. He's in Isla Parida, Panama and does an **OK** (just OK) job. He also conveys way, way, way too much "professed" weather forecasting knowledge to the cruisers and some come to rely on his info too much and not follow up for themselves. This is where that phrase "everyone makes their own choices" applies.

#### From Barillas South:

It's about 45 miles to the Gulf of Fonseca but with the 1 1/2 - 2hr trip down the river to the boca it's almost impossible to make it to the Gulf of Fonseca in one day. An overnight was not attractive to us as Tropical Waves were sweeping through with convective activity regularly at night. We decided to try and make a straight shot to Costa Rica to Bahia Sta. Helena if possible as all we'd heard about and read about Nicaragua was that it was expensive and difficult to check in and out of. Not wanting the hassel we charted for the non-stop plan. We wanted to do a few of the islands in the Gulf but time was getting into hurricane season and there'd already been a couple of hurricanes pass through the Gulf of Tehuantepec that we felt it important to press onward. We made this passage in the 2nd week of June. Bear in mind that every passage at different times of the year are different but here's our notes.

Once again the *Forgotten Middle* was so outdated that the information was pretty much useless, Rains encouraged people to pass through and not stop and we had just a few articles from Latitude 38 with minimal information on Nicaragua. Our friends ended up having to seek refuge in **Corinto** at 11:30pm as they got pounded crossing from Barillas. They reported the fees totaled \$66 and people were very accommodating. They did report that the authorities weren't really prepared for transiting cruisers but they tried very hard. Other friends stopped in the **Gershunas Unnamed Anchorage** (11°30.4'N 86°10.2'W) for 3 days and really enjoyed themselves. We were also told there were many places to tuck in along the coastline that were not marked or charted between Punta Samosa and San Juan Del Sur that would be fine to seek respite from the weather. There are a couple mentioned in

the *Latitude 38* article on the last page on Crossing Tehuantepec and Papagallo that we had marked indicating the same but never needed them. We were very surprised to see how green and scenic the coastline of Nicaragua was.

**San Juan Del Sur** sounded like an interesting spot to stop but we were put off by the hassel of checking in and out we pressed on to Costa Rica. We had heard that San Juan Del Sur is even more difficult to check out of as there are no immigration facilities there and this necessitates traveling to the border by bus to perform the check out process. I have a little more info on San Juan del Sur from a Lat 38 article I clipped that detailed the ride to the border, fees they paid, Managua connection, Internet cafes, restaurant name. I will send it to anyone who wants it (e-mail me). Friends did stop there for emergency fuel and reported the Pt. Captain to be very nice and made some notation on their zarpe that they stopped for emergency reasons and thereby didn't have to do the whole paperwork song and dance. They also reported fuel to be very reasonable.

#### Observations & notes on the passage along the Nicaraguan Coastline:

Keep a good watch at night as there are many Nicaraguan fishing boats out all night without any lights. We saw one when we were about 20 feet away in the pitch black of night! I shined a flashlight and we saw 4 heads pop up out of the bottom of the panga. Definately could have passed the grey poupon that night!

*Beware of black flag fishing lines* with nets hanging from them. Keep them to windward. They are right up along the coast where you'll be traveling.

*Practice the same passage technique as Tehuantepec*— travel with one foot on shore. We travelled about 1/4-1/2 mile off the coast and had a fairly OK passage. The difference between Tehuantepec and Nicaragua is (as described in the Lat 38 article) there's no way of predicting the Papagallo winds as there is in Tehuantepec. The coast of Nicaragua is covered with volcanos and those contribute to various local conditions, hence stay close to shore as the further out you are the more you'll feel their effects. A boat poopooed the suggestion and headed offshore from Barillas and got the crap kicked out of them. Ended up heaving to for 2 days. Our passage a few days later was much more ah, pleasant (?) than theirs as we stuck close to shore. We had one really big squall hit us with 57 kt winds and rain like I've never seen in my life for 45 minutes off Pta. Samosa but we saw it coming over the water and got through it.

It's about 18 miles from San Juan del Sur to Bahia Santa Elena.

#### PART V COSTA RICA (GENERAL INFO) TO PLAYA DEL COCO

##### Welcome to Costa Rica

You'll now find yourself relying on bits and pieces of

information you've taken notes from here and there, from *Latitude 38* articles that you've clipped (hoping that they've passed out accurate information), and an old, old, old *Charlie's Charts of Costa Rica*. We found that if we put the page numbers of the various anchorages on next to their names on the maps on the inside and back cover it made it much easier to use Charlie's Charts. We are members of SSCA (Seven Seas Cruising Association) and purchased a *Cruising Guide from Mexico to Panama* written by Pat Bobzin on *Illusion* (I think it was \$2.00). It's old but it was more information. And so the adventure begins. Cruisers hailing channel on VHF is 22 in Costa Rica. Except in Golfo Dulce which I'll talk about later.

**Bahia Santa Elena:** This is a huge bay. Charlie's advises people not to stop here before checking in as you are required to check in at Playa de Coco first. Well that's ridiculous as it's 40 someodd miles further. Just maintain a low profile. We didn't fly our Q flag and stayed off VHF channels 16 & 22. No one reported any problems with stopping here before continuing on to Coco. We were the only boat anchored in this massive bay. It was deafeningly quiet and the only sounds were the squawking of the hundreds of green parrots on the shore and the howler monkeys at dusk. The only down side of this anchorage is that the winds gust over the two anchorages that are indicated on Charlie's. We anchored in the Northern tuck where Charlie's chart has two little ovals on the shore. Not sure what those were supposed to be but favored this area as opposed to the one(s) further east as those were totally open to a canyon where the prevailing winds and papagallos could whistle through. Make sure you leave ample swing room as you'll swing 360°. (except Sandy will probably swing 380°—sorry Sandy, couldn't resist) The gusts only lasted about a minute but were sometimes as high as 35 kts. Holding was good but it was exhausting to sit through the constant gusts at anchor. We would have stayed here longer had it been less gusty. There are paper nautilus shells on the western beach by where Charlie has X's. We noticed these bugs that looked like termites flying at night and were a little concerned. When we asked the naturalist at Punta Leona what they were he told us they were Queen Termites. Yikes! You swat them and they die or their wings fall off but it's a little unnerving. No no see-ums to complain about here. We usually ran the green bug coils every evening just as a precaution. You can buy a 20 pack in Sams Club in Mexico for \$2.00. Stock up on them! We also have those metal holders for the coils. This eliminates the fuss and mess with the coils having to be on those tiny little stands. They worked well. You can buy them at any sports store for about \$4.

Everyone on the Net kept predicting doom and gloom, and miserable conditions *rounding Cabo Santa Eleana* but never detailed what to expect. Here's what we found: Winds predominately are from the NE-E and increase and become very gusty at the point and through the area once you round the point until about Key Point near Isla Pedada by about 10kts. We reefed way down before we

rounded the point and were fine. But we can see if you hadn't prepared for the increase in winds you could get yourself into trouble.

The anchorage between Isla San Jose and Isla Cocinero looked like a super spot but we didn't stop. Some people said they returned there to dive from Coco. We didn't feel comfortable about the winds at night to stay overnight anywhere in this area. Some people did stop and they reported one of their more uncomfortable nights at anchor at Key Point anchorage. Very rolly and windy.

We headed into Playa Panama as everyone on the Net was hanging there instead of Playa de Coco. It's much, much, much more protected of an anchorage than Coco that is totally exposed. We didn't fly our Q flag upon arrival and took a taxi into Coco to check in.

**Check-in process:** There's was a lot of controversy about checking in at Coco when your boat was anchored in Playa Panama. We subscribed to the "don't tell, if not asked" philosophy and it worked fine. Two female cruisers reported on the net that they took a taxi over to check in and the Pt. Captain refused them check in as the boat wasn't anchored in Coco. Turns out he's a central american and didn't like dealing with women, only the men. This wasn't too well received by the women and so the information was broadcast on the Net that you HAD to be in Coco to check in. We were never asked exactly where our boat was and the customs agent didn't want to see it as our is a non-descript boat. Our friends who had a 50' power yacht had a little problem when they went to check in as the customs agent walked outside of the office after saying "vamos a veer" (let's go see) and our friend did some gibberish spanish and lots of hand motions about the anchorage being "muy malo" and the customs agent threw up his hands and said "Donde? Playa Panama" he quickly replied "Si" and the customs agent signed the Import Permit while shaking his head reluctantly. I say try and if they really get stubborn, it's their country, bring the boat over and do the process again. I really don't think it will come to that.

**1st stop— Migracion:** With your back to the harbor, it's on the right hand side of the street about 2 blocks up from the harbor. They'll want a copy of your crew list, your passports, a copy of your boat documentation and a copy of your Zarpe. They'll give you a 90 day visa for yourselves. No charge.

**2nd stop — Pt. Captain's office:** With your back to the harbor, it's on the left on the first block. He'll want your original Zarpe, a copy of your passports, your boat documentation (2 copies), and 2 copies of your crew list. He'll start the paperwork for Customs (aduana). No charge. As there's no aduana in Coco, he calls the Aduana and sets up a time for the agent to come and issue your Import Permit for your boat. It's best if you do these steps in the morning as in the three cases we did this the aduana agent came anywhere between 1:30p-2:30p.

**3rd stop —** You then go back to the Pt. Captains office and the Aduana Agent issues your Import Permit allowing you

90 days in Costa Rica for your boat. You may get each of these extended another 90 days. Cost: 1,500 Colones (about \$5) While we were there the renewal process was changing daily on the morning Net so ask Migracion and the Aduana agent when you check in how to renew them. You will need to return to the Pt. Captain's office and get a domestic Zarpe when you leave Coco. We checked in and out at the same time.

**Money: at the time we were there June 2000** — 300 Colones to the \$ The Colon fluctuates every day by a colon or two usually in our favor.

**Phones:** There are loads of payphone all over. Usually you can count on there being some in every town square. The phone lines are unreliable. You can buy two different types of phone cards. One plastic card that you insert into the phone and it reads how much you have left and automatically deducts the amount used. The other is a paper card, you scratch off the back of the card and get a code that you type in when you make a call. There are some phones that don't accept the more modern plastic cards. It's very, very cheap. We bought a 500 colones card (@\$1.75) and made a 15 minute phone call down to Golfito if cost 30 colones. (no this isn't a typo. Every call is a local call. AOL and compuserve are close to impossible to connect to due to the poor quality of the phone line. People who did have success in connecting did it very early in the morning.

**Security & Theft:** This was something that we read a lot about prior to our arrival. One needs to be much more attuned to locking than elsewhere. People used cables with locks for their dinghys around palm trees on the beaches just as a deterrent while in Playa Panama. Always lock your outboard to your dink. Someone's dinghy and outboard were stolen at night in an anchorage in the Gulf of Nicoya. It wasn't locked and they'd been in the same spot for a number of days. Hence people were able to view their coming and going pattern. It was never recovered. A big power yacht was anchored off in Golfito when we were there and their dinghy and outboard got stolen while the crew was being entertained by some hookers they had invited onboard. Little did the crew know that the hookers boyfriends were out stealing the dinghy and outboard while they were working. Bruce at Banana Bay was informed at 2am and caught the thieves with night scope binoculars and his fast launch. But this is rare. It's a real problem to find a safe place to leave your boat as there are only two marinas in the entire country. And one, Marina Flamingo in the North is one that I wouldn't even consider staying in. Many cruisers visited it thinking that it couldn't be that bad and came away saying "No, way". There really isn't a good word that's been said on the cruisers grape vine about Flamingo. We had decided to by pass it for sure after Robert on Puesta del Sol told us about his experience leaving his boat there. Basically there were three boats (including his) that were told to anchor out until the fishing tournament was over and then they'd bring them into a slip (as the people had reservations to leave the country) The marina never

moved the boats. Every time the tide went out the boats all laid on their sides and when the tide came in, it swamped two of the three as they had louver companion-way doors. The marina took absolutely no responsibility for the damage! Robert was lucky as his boat was closed up tightly and didn't sustain any flood damage. We met a delivery skipper checking in at Coco and he complained bitterly about Flamingo and how they gouge people for fuel. They not only charge the most for fuel in the area but also put a surcharge on top of the price! It's also very difficult to get in and out of the marina area even when fueling as it's very shallow and the 10' tides make timing essential. A great deal of surge was also reported inside the marina area. With Marina Flamingo out, it leaves anchorages with arrangements of people watching your boat while you travel inland as the only other option until you get south enough into Golfito for Banana Bay Marina. Playa Panama would be a good spot as it's close to inland sights. Other cruisers left their boat anchored out at: *Oasis Del Pacifico at Playa Naranjo*. (9°65.4'N 84° 57.9'W) VHF 78a Phone: (506) 661-1555 e-mail: wilhow@sol.racs.co.cr Lucky & Agie (owners) of the resort made arrangements for someone to sleep onboard their boat every night for a small fee. Everyone who used the facility enjoyed it very much. The ferry over to Puntarenas leaves from here, so you could do a Puntarenas shop from here. *Punta Leona Beach Hotel*: (Charlie's page 63) This is a great little anchorage I'll write more about further on; but it also was a good spot to leave your boat at anchor with someone watching it. That's pretty much it for safe spots collected, experienced, and reported for Costa Rica and cruising boats that we've got.

**Playa de Coco:** The anchorage is totally exposed to the predominate swell and thereby is not as comfortable as Playa Panama. It is much more convenient to be in Coco as the shore landing is fairly easy and you're right in town. If you're there when the anchorage is comfortable, I'd stay there because of the logistics of being able to walk to everything from the beach. *Pacific Cafe* on corner on same side of the street as migracion has great food. Tico plate is chicken and rice and it's really good. Reasonably priced.

**Bank:** 2 blocks further up the street on the same side as Migracion. No ATM access but they will change money for you inside. I went in and used my ATM card (with Visa logo) and got a "cash advance" on the card and bought Colones. I was not charged ANY fees at all on my debit card. If you use a real credit card you'll be charged by your bank all the normal fees. There are real ATMs in Liberia. **Post office** is across from the Taxi stand. They'll sell phone cards also.

**Internet Connection:** Cafe Internet 2000 on the right side of the road out of town next to Coldwell Banker office. About 10 minute walk.

Excellent cafe: e-mail: cafeinternet2000@hotmail.com  
Linda & Jim Gray phone: 670-0948 fax: 670-1097 Open Mo-Sat 9a-8p Sunday 9a-5pm I think it's about \$5/hr.

**Grocery store:** Super Luperon Market behind the soccer field by the harbor. I thought it had a good selection of everything. Mind you, this is after having been out of Mexico for 2 months.

**Liberia:** About 20 minutes by car. Regular bus service from Coco but the return schedule doesn't allow you to much time there. Bus schedule posted at Park on corner of harbor where Taxi stand is in Playa Del Coco. Excellent internet connection off the square. \$2/hr. It's on the ground floor inside a building on the corner. If you face the section of the square where the telephones are it's on the left side at the bottom of the square. Great little "snack bar"/restaurant directly at your back with tables outside that serves yummy burgers and fries. There are a number of grocery stores here but the logistics of it all don't justify the few items that you may be able to get here and not in Coco.

There are 2, if not three, banks with ATMS on the right hand side of the road as you come into the square. Get off when you see them. Make sure you use the Bank with the ATM machine that accepts your ATM card ie: plus, star as some bank's ATM machines support one and not the other.

#### **Playa Panama, Bahia de Culebra:**

The cruisers hang out was Costa Congrejo restaurant right off the calm bay where we anchored. There's a sand bar right in front of where you land your dinghy so stay to the right of the little bouy off the shore and then cut into the palm trees with the white paint around them. In April/May 2000 there must have been 18 boats anchored there, and I tend to think that the managers of Costa Congrejo might have provided special services to those anchored there that they would normally not have and hence these cruisers were putting out information that wasn't *entirely* accurate. We arrived assuming that there'd be Washer and dryer, internet access, showers and more. This impression/information was also published in the August Changes of Latitude 38 and, it is my opinion, was terribly misleading as to the facilities that are really available. Here's the scoop: The bay is hands down the calmest anchorage we've been in all of Costa Rica to date. Bear in mind that Costa Rica is a surfers paradise particularly from May-November. Surf = roly anchorages for sailors. But Playa Panama was very comfortable. Costa Congrejo Restaurant sells food at a decent price. Beers are from 300 Colones up. They MIGHT fill your propane tank if they're heading that way as well as do a Jerry jug fuel run for you if they're headed to a gas station that's on the road to Liberia. You can arrange a rental car but you have to go to the bar next door and pay 50 Colones PER MINUTE to use their phone and make arrangements. People tended to use Budget as they seemed to have the best price. Roads are pretty crappy so 4 wheel drive is definitely advantageous if you are going to travel inland. Costa Congrejo is run by Ghina and Hiram and they do not have a telephone. People used the phone at the bar

next door to connect to AOL (early in the morning) when the lady was there and let them. The lady who owns the bar wasn't too keen on people using her phone for internet connections. It's about a 15 minute ride to Playa del Coco. Either by taxi that you call from the bar next door (2,000 Colones — @\$6.00 each way) or hitch hike. (Oh, that sounds like fun) This is the real drawback about Playa Panama. You're stuck. The washer and dryer that they have is THE ONLY ONE IN ALL OF PLAYA DEL COCO. Believe it or not, and it's in the back of the restaurant in a shed. You buy tokens to use it (@\$2.40 PER token) One token each machine. Now, there's no water pressure so you start the washer (dribble, dribble, dribble) and stick something in the on switch mechanism on the lid so you can keep the lid open. You take a hose from somewhere around there and attach it to another faucet somewhere else other than one that access the water tank on top of the shed, and you put that in the washer. Then you take a 5 gallon bucket that you find somewhere around there and go over to the ah, ah, showers and fill that and schlep it over to the washer and fill with that also. Then when the water fills to the right level and starts washing you wait until ....yes, the rinse cycle, where you start the previous process all over again. Oh joy, ain't cruising grand! :-)

The showers are rough and probably not anything that one would use other than to rise the sand off your feet. There is a vegetable truck and the German Bakery truck that come to Costa Congrejo weekly (I think it's Tuesdays at 10am). I'm sure Ghina and Hiram will confirm the day. People would feel comfortable about leaving their boats and traveling inland as long as there were others in the anchorage that would watch their boats. This is one of the few places to do this in Costa Rica. I'll notate them as I go along.

#### **PART VI FROM PLAYA DEL COCO TO GULF OF NICOYA**

**Bahia Brasilito:** (Charlie's pg. 36) About a 4 hour sail south from Playa Panama. We anchored in front of Playa Conchal in about 14 ft of clear water on sand. This was the first time we could see the bottom since Huatulco and we were excited. It's not a very protected anchorage but we put up with it due to the visibility. Stern anchor definitely helped make it more comfortable. The beach is so soft you can sink in up to your thighs. We snorkeled off the point inside where the Xs are on Charlie's pg. 37 above the "P" in Playa Conchal. Good viewing of fish and sealife as well as coral. There's a restaurant ashore but friends went there for lunch and reported it to be fairly pricey for simple food.

From here on down to the Gulf of Nicoya you may be subject to strong(er) currents 1-2 kts on the nose.

**Bahia Tamarindo:** (Charlie's pg. 38) When we were there in June, it was filled with high surf and not a possibility for a comfortable anchorage.

**Bahia Carillo:** (Charlie's pg 44) The reef extends much further out than you imagine. Rains had better informa-

tion: "...a protected anchorage in all but south winds... Don't over rely on the use of GPS to bring you in here; we found the GPS position inside the harbor to lie 0.42 nautical miles 085->T from the charted positions on Chart #21543. For Carillo, a good offshore approach waypoint using GPS is 9°51.00'N and 85°29.46'W. The entrance is 1/2 mile wide, and a reef extends from the western side toward the southeast. Favor the eastern side to stay clear of the reef, steering 350° M until you're inside." - *Cruising Ports: Fla to Calif. via Panama 4th edition pg. 154.* During the summer months (rainy season) the swell comes directly (usually S-SW) into the anchorage as the wind is from the south, and makes for a very, very uncomfortable night. We've heard it's a beautiful calm bay at other times of the year. Once again, we wanted to avoid night passages due to the convective activity and opted to anchor for the night. Lots of complaints from others that had passed through previously but they didn't double anchor and so found themselves rolling gunnel to gunnel because their boats turned sideways to the swells. It was still rolly for us but the stern anchor enabled us to get some rest before moving on. There are two spots to anchor. One on the East corner of the anchorage which has private buoys very close together. When we were there there was a lot of back swell from the rocky edge making it even more uncomfortable of an option. The bottom was reported to be rocky there (understandably) and therefore not good holding in our opinion. There were too many boats in a small area making it not attractive to us. We anchored on the west side of the anchorage a little further towards the beach at the back of the anchorage (a little further North of where Charlie's has an anchor). Set the stern as we came in and then the bow and slept relatively comfortably. We left at first light for Bahia Ballena.

**Bahia Ballena:** (Charlie's pg. 46) This is a big open bay. It's just up inside the Gulf of Nicoya so it's fairly calm. The reef on pg. 47 juts out from the southern entrance to the bay and isn't that well marked on the chart so give it wide berth. When you read "yacht club" you assume a whole layout. The "yacht club" is open from November-ish to May. There's a floating dock to tie your dinghy to and a bar/restaurant. Laundry facilities are also available when it's open. The Heart family (of Heart Interface) own the Yacht Club and run the vegetable truck in this area. (update 12/00) The Yacht Club is up for sale and people have reported that the veggie truck doesn't run anymore either. When we were there the locals warned us about the Puntarenas fishing pangas that were anchored in the bay as their presence marked increased thefts on cruising boats. When the Yacht club is closed, you can tie your dinghy off the barnacle covered cement fishing steps at the end of the pier. Take care to use a stern anchor as the surge tears your dinghy apart. It's pretty scruffy walking through the end of the pier and the fishermen that are sleeping on the wet ground covered with fish remnants and cooking over fires. *Panchos Restaurant* is to the right of the Yacht Club. Frank is an american who owns the place. The food's a little pricey but really good. He makes the

greatest garlic bread we've ever tasted! He lets you make an internet connection with your laptop and his phone to AOL or Compuserve for 500 colones (if you can get through on the phone lines). He encourages cruisers to anchor off his restaurant west of the pier as he'll be happy to watch your boat while you're ashore. The massive luxury resort in the middle of the beach is an all inclusive resort and does not welcome cruisers.

**Phones:** There are two phones that take the non-automated phone cards that you punch in a number to access at the end of the pier.

**Water:** There's a water faucet on the back side of the Yacht Club on the right corner of the building as well as at Panchos.

**Fuel:** You can jerry jug fuel from the end of the pier by going to the pink and light blue tienda on the left of the end of the pier. Juan will come down and fill your jerry jugs after you've paid. Bags of ice are also available here.

**Bus Stop:** Down the road at the right of the pier about 1/4 of a mile. You can take a bus to a larger town that is heavily frequented by German tourists for bigger grocery store and other items.

*Swiss Restaurant* further down the road past the bus stop on the beach. Supposed to have good food.

**Gulf of Nicoya:** There are a number of islands up in the Gulf of Nicoya that many people stopped at. The Gulf is terribly polluted and you need to keep a very sharp eye out for debris in the form of logs, wood, plastic, dead turtles and other forms of human debris. It is for this reason that we didn't travel at night as the logs are pretty big and frequent! Believe it or not, at times we would take turns on the bow as look out. The current that runs in and out with the tide increases the speed at which the debris travels. It's been reported that the number of dead turtles is due to the Ticos blatant disregard for the environment. They dump plastic (and garbage bags) in the water and the turtles think that they're food, eat them and suffocate and die.

Many of the islands have accessibility to the ferry that runs to Puntarenas. If someone can watch your boat you could travel inland from Puntarenas as there's excellent bus service inland.

**Isla Tortugas:** (Charlie's pg. 48) About 4 hr sail from Ballena. Frequented by tourists from Puntarenas on day tour boats. Stay away from the moorings in the anchorage as once the tour boats leave in the afternoon, a 70' fishing boat uses it at night!

## PART VII FROM GULF OF NICOYA TO GOLFITO

**Punta Leona:** (Charlie's page 62) The picture across from pg. 62 is exactly what it looks like. Be very careful of the reef that sticks out from the point at the right side of the photo. With the large tides it's almost covered at high tide and you are unable to see how far the rocks extend. Give it wide berth! We also were a little confused when we set our course according to Charlie's waypoint for Punta

Leona, we were actually headed for Playa Blanca around the corner from the point. It is our opinion that the way-point was either off or too close to the rocky point for our comfort. Favor the NE side of the anchorage in your approach and then head south along the edge of the NE portion of the anchorage to your spot. Stern anchor helped here immensely as at high tide, the swells sweep over the rocky reef. Without the stern anchor you'll find yourself sideways to the swell during high tide. The *Hotel Punta Leona* didn't mind that a number of cruising boats ran stern lines to their buoys in front of the property instead of dropping a stern hook. Obviously check around first. The hotel is **very** cruiser friendly. You may use all the facilities at no charge. 2 swimming pools, disco, 1 snack bar/pizzeria, 1 nice Tico restaurant with live music on weekends, 1 buffet style restaurant, small store (but sufficient) ice available from here, water on the shore, beach for dinghy landing (land by the little stream on the SW side of the beach) and pull your dinghy up (remember 10' tides). There's a trail that goes between the point over to Playa Blanca, a very nice beach. Further down the road is a restaurant run by the hotel also. Go to the front desk and get their activity schedule. You may sign up for any of the activities at no charge (just tip if you do a nature walk). There's kayaking, basketball, tennis and nature hikes. The nature hikes are lead by a naturalist (Roy was ours) 3 times a day — 6:00am, 9:15am and 7pm. The 6am focuses on birds and animals, the 9:15am focuses on the tropical rainforest, and the night one we never had enough nerve to enter the forest in the dark. The hotel is located on a 750 acre biological reserve and private wildlife refuge. They have been recognized for their cleanliness of their beaches and their maintenance of the ecological environment and are very proud of the award. Don't miss the nature walks they were a high point of our visit. The hotel's tour office publishes a list of excursions that you may purchase. There are some that are overnights and it might be a good opportunity to travel inland from here if you have someone that will watch your boat. Many cruisers took turns watching each others boats and traveling inland. This worked very well from here. You can rent a car from the hotel lobby. Laundry is expensive: 65¢ *per piece*. There's an internet connection at the membership office for \$2/hr but every time we tried to use AOL & Compuserve failed to connect. The membership office was never open early enough to try and make a connection when others had been most successful.

**Bahia Herradura:** (Charlie's pg. 64) This has totally changed since Charlie's was published. Jaco is a surfing town and pretty non descript. The Marriott hotel has built a breakwater that runs from the Northern shoreline about where the "g" is in the word snorkeling well across the anchorage. This breakwater reportedly ruined the snorkeling that was once there. The hotel "Los Suenos" is complete and charges going Marriott resort room rates. They've also built a condominium complex. The marina was just complete when we were there in July of 2000.

(Update 2000) There was talk that it was going to be a members only facility. Only people who owned a condo could have a slip. This has changed, although the majority of boats are sportsfishing boats in the marina. Water was still not installed at each slip and electricity was provided by running extension cords to the slip. Friends stayed here in December and reported it close to impossible to contact the marina to make advance reservations. When they did finally get through, they were told to just pull into the marina. When they arrived, they were told they wasn't space for them. After some confusion, they were accomodated but there were no set rates for transient boats and they had to bicker back and forth to arrive at a price. It was more than \$1/ft/night. They reported security was excellent, bordering on excessive during their stay. It was an easy place to leave their boat and rent a car to tour inland.

**Quepos:** (Charlie's pg. 66) Get ready to rock and roll! This anchorage is totally exposed. There's no two ways about it but it's a stopping spot between the Gulf of Nicoya and Bahia Drake. Quepos is a town with good provisioning, and in close proximity to Manuel Antonio Park. You should check in with the Pt. Captain here. We arrived at 4pm and left at 5am. There are a number of moorings off the wharf. The sailboats that were moored looked like metronomes marking time to an irish jig! The sight of the masts swinging like that confirmed our plan to only overnight. We anchored about where Charlie's indicated but well clear of the clump of moored boats and a stern anchor was a must! People reported a great Italian Deli in town with an excellent assortment of Cheeses.

**Bahia Drake:** (Charlie's pg. 74) A full days sail from Quepos. We anchored inside the moored sport boats and as close to the point as we were comfortable as there is a prevailing swell into the anchorage. Once again, a stern anchor made it more comfortable for us. There are two hotels on either side of the Rio Agurjas. The Wilderness camps (they were pretty nice) but no restaurant, and *Aguila Oasis Inn* on the South side of the river. This was an all inclusive resort in a beautiful tropical setting. Take your dinghy up the river (you can't go too far) at high tide and drift out using your oars to steer around the rocks. Beautifully peaceful scene. The *Aguila Oasis Inn* runs excursions to **Isla Cano**. If you're interested in diving take one of their boats as it's not suggested to go on your own. The Inn has a nice dining area with a view of the anchorage and welcomes you for dinner as long as you make ressessies by 2pm. Price in July 2000: \$30 per person includes 4 course meal with appetizer, desert and red or white wine. We had a couple of hors d'oeuvres when we were there and they were scrumptious!

**Gulfo Dulce:** It's a full days sail up into Gulfo Dulce. We decided not to try and make Golfito but to anchor at Jiminez instead as it was about 5 miles shorter. Once again the current does effect your passage and you have to keep an eye out for debris once you enter the Gulf.

**Puerto Jimenez:** (Charlie's pg. 78) This is a wonderful anchorage! There is a shelf that you will need to locate and anchor on. It's a bit illusive at first but with a little effort you'll find it. As you approach the anchorage you'll be wondering if this could possibly be the right spot as your depth gauge will be reading 120' feet. Crocodile Bay Resort has installed a pier with a floating dock between the old pier and Punta Arenitas. There are a few private moorings off this pier. Use these as your guide to where the shelf is for anchoring. Anchor anywhere along the shelf between the moorings and the old pier. *Crocodile Bay* allows cruisers to use their floating dock to tie their dinghys, and as long as you purchase food or drink, you are welcome to use their facilities. There's a chicken restaurant in the town that's good and the owner is a flamingo guitar player. Good produce and food is available. The anchorage is very calm. We are going to use this anchorage as our departure point for Panama as it's a little closer to Punta Banco (the SE portion of Golfo Dulce) than Golfito and it would be very easy to depart at night from here.

**VHF channels**— Channel 16 is full of static and impossible to be used inside the entire Gulf. Hence, the locals use channel 22 as their telephone. Cruisers used 17 for hailing within Jimenez and 19 for within Golfito. (I might have this backwards. Ask when you get in.)

**Golfito:** (Charlie's pg. 82) *Banana Bay Marina* (formerly Eagle's Roost) is the only marina facility in this area...and in my opinion in Costa Rica! They can only accommodate maybe 10 boats maximum, so plan early as they have a number of larger sport fishing boats that are on long term stays. All boats are Med moored here. As it's not that big look for the yellow building on the water as you enter the bay. Taxi drivers in Golfito know the marina as "La Casa Amrailla". There are two or three large slips that have fingers on either side but they're usually occupied by the long term sport boats. ***If you even think you might want to leave your boat at Banana Bay you need to contact them and make reservations.*** They're very responsive to e-mail [bbmarina@sol.racsa.co.cr](mailto:bbmarina@sol.racsa.co.cr) but with the price of telephone calls it's worth calling: (506) 775-0838. Monitor Channel 12. The price in July 2000 was \$16/foot/month. You pay for electricity and water. They have 3-4 moorings just off their docks. Fuel is available from their dock. Bruce is able to get large quantities of fuel duty free with advance notice. (update 12/00) They have expanded the restaurant and bar facility. The marina is now offering travel agency services and internet connections.

**Important note on payment:** The banks in Costa Rica charge 4% service charge for credit cards. This will be passed on to you should you choose to use a credit card to pay your marina bill. With the size of the slip fees, this can be a lot of money. Odd as this may seem, they don't like to take large quantities of travelers checks as the banks pretty much refuse to handle them. They don't accept U.S. personal/business/bank checks. Cash is always accepted but who's got that much onboard? Most people arrange for

electronic transfers from the states to the marina's account for payment of their fees. Plan accordingly. Americans Tim Leechman and Katie Dunkin run *Tierra Mar* (Land Sea) phone: (506) 775-1614

e-mail: [landsea@sol.racsa.co.cr](mailto:landsea@sol.racsa.co.cr) They have a small dock right next door to Banana Bay Marina that can take 2 boats med moored. Their prices are a little less and they prefer to have boats stay for at least 30 days. **Internet** access is available at 10c/minute with a \$2.00 connect fee per use. **Laundry** is done for you at \$1.60 US per kilo. Boat sitting is \$1.00/day with any special services billed at \$10/hr. Katie runs a travel agency inside their facility.

**Restaurants:** There are lots of restaurants in Golfito. The marina has excellent food beautifully presented. There's a hungarian restaurant on the way out of town *Something Janerio* that has good food served outside on the terrace overlooking a stream. We felt the food was overpriced. *Coconuts* almost in town across from the park is run by an american, Dave, and has delicious mexican food at good prices. He also has internet access at 10c/minute but no connect charge. The *Samoa Yacht Club* has a very nice menu and is located right on the water on your way into town. Others include: *Restaurant La Cubana*, and the other restaurant on the same street that has an ice cream parlor in the corner. Both these restaurants are on the cut in the road that goes up and to the right on your way into town.

**Provisions:** A veggie truck stops at the marina twice a week. If you're staying at the marina, tell the office that you want to buy from the truck and they'll come down and get you when it comes. The truck came on Monday's and Thursday's when we were there in July 2000. There are two grocery stores in town. One on the left side of the street and one a block further on the right. Both are OK and what one doesn't stock the other probably does. Both of them are weak in the veggie department as well as meats. There's a pretty good bakery on the right hand side of the street across from the park.

**Transportation to San Jose:** We left our boat at Banana Bay for a number of months during the rainy season as it rains twice as much in the southern part of Costa Rica than it does in the northern area. I have a great deal of information on the various options but not sure anyone will need it. If you do, e-mail me at [svnetresult@yahoo.com](mailto:svnetresult@yahoo.com), and I'll fill you in.

That's about it for us to this point. When we return to Net Result, we'll head south into Panama so this is the end of my notes for the time being.

I found a couple of paragraphs from Changes Articles of Latitude 38s that summed our feeling about Costa Rica up perfectly:

*"We were lucky enough not to have to look for a mechanic, but those that did reported mixed results and long waits for parts. Flying parts into Costa Rica is tough because the government gets its income from import duties. It's great for expatriate Americans who live here to avoid income taxes, but for cruisers on a budget the 100% duty on all imports sends prices skyrocketing.*

*Other negatives about C.R. include an abysmal phone system that is much worse than Nicaragua's. The Ticos - Costa Ricans - are also fed up with a failed privatization program that has also ruined their roads. Potholes are everywhere, and makes renting a car an unnecessarily exciting adventure. Many of this year's cruisers agreed that the Ticos are far less friendly and open to visitors than Panamanians we later met. For example, because we speak good Spanish, we discovered that the friendliest taxi drivers are also the very ones most likely to overcharge you. The fact that everybody in Costa Rica always seems to be on the make isn't a fatal flaw, but it becomes tiresome..."* - Miki G pg. 204 Latitude 38 January 2000

*"While Costa Rica's natural beauty has been a joy, we did not feel the same spontaneous welcome we enjoyed in Baja. I think this is attributable to several things: Costa Rica's primary industry is tourism, and since yachties only form a small part of this business, they don't rate any special attention. There are also many Americans who have moved to Costa Rica without really trying to become a part of the local community — and some don't even try to learn Spanish. Consequently, there seems to be a general assumption that gringos don't bother to converse. However, when you break that assumption you are rewarded with a friendly smile and all the chatter you could want..."* - Saga p. 223 Latitude 38 October 1999

Hope you've found these notes helpful. If anyone has any questions about any of my notes, feel free to e-mail me and I'll try and help.

Lisa & Joe Gerardin  
s/v Net Result  
lgerardin@sbcglobal.net  
Baba 30

A couple of recent updates on my notes as of April 2001:  
**Barillas Marina in El Salvador:** Pool complete, internet access on site,  
Mooring rates: first three nights free after that \$5/nte  
Web site: [www.barillasmarina.com](http://www.barillasmarina.com)  
take a look at it, it's great.

**Ballena Bay Yacht Club in Costa Rica** is now closed and up for sale. Hence no wonderful veggie truck there either.

**Los Suenos resort & marina in Herradura, Costa Rica** is now open.

Fuel dock there. April 2001 fuel rates \$2.00/gal  
Marina prices very high and management very unorganized as they sort out how to charge and what services to offer.