

# Cruising the Western Caribbean



- Dave & Sherry McCampbell
- Experience
  - In W Carib 96-97, 01-02, 07-08
  - 3 trips around Carib-Sherry first in 74 'old days
- At [svsoggypaws.com](http://svsoggypaws.com)
  - This presentation
  - Detailed log & pics

# Overview



- 1 Preparation
  - Boat thoughts
  - Security
  - Equipment
  
- 2 Places
  - Getting there
  - Where we went
  - Resources

# 1 Preparation



- Boat Info
- Security
- Electric
- Plumbing
- Navigation/Comms
- Rig/Deck
- Engine/Systems



# Prep – The Boat



- Length - 40-45'
- Draft - 5' to 6'
- Fuel/Water-100 gals
- Protected prop
- Full cockpit sun/rain protection
- Great ventilation, AC
- Roller furling headsails



# Our Boat

- ❑ CSY 44 Walkthru
- ❑ 1980, 5.2' draft
- ❑ Fuel/water-160 gals ea
- ❑ Protected prop
- ❑ Hard dodger and extension
- ❑ 7 hatches, 15 ports
- ❑ Two Profurles



# Prep – Security 1



- Theft BIG problem
- Prime target is dinghy
- 10-15 HP outboard motors easy to sell
- Lock it or lose it
- Prevent dinghy theft
  - High lift dinghy davits
  - Abus outboard/dinghy locks
  - Chain better than wire



# Prep – Security 2



- Personal defense
  - Pepper/Bear sprays
  - Tasers/handcuffs
  - Flaregun/.38 insert
- Boat defense
  - Always lock up boat when away
  - Lexan hatchboards
  - Consider hatch bars
  - Lock eqpt on deck
  - Motion/pressure alarms

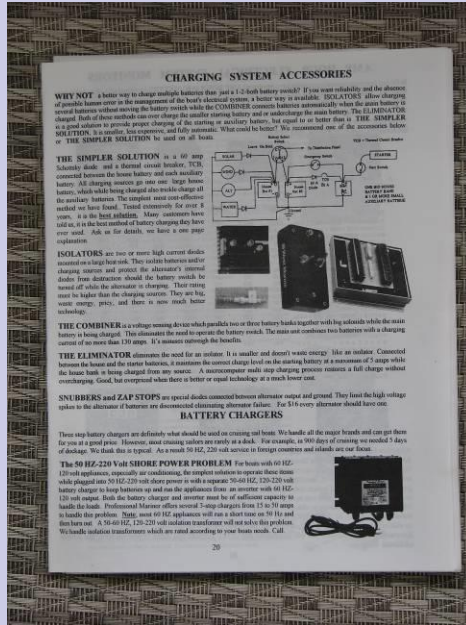


# Prep – Electric 1



- Calder says 75% of maint/repair time
- Lightning
  - Biggest danger
  - Ground mast
  - Use Faraday cages-oven/microwave
  - Static shielding bags
  - Electronic disconnects

# Prep - Electric 2



## Batteries

- Lots of battery problems
- Expensive to buy/import in W Carib
- Start w/ strong/new
- Separate marine start battery
- Solid charging system
- SPaws House - 700ah, L16 LA Rolls CH 375M



# Prep – Electric 3

- Typical battery life:
- Starting: 2-4 years
- Golf cart: 2-4 years
- L-16: 4-8 years
- Rolls 4000: 4-10 yrs
- AGM D cycle: 4-6 yrs
- Gell D cycle: 2-5 yrs
- Research carefully - LA vs AGM vs Gel
- Source fm several Inet battery websites
- Heat is a killer
- AGM/Gell have less cycle life than LA
- Must equalize and water LA



# Prep - Electric 4



- Alternate energy
  - At anchor 90% of time
  - Don't charge batts with main engine
  - Solar vs Wind vs Gen
  - Solar
    - Shading a killer
    - MPPT regulator-+25%
    - Tilt fore and aft-+25%
  - SPaws uses Solar and Honda gas generator

# Prep – Plumbing 1



- Fresh water
  - Need good rain collection system
  - Lots of FW filters
    - Drinking-SeaGull IV
    - Under deck fills
    - Btwn tanks and pressure pump
  - Multiple FW tanks
  - Convenient manifold

# Prep – Plumbing 2



## ■ Watermakers

- Two pers use 5-10 gpd FW
- 5-40 gph wmaker \$4-12K
- Many choices, research carefully
- DIY unit for \$2 K
  - Produces 42 GPH
  - Diesel or AC driven
  - See [svsoggypaws.com](http://svsoggypaws.com)



# Prep – Plumbing 3



## ■ Commodes

- Reliable units you can repair X 2
- Carry all overhaul parts
- SPaws uses Raritan PH2

## ■ Brown Discharge

- Most marinas require holding tank
- Raritan Lectra San good option



# Prep –Navigation/Comms 1



- VHF radios
  - Need min three units
  - One at helm, one at nav station, one HHeld
  - HHeld for dinghy use, not cockpit option
  - Two antennas-one at mast head, one aft
  - Gam 6 db best rated
  - Weax alert and DSC

# Prep –Navigation/Comms 2



## ■ HF radio

- 100-150 watts out; digital, ham & SSB capable
- Auto tuner-mounted within ~6' of antenna
- Antenna-insulated backstay, SW ground plane, GTO-15 w/ 2" spacing
- Lightning disconnects
- External speaker mountable in cockpit w/ velcro



# Prep –Navigation/Comms 3



## ■ FFinder vs Digital DS

- FF much more info for similar cost

## ■ Phones

- Open GSM cell phone
- US/CA/SA freqs-850/1900
- Buy country SIM cards
- Skype cheap option

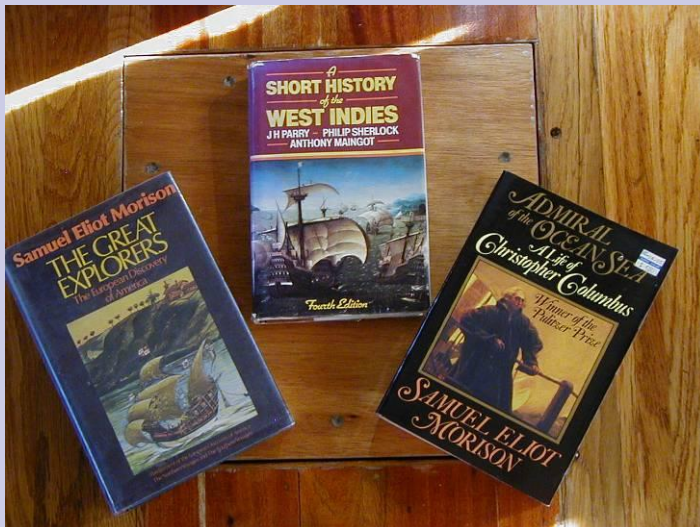
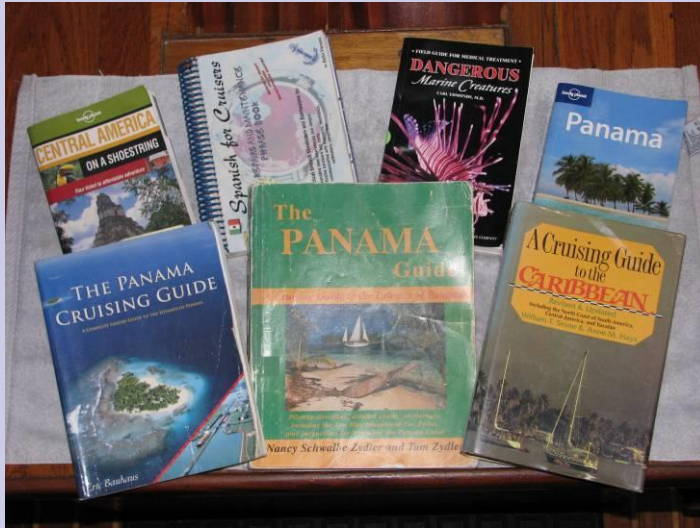
## ■ Wifi Internet

- Available everywhere
- External antennas
- Options- See SPaws website - Electronics



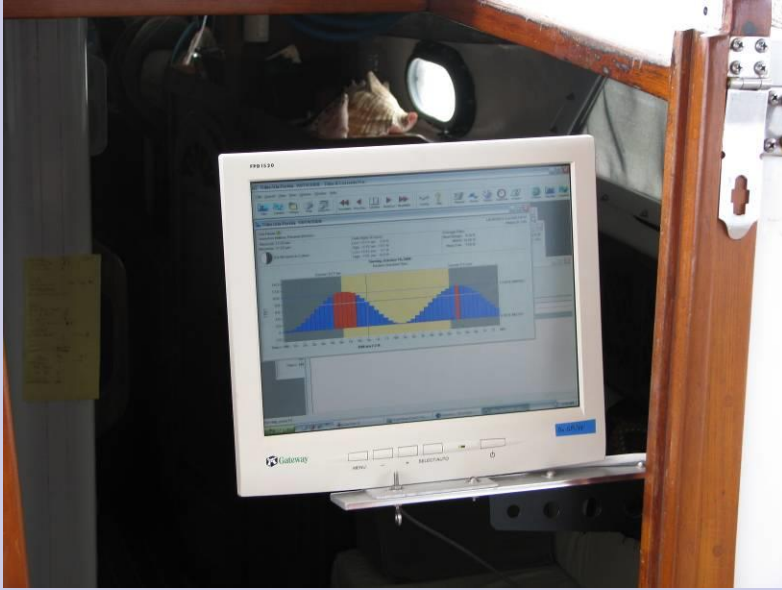


# Prep –Navigation/Comms 4



- Guide books
  - Better than paper charts
  - NW - Calder/Rausher/Pavlavis
  - SW - Stone-Hayes/Zydlar/Bauhaus
- Lonely Planets
  - Best inland travel info
  - Download chapters as PDF, planning chapt free
- SSCA Bulletins and cruiser websites
  - Download for future reference underway

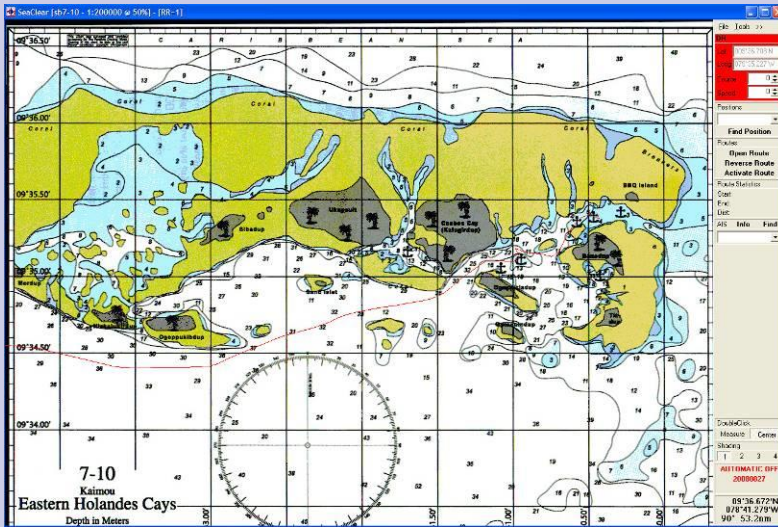
# Prep –Navigation/Comms 5



- Computer Navigation
  - Better than chart plotter
  - External 12v monitor on swing arm, use inside or out
  - Multitasking advantage
  - Port hub allows use of multiple nav programs
  - See notes, sketch charts, web info underway w/ wireless mouse



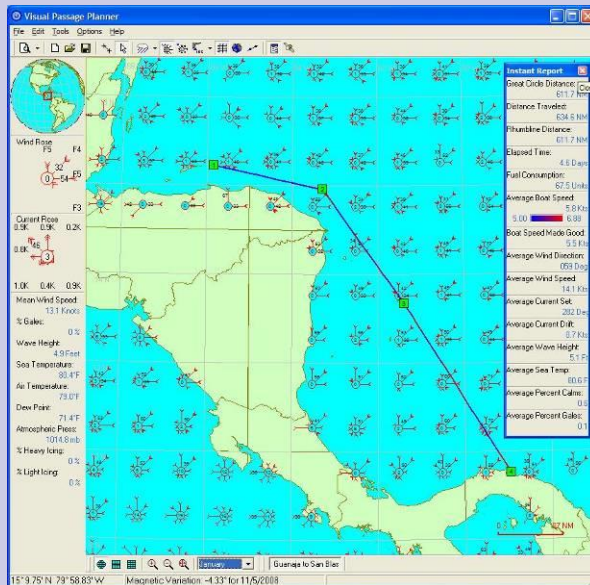
# Prep –Navigation/Comms 6



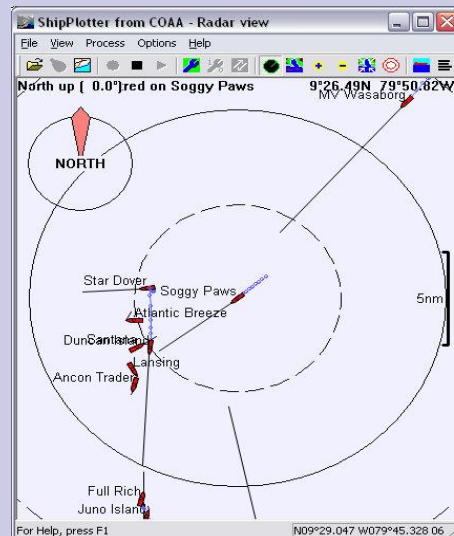
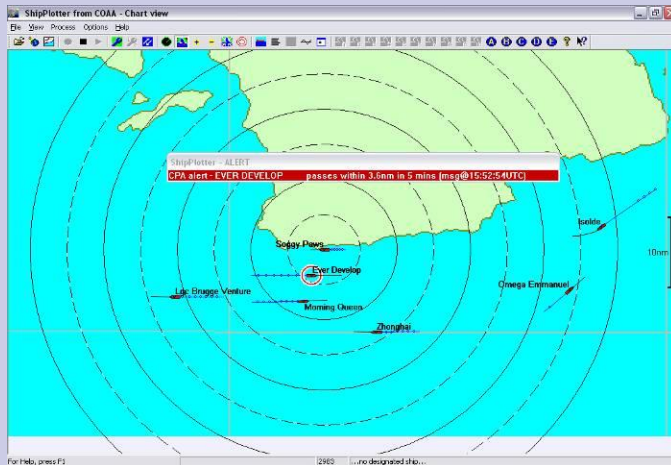
- Software charting
  - Can't use Vector/Raster charts in Belize, San Blas
  - Sea Clear and Fugawi do scanned chartlets
  - SPaws uses all above

## ■ Visual Passage Planner

- Great route planning software w/ pilot charts imbedded
- Gives detailed monthly route wind/seas forecast



# Prep –Navigation/Comms 7



## ■ AIS

- VHF based text and graphic big ship info
- Greatly enhances ability to avoid ships
- Up to 40 mile range
- Close CPA alert

## ■ SPaws system

- Smart Radio receiver
- VHF splitter
- ShipPlotter software



# Prep –Navigation/Comms 8



## ■ Portable GPS

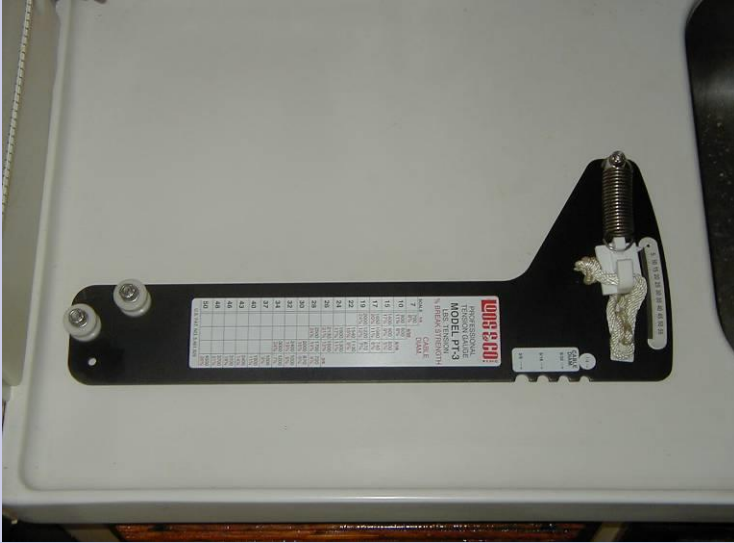
- Garmin 76 Map-better than fixed mount
- World base map, all Americas nav aids/roads, tides
- Store below for theft protection
- Take it for abandon ship or inland travel

## ■ Weather station

- Max wind speed/temp, recording baro, etc



# Prep – Rig / Deck 1



- Standing rigging
  - Any SS wire/SS over 15 years suspect
  - Use Loos tension gage to tune own rig

- Running rigging
  - UV cuts line life 50%
  - Cover sheets and use sacrificial halyards when in port for more than couple of weeks
  - Canadian line <\$



# Prep – Rig / Deck 2



## ■ Sails

- Light air-yes, storm-no
- Maximize UV protection

## ■ Mast climbing

- Use windlass with halyard rope clutch
- Safety-slide rolling hitch up and down adjacent tensioned halyard



# Prep – Rig / Deck 3



## ■ Dinghy

- It is your car
- RIB has speed, stability, dry ride
- High strong davits
- Bimini & sun cover
- 2 outboards-5/15 HP
- DIY outboard repair and maintenance
- SPaws-10.5' AB Lite w/ Tohatsu/Nissan motors





# Prep – Rig / Deck 4



## ■ Anchoring

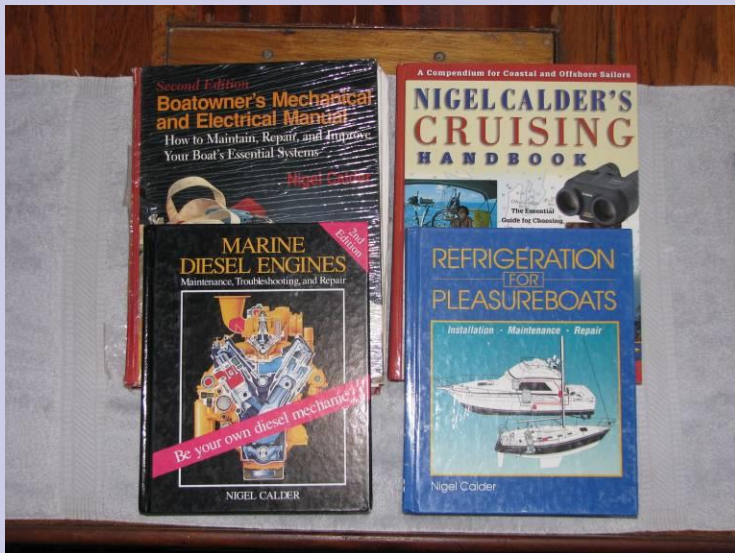
- Research anchors & anchoring carefully
- Learn how to anchor
- Single big bow anchor w/ ~200' HT chain best
- Power windlass on solid Fglas base
- Pressure SW deck wash down system
- SPaws carries Delta 88 & 55, Fortress 55 & 37, Danforth 35 HT

# Prep – Rig / Deck 5



- Self steering
  - Research carefully
  - Need 2 reliable units
  - Autopilot vs wind vane
  - Can you repair it?  
Even the best break
  - SPaws has Monitor & 3 CPTs
- Look at CPT autopilot
  - New CPT, Inc owners
  - Inexpensive-new or used
  - Reliable & repairable onbd
  - CPT repair on SPaws website

# Prep - Engine/Systems 1



- Maintenance/Repair
  - Must know how to maintain/repair your onboard systems
  - Read eqpt manuals, Calder books, take classes, practice
  - Onbd tools/spares inventory critical
  - Cleanliness, neatness, preservation important



# Prep - Engine/Systems 2



- Main engine
  - Learn basic diesel mechanics for your engine
  - Keep neat clean engine- no corrosion
  - Amsoil extended oil change option
  - Weatherhead DIY LP oil fittings/hoses
  - Gates Green Stripe belts
  - DIY dual Racor fuel filters w/ vacuum gage

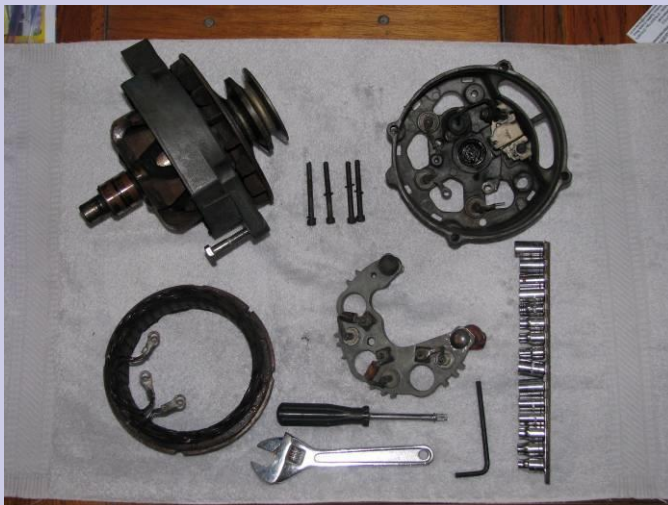


# Prep - Engine/Systems 3



## ■ Alternators

- Common failure item
- Cause-open charging wire, loose belt heat
- Easy, DIY repair w/ common onbd tools
- Repair parts include diodes, brushes, bushings, bearings
- Good description - Calder's Mech/Elec Manual



# Prep - Engine/Systems 4



## ■ Refrig system

- Expensive system and huge elec user
- Sealed vs reciprocal compressor systems
- Lightning issue
- Tools and spares
- Frigiboat 12 v system
- SPaws DIY 12 v system on website
- Calder Refrig book for DIY repair info

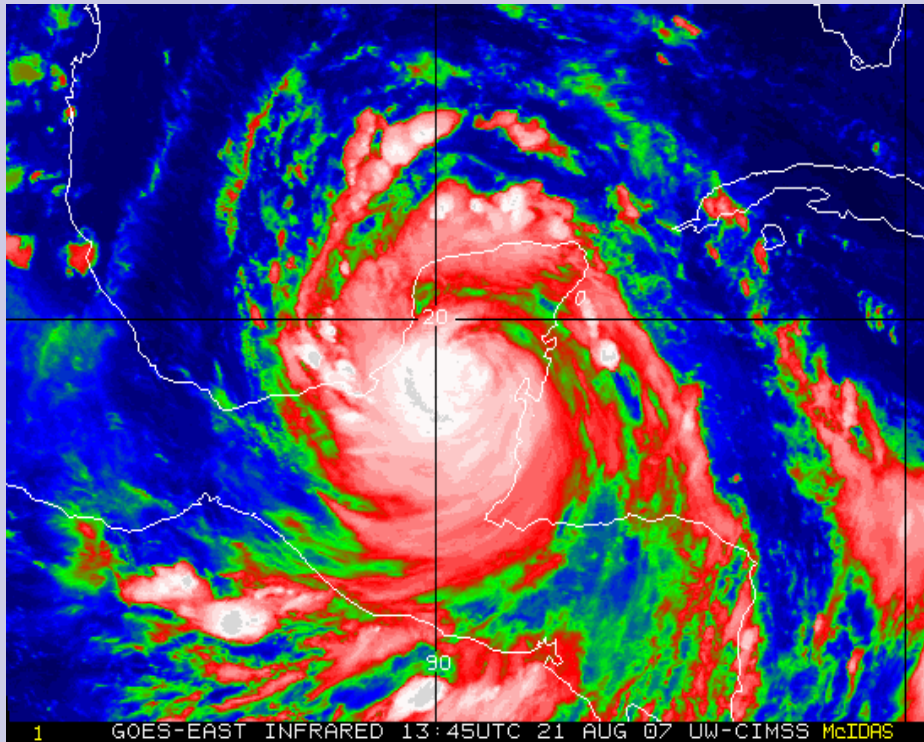
# Prep - Engine/Systems 5



- Air Conditioning
  - Need in marinas, bugs
  - Window unit entirely adequate, inexpensive
  - Install in companionway
- Propane system
  - Best fuel for stove, grill, fresh water heater
  - Zero leak tolerance, check hoses and fittings
  - Get fume/bilge/fire alarm
  - Panama valve adapter



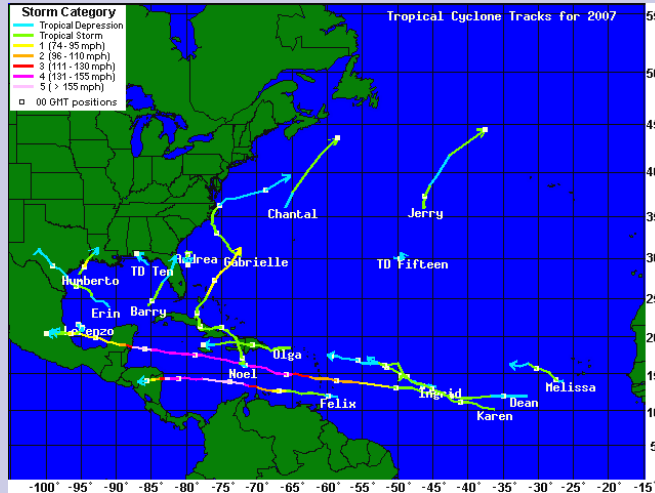
# 2 Getting There



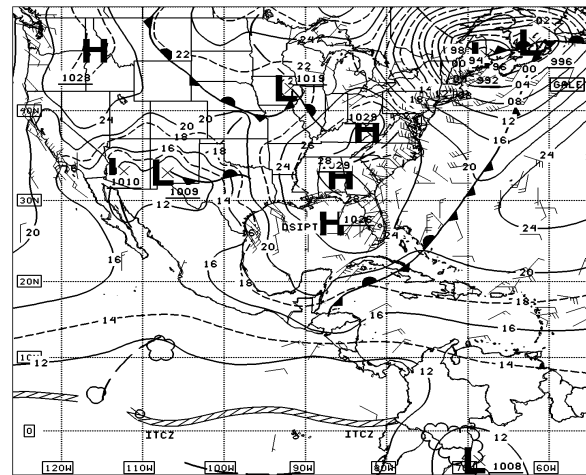
- Weax considerations
- Gulf Stream tactics
- Where to clear in/out
- Routes & distances



# Getting There - Weather



- Summer/Fall-Hurricane Season
  - Don't go early or late in season
  - Hurricane holes-Isla M, Rio Dulce, Roatan
- Winter-Cold Fronts
  - Wind clocks from East to S then strong W-N
  - Need secure harbor
- Spring-Good Weather
  - Go S in weax window

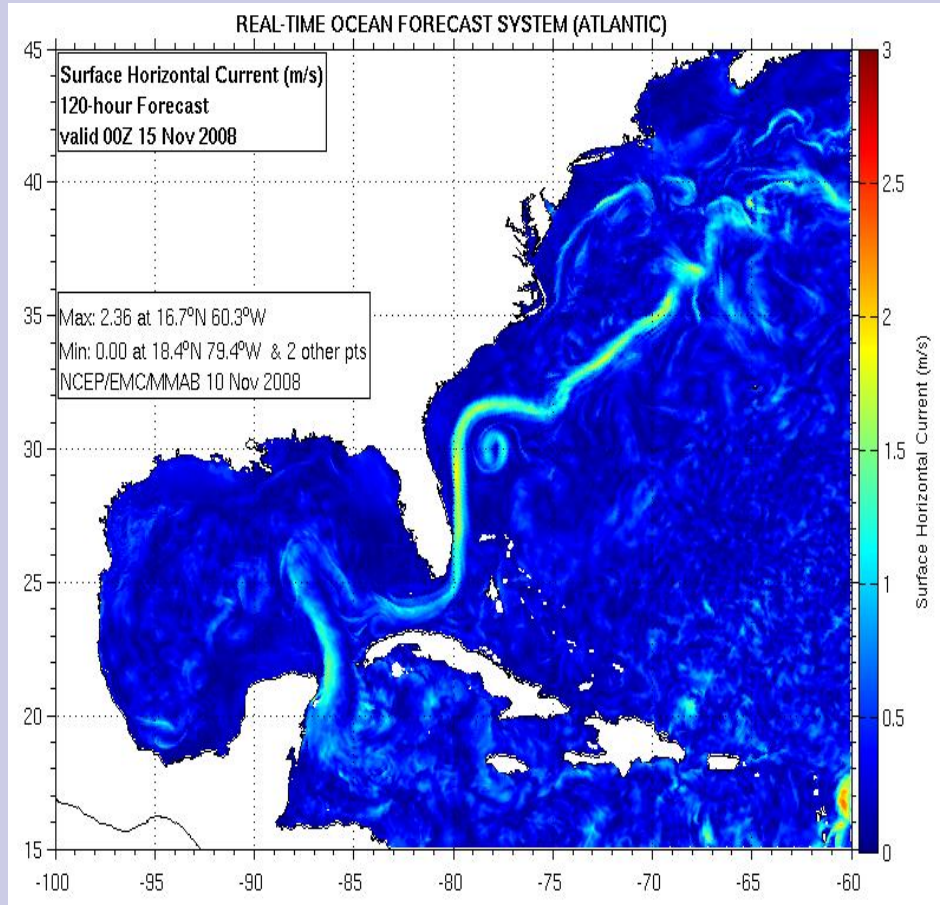


12Z WESTERN TPCL SFC ANALYSIS  
ISSUED Sun Mar 9 14:36:53 UTC 2008  
THUNDERSTORMS: SCALLOP LINES



TROPICAL PREDICTION CENTER / TAFB  
MIAMI, FLORIDA  
BY TAFB ANALYST JC  
COLLABORATING CENTERS: TPC OPC HPC

# Getting There - Weather



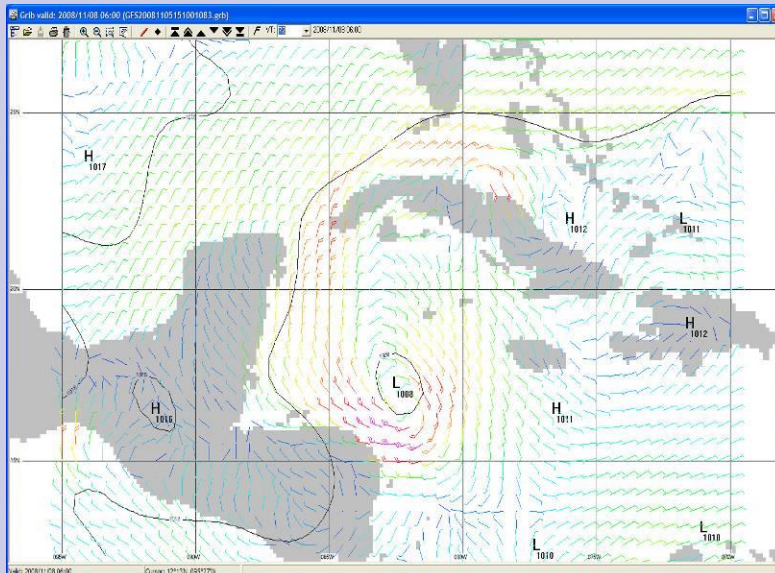
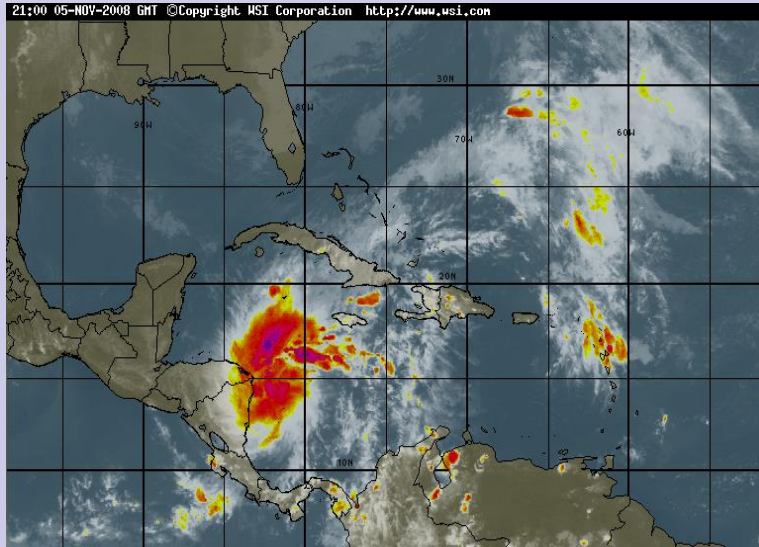
- Gulfstream Tactics
  - Options to cross loop north of W tip Cuba
  - Avoid squeeze zones at Yucatan, Fla Keys, Miami
  - Hug close to W tip Cuba
  - Avoid strong wind >20 kts against current

# Getting There - Weather



- Rainy Season
  - June-Nov most areas
  - Lightning and squall danger
  - Need good anchorage
  - Inland travel planning issue
  - Diving water clarity reduced

# Getting There - Weather



- Multiple sources
  - Internet
    - Infrared loop pics
  - HF radio
    - Satellite pics
    - Grib files
    - Faxes/forecasts
  - HF voice
    - Nets
    - Chris Parker
  - Sat phone



# Getting There - Weather



- Visit NWS Key West
  - Latest Wefax forecast
  - Latest Gulfstream data
  - No VHF/Inet/cells at Dry Tortugas
  - Latest forecasts only by HF radio or satphone at DRTO

# Getting There-W Carib Weather

- SPaws experience 2007-08
- Highest Seas: 8 feet (swell)
- Highest Winds at Anchor: 40 knot squalls
- Highest Winds on Passage: 30 knots
- Average Winds on Passage: 5-10 knots
- Some Rain and Lightning (during rainy season)
- Mostly sunny with light winds

# Getting There – Clearing In



- **NW-Most Convenient**
  - Isla Mujeres, Mexico (check)
  - Ambergris Cay or Punta Gorda, Belize (\$0-\$15)
  - Livingston (Rio Dulce), Guatemala (\$99)
  - Bay Isls, Honduras (\$0)
- **DON'T Clear In / Out**
  - Cozumel, Mexico
  - Belize City, Belize (\$120)

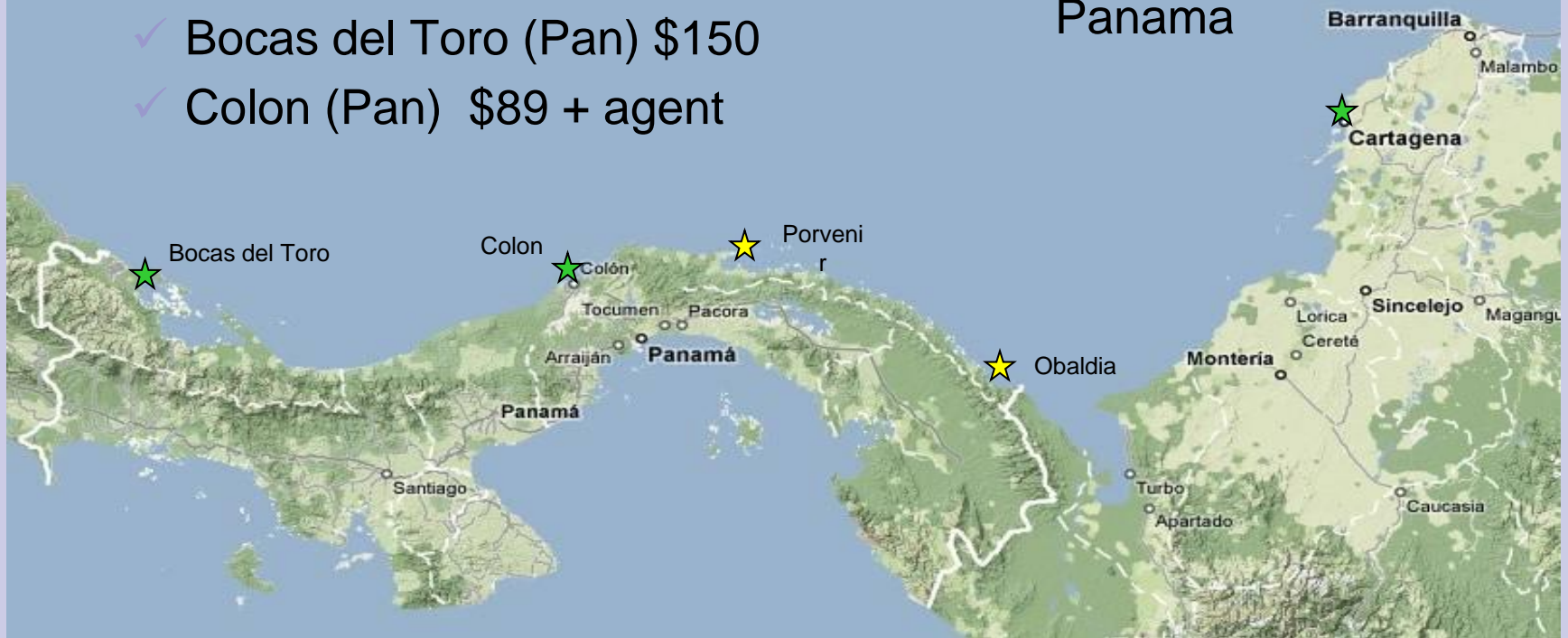
# Getting There – Clearing In

## ✓ SW–Most Convenient

- ✓ Providencia (Col) \$90 in/out
- ✓ San Andreas (Col) \$100
- ✓ Cartagena, (Col) \$60 in/out
- ✓ Bocas del Toro (Pan) \$150
- ✓ Colon (Pan) \$89 + agent

## ■ Issues Clearing In/Out

- Porvenir (San Blas), Panama
- Obaldia (San Blas), Panama





# Getting There

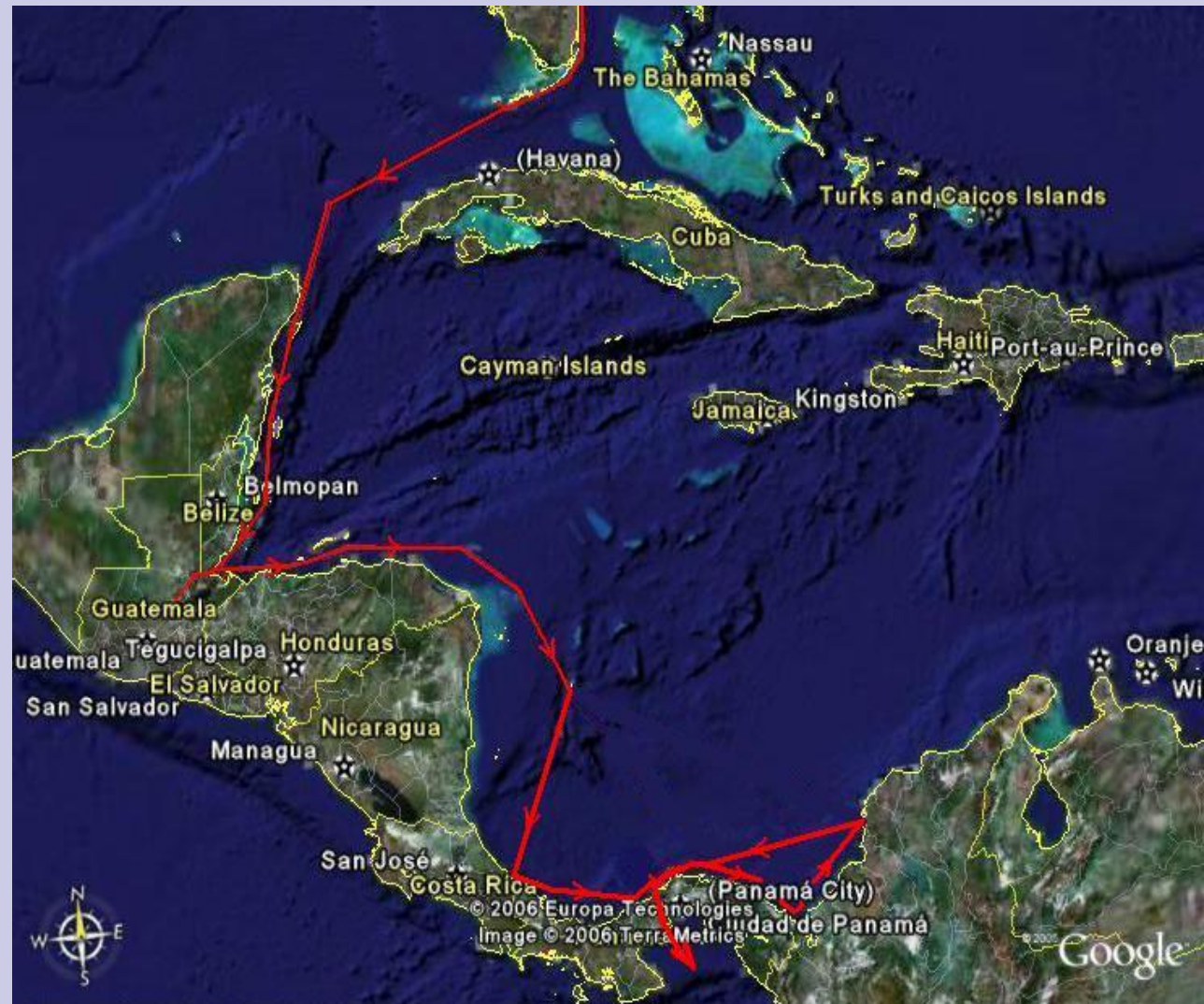
## Routes & Distances

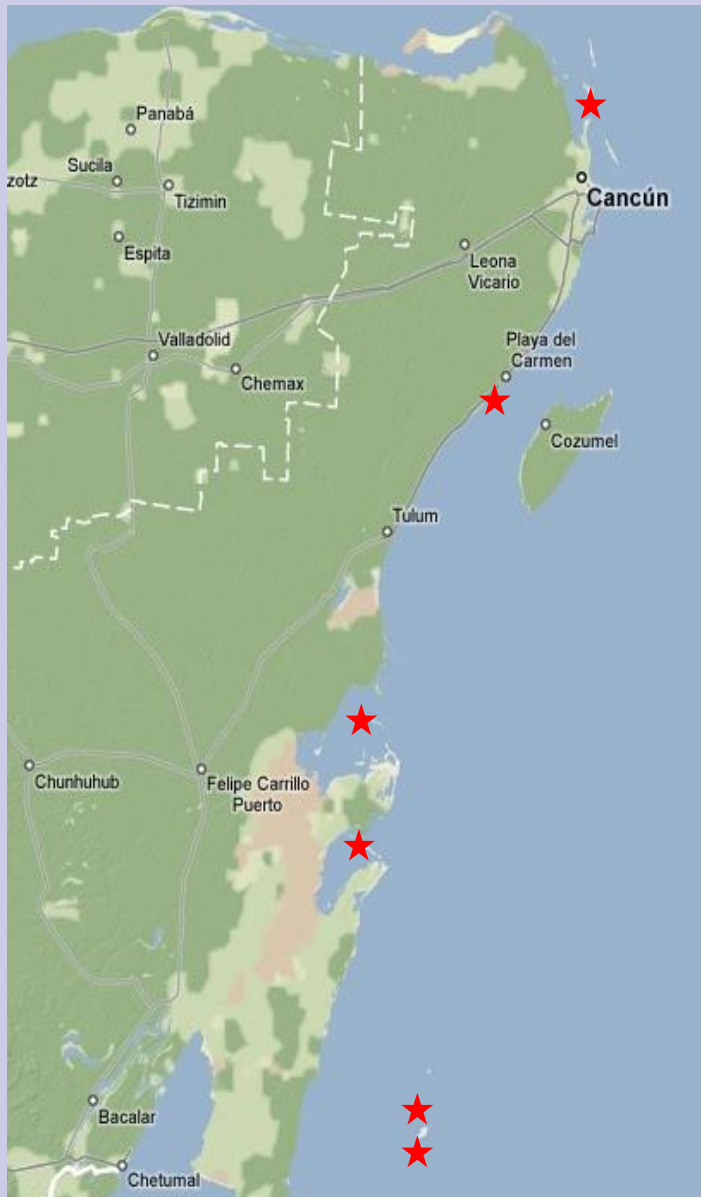


- Fm DRTO
  - Isla Mujeres
    - 3days / 310 nm
  - Ambergris Cay
    - 4-5d / 500 nm
  - Livingston (Rio Dulce)
    - 5-6d / 630 nm
  - Bay Islands
    - 5d / 560 nm

# 3 Places

- Summary
- Mexico
- Belize
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Panama
- Colombia

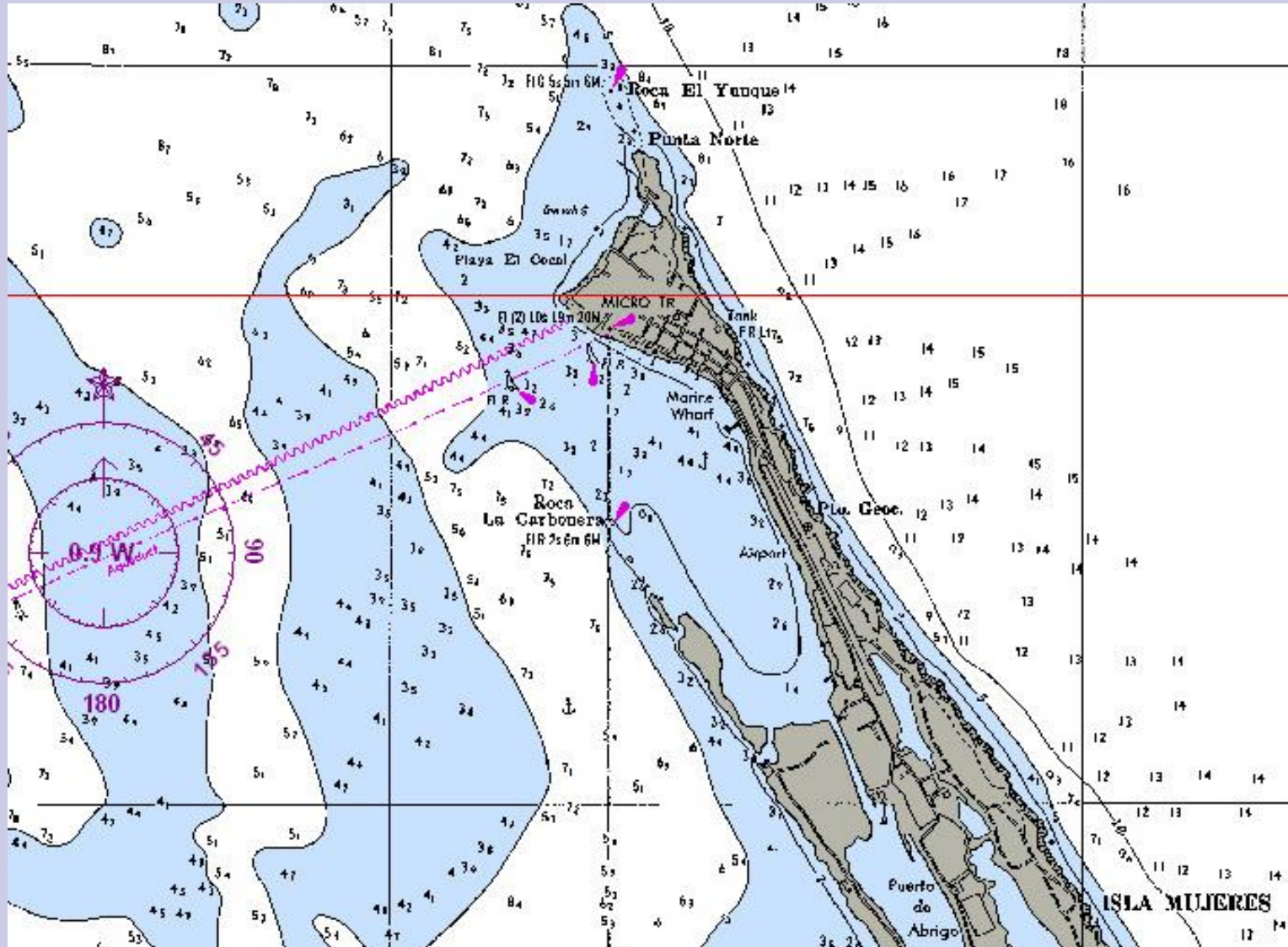




# Mexico – Cruising Yucatan

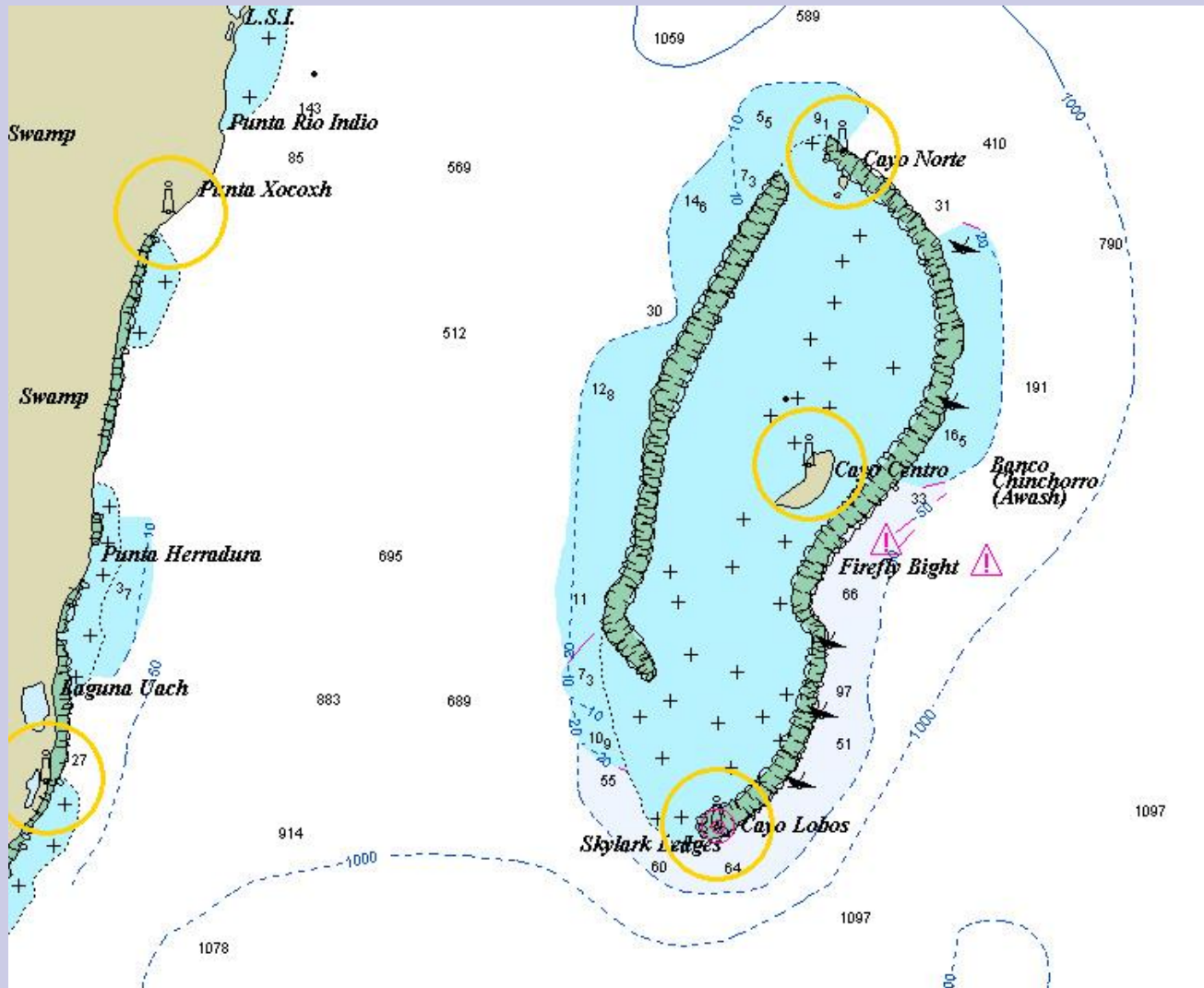
- Can coastal day hop
- NE coast very touristy
- Some south current
- National Zarpes?
- Cozumel – not cruiser friendly

# Isla Mujeres

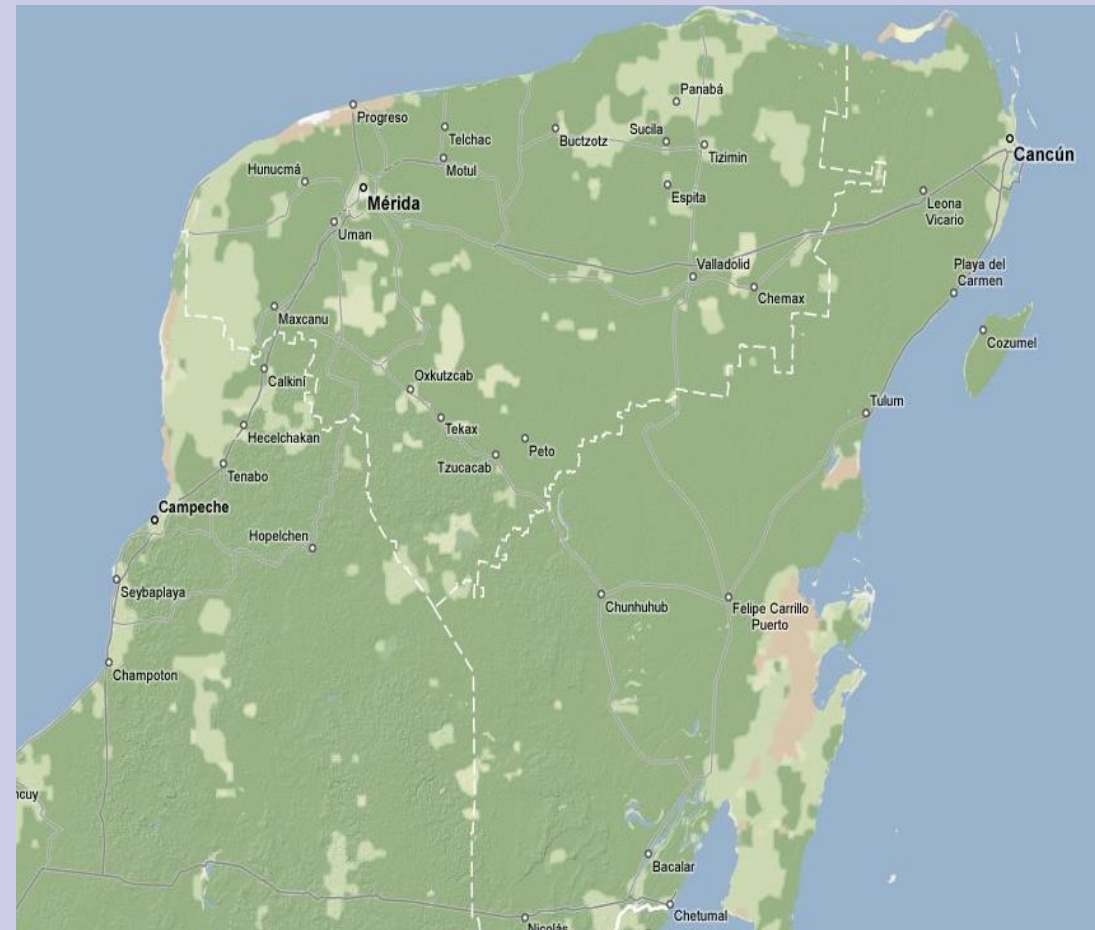




# Chinchorro Bank



# Mexico - Inland



- Mayan ruins superb but crowded
- Great bus system
- Lots of tourists
- Cancun like Miami Beach

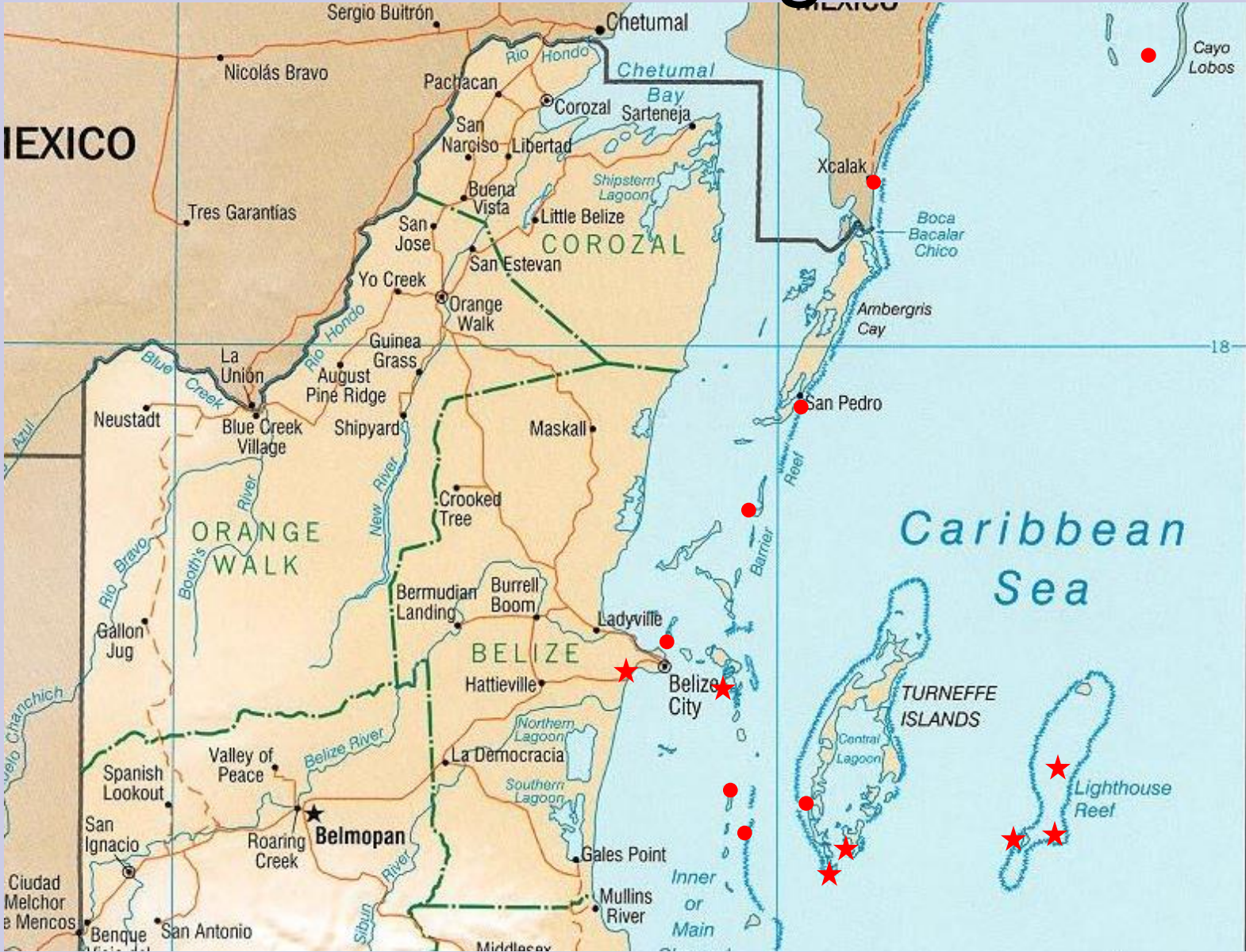
# Belize - Cruising



- Atolls are best diving
- Great sailing N/S inside outer reef
- Clearest water off shore
- Park anchoring fees
- Few repair facilities

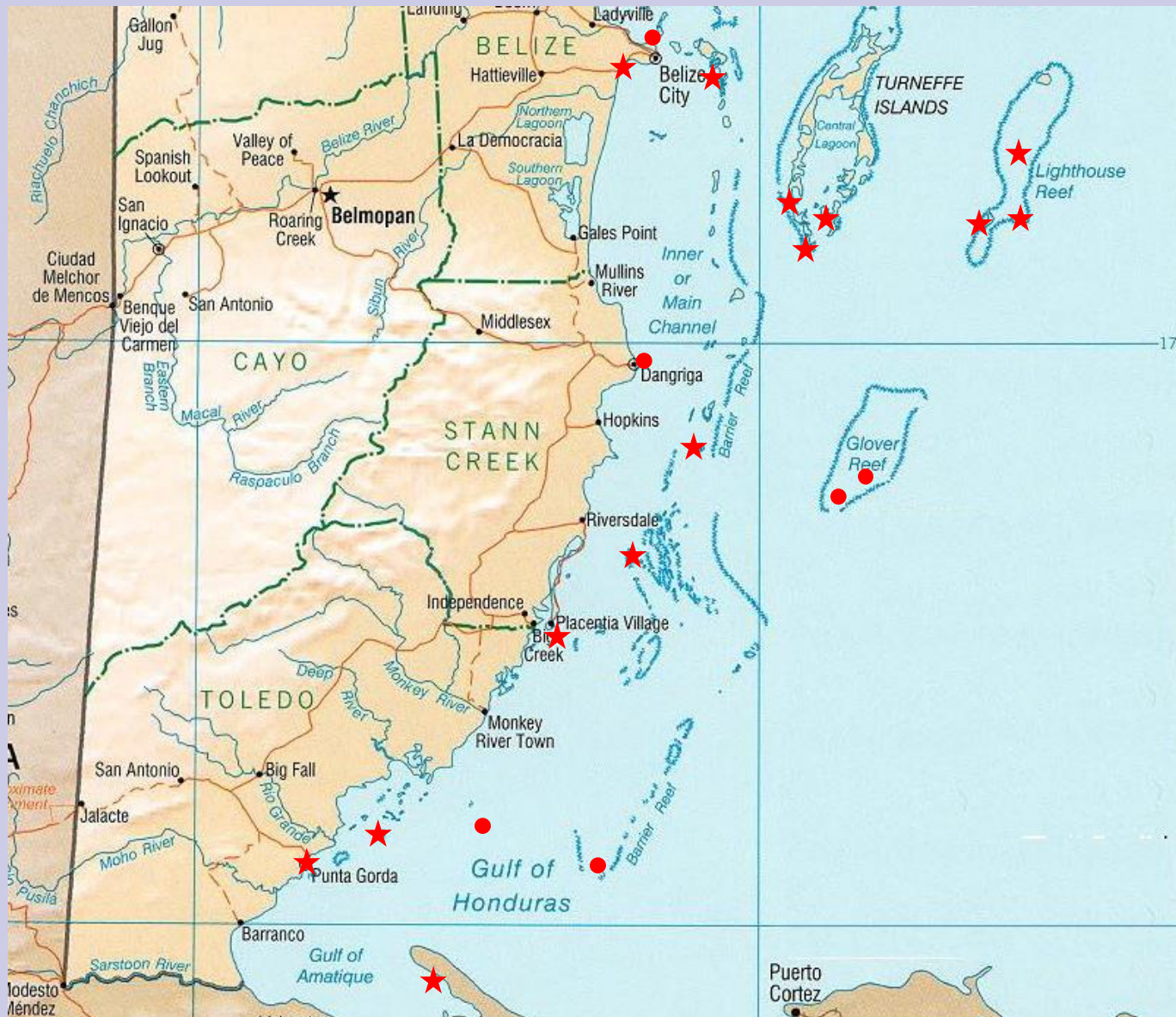


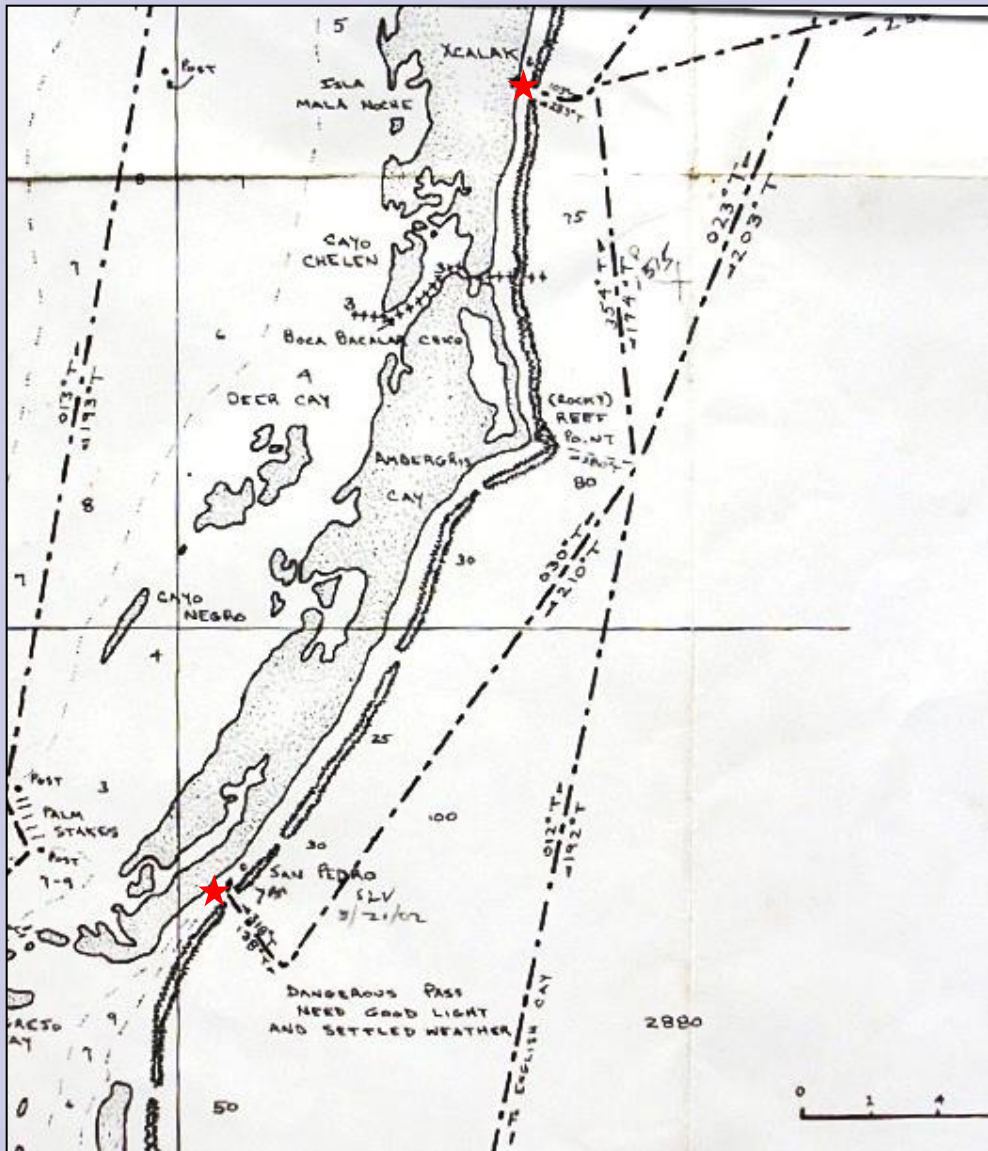
# Belize - Cruising North





# Belize - Cruising South





# Ambergris Cay

Caution: Entry through reef can be dangerous if strong south easterlies greater than about 20 kts

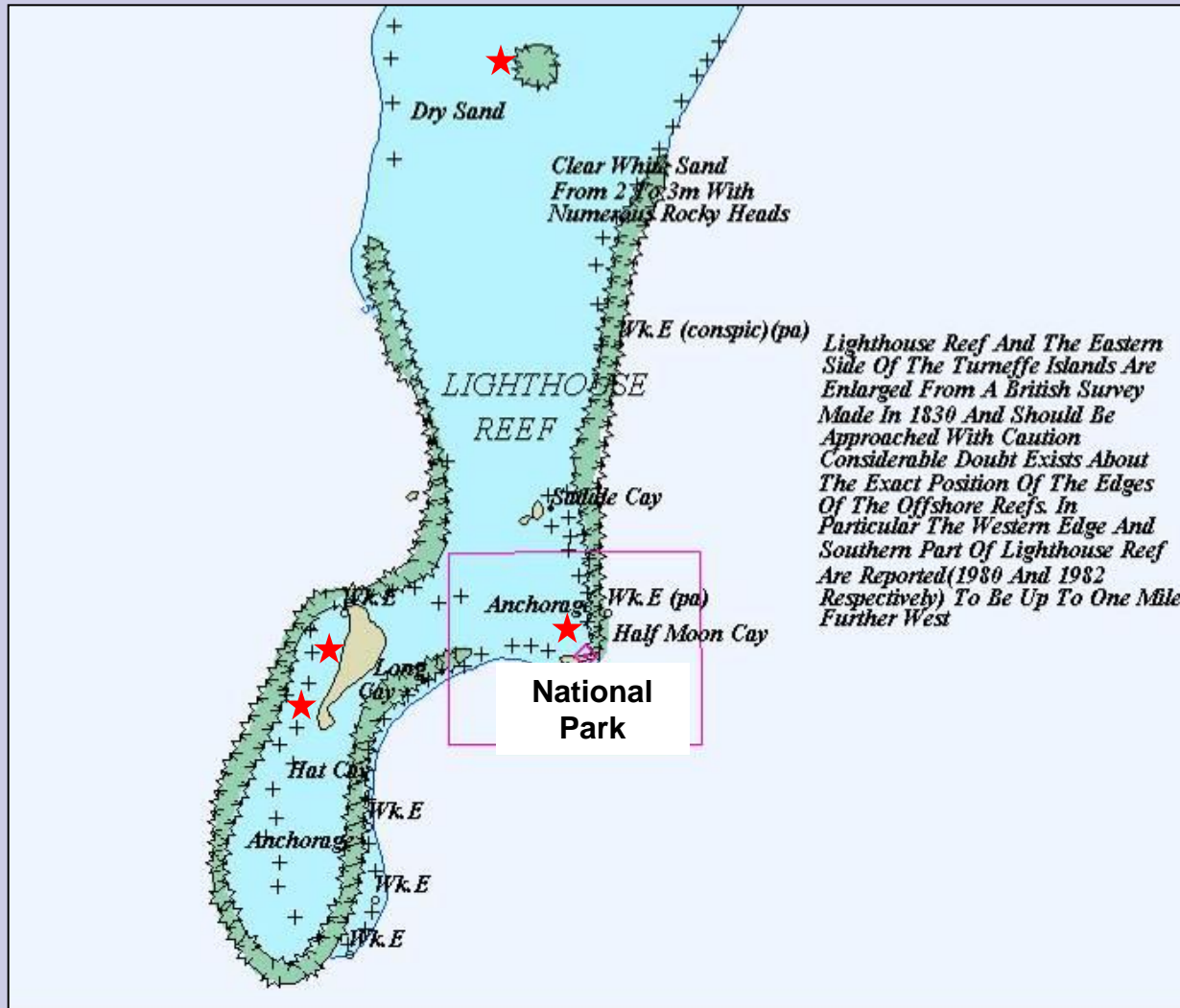
# Cucumber Beach Marina



- Only convenient marina for boat during inland travel
- Fuel, all amenities
- Not cheap
- Max 6' draft at high tide

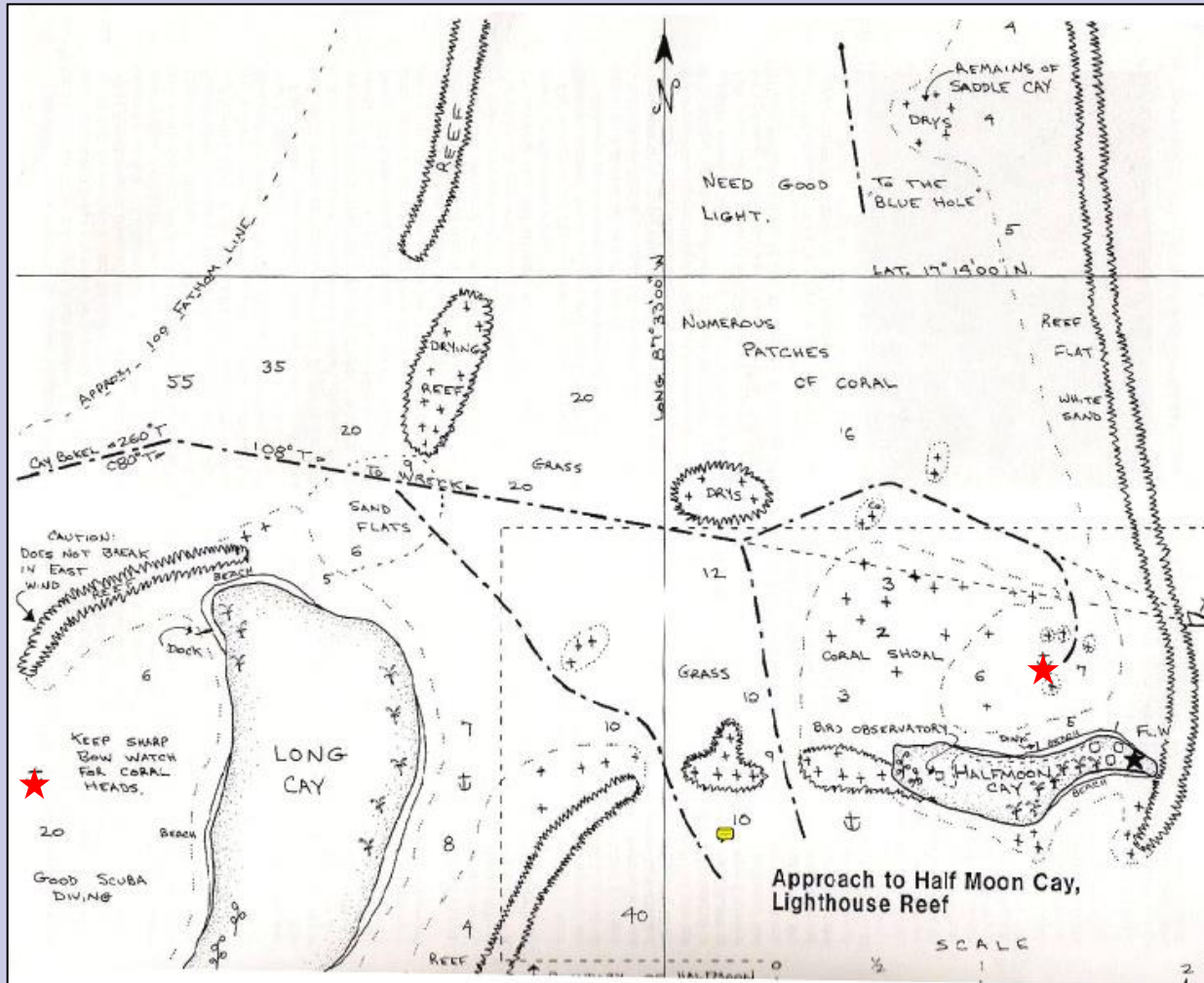


# Lighthouse Atoll





# Lighthouse Atoll



Chartlet from Freya Rauscher Guidebook

# Half Moon Cay, Lighthouse Atoll



- The BEST diving
  - National Park
  - Vertical wall
  - > 100' visibility
- Very secure but shallow anchorage
- 10 nm N to Blue Hole

# The Blue Hole









# Placencia

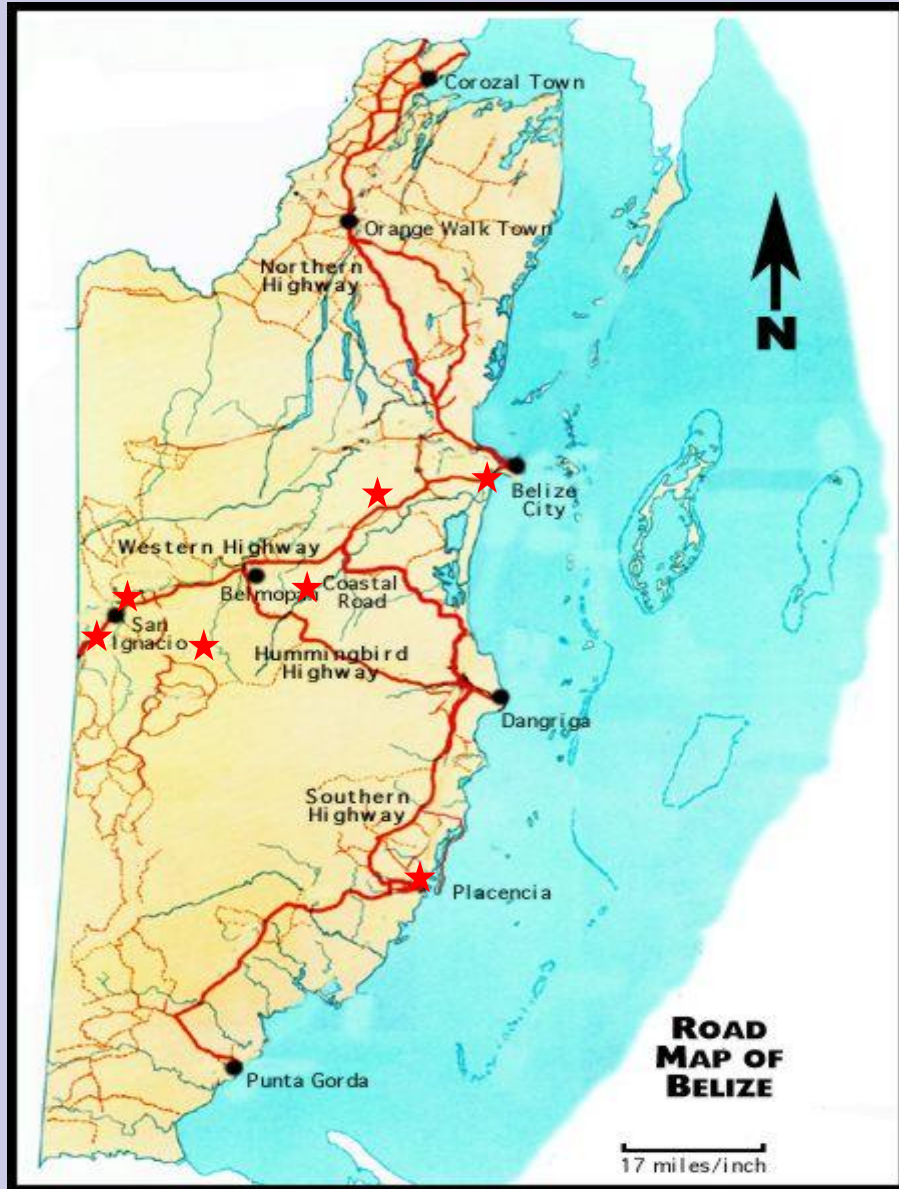
- Popular hangout for cruisers
- Fuel and water avail
- Check in/Check out (but convoluted)
- Somewhat exposed anchorage for cold fronts



# Punta Gorda



- Best place to check in to/out of Belize
- All officials at dock
- Exposed anchorage-use AM only
- Protected anchorage 2 hours North
- 2 hours from Rio Dulce entrance



# Belize - Inland

- Inexpensive bus travel
- Great but expensive things to do
- San Ignacio tour center
- Licensed professional tour guides
- English spoken



# San Ignacio





# Caves Branch Tubing



# ATM Cave





# Xunantunich





# Belize Zoo



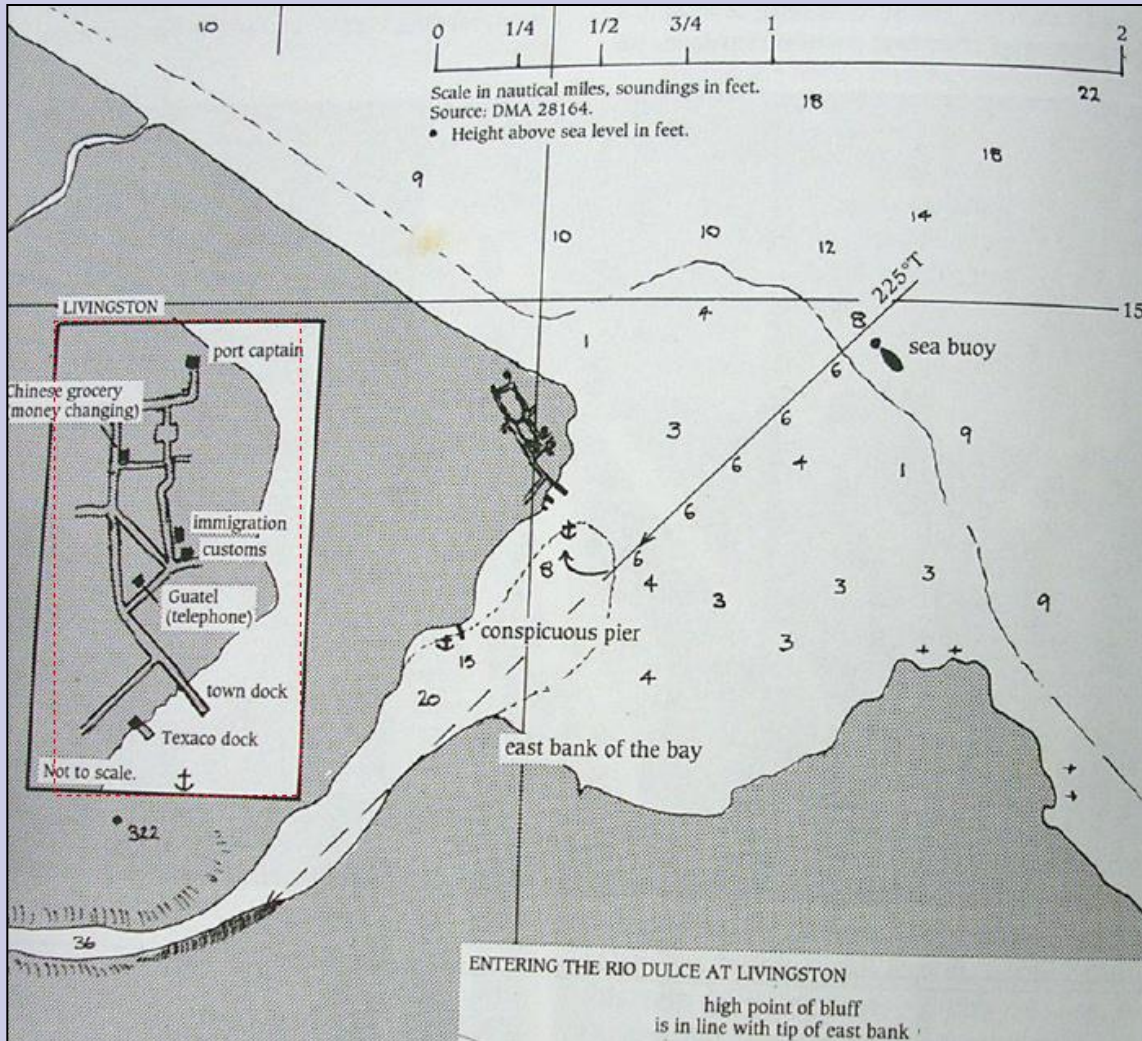
# Guatemala - Cruising



- Rio Dulce dangerous anchoring alone
- No reason not to use marinas-inexpensive
- Catamaran best marina
- Best hurricane hole in W Carib
- Cruising community
- Good boat repair facilities



# Crossing the Rio Dulce Bar





# Livingston, Rio Dulce



# Rio Dulce Canyon





# Fronteras





- Antigua tour center, great place to learn Spanish
- Lots to see and do
- Cool mountains, hot Rio
- Great inexpensive tours
- Inexpensive bus/van travel, food and lodging



# Guatemala Inland



# Castillo - Spanish Fort





# Antigua





# Lake Atitlan





# Chichicastenango Market





# Pacaya Volcano





# Tikal





# Finca Ixobel





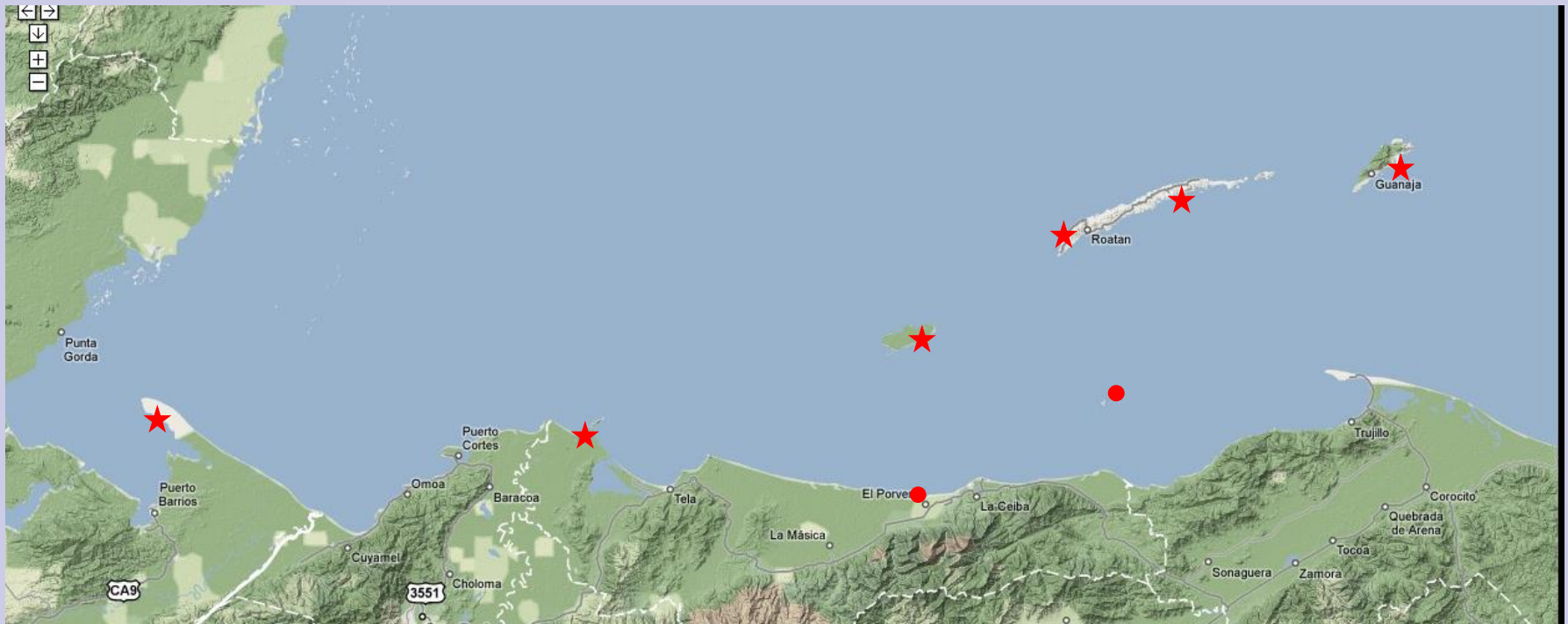
# Semuc Champey





# Honduras - Cruising

- Bay Islands best cruising
- Great diving
- Many anchoring spots, few marinas
- English spoken
- Parts/mail shipping and importation available



# Utila



# Utila





# Roatan



# Roatan



# Guanaja





# Guanaja

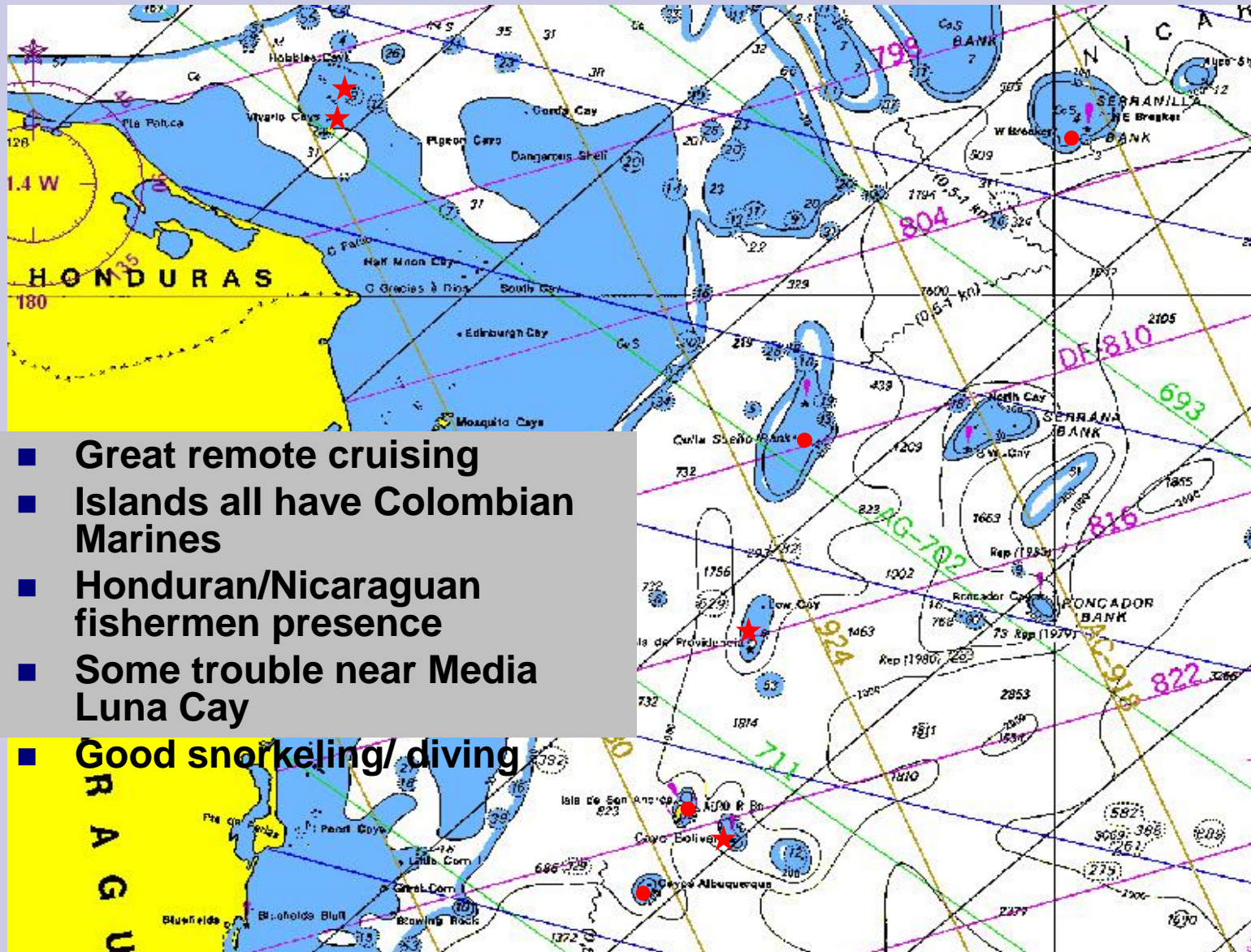


YACHT'S

Free Moorings  
Free Ice.  
Free Water  
Free Garbage Collection  
Laundry - Washing Only  
\$10.00 Per Load.  
INTERNET   
\$10.00 Per day or  
\$2.00 Per Hour.  
Phone U.S. only 50¢ <sup>Per</sup> minute



# Colombian Offshore Islands



- Great remote cruising
- Islands all have Colombian Marines
- Honduran/Nicaraguan fishermen presence
- Some trouble near Media Luna Cay
- Good snorkeling/ diving

# Vivarillos/Hobbies Cayes







# Providencia Island

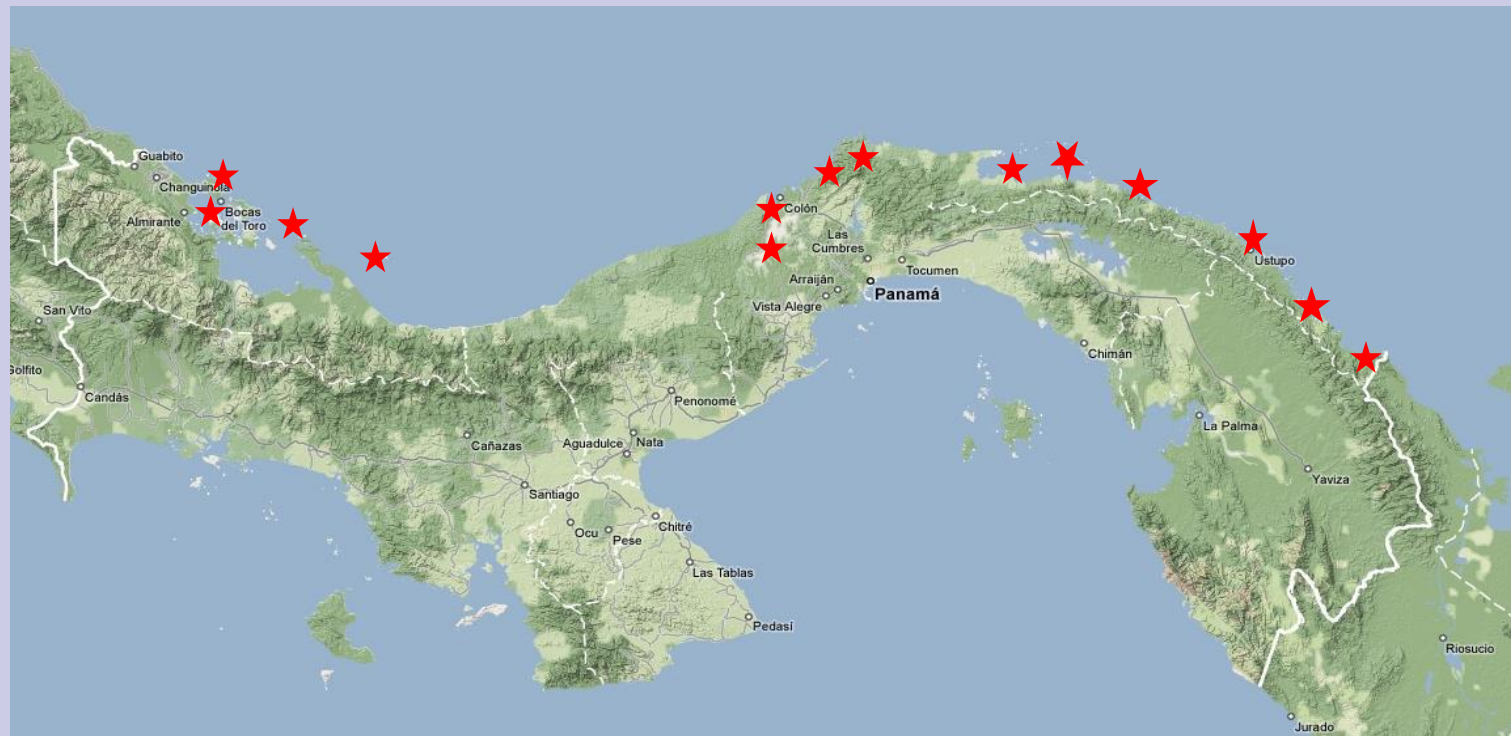






# Panama - Cruising

- Generally mild seasonal cruising
- International cruising communities
- Gateway to Panama Canal
- Highlight is San Blas
- Good marinas and boat repair facilities



# Bocas del Toro





# Chagras River





# Colon



# Porto Bello













# San Blas Islands





# San Blas Islands





# SE San Blas





# SE San Blas



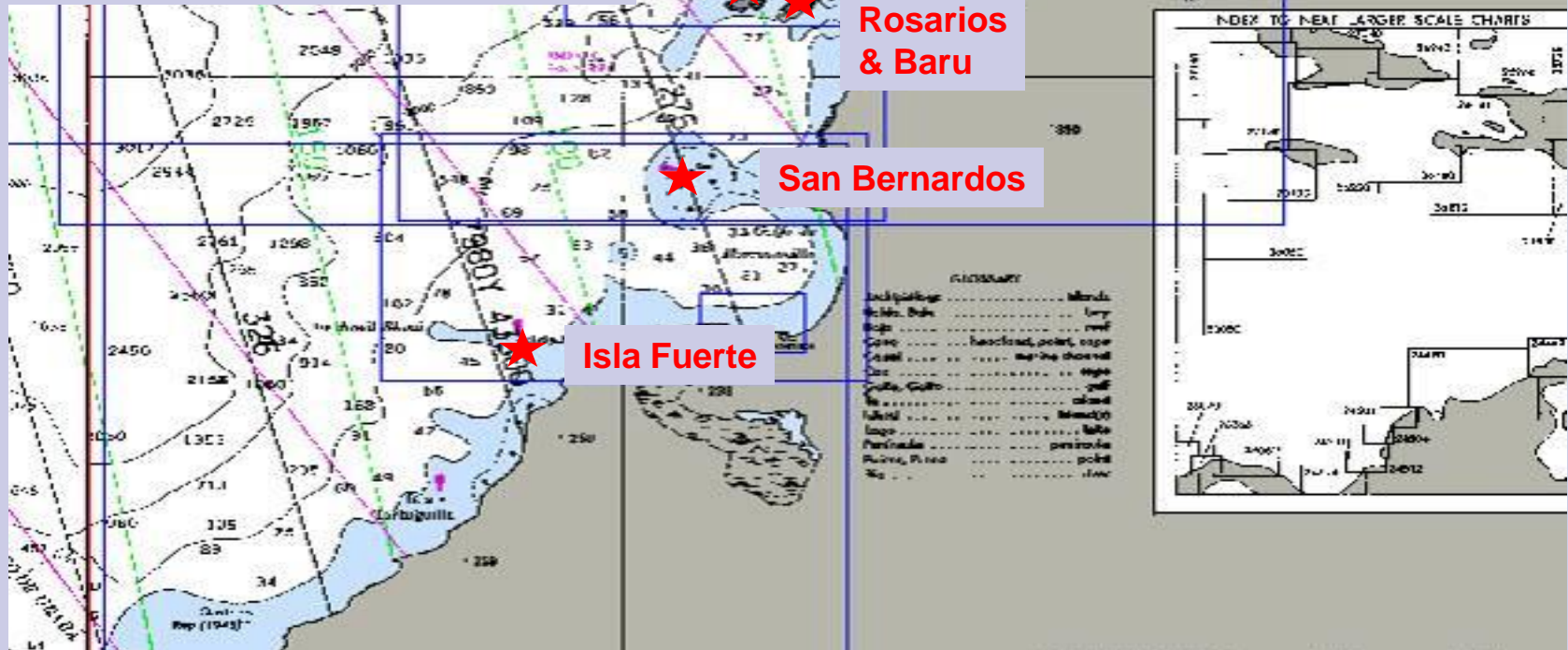
# Panama Canal





# Colombia – Cruising

- Few good anchorages
- US military presence
- Colombian Coast Guard—great cruiser security
- Little diving
- Usually Insurance rider



# Sapsura





# Islas Rosarios, Baru



# Colombia – Inland



- Best inland travel
- Lots to see and do
- World class hiking
- Cartagena is best Spanish colonial city
- Cheap good bus travel, food, lodging



# Cartagena





# Ciudad Perdida



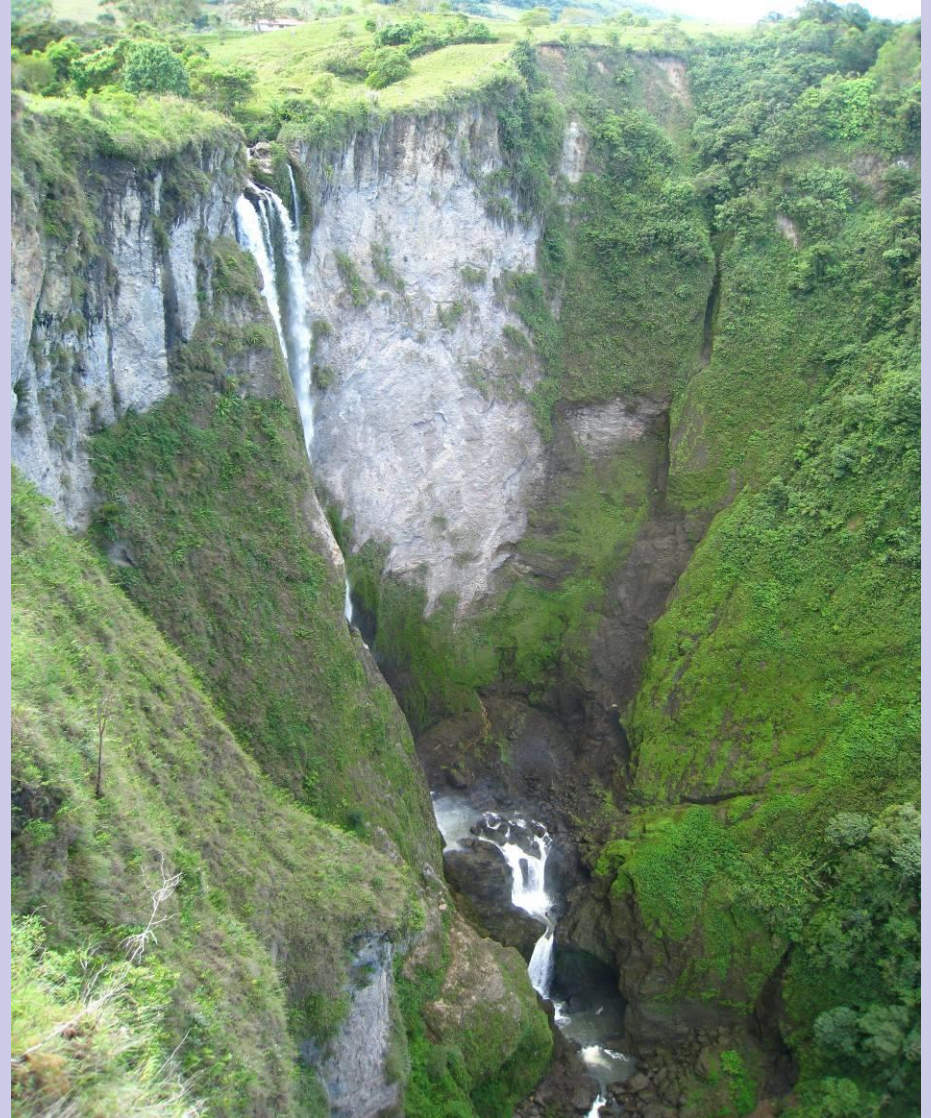


# Ciudad Perdida





# San Augustin





# Popayan



# Salento





# Manizales



# Bogota





# SPaws W Carib Travel Summary

17 June 2007 – 12 Sep 2008

- **Miles Traveled**      3507
- **Engine Hours**      640
- **Nights**      476
  - 10    On Passage
  - 191   At Anchor/Mooring
  - 275   In a Marina
    - 8 mos in Rio Dulce/Cartagena
    - 58 in the U.S.
    - 67 Inland Travel



# Highlights

## ■ Cruising

- Belize Atolls, San Blas Islands, Colombian Offshore Islands

## ■ Inland Travel

- Guatemala, Colombia, Belize

## ■ Scuba Diving

- Belize Atolls, Honduras Bay Islands



# 4 Resources

## ■ Guides

- Cruising-Bluewater Books, Amazon.com, cruisers, etc
- Travel-Lonely Planet, Footprint Guides and ebooks

## ■ Charts

- Paper-SSCA, Belleview, cruisers, retailers
- Software-Internet, retailers, cruisers, SeaClear scans

## ■ SSCA Bulletins-paper, CD, ebulletins

## ■ Internet

- Cruisers' websites-svsoggypaws.com, etc
- Backpacker websites
- Noonsite.com-J Cornell
- Travel discussion groups-Thorntree at LonelyPlanet.com, etc

## ■ Full list with links on [svsoggypaws.com](http://svsoggypaws.com)

A tropical beach scene featuring a blue sailboat on the water, palm trees on the right, and mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The text 'The End' is written vertically in the center.

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**The End**