

A Cruising Guide to CUBA

Ed. 1.0

by

Amaia Agirre

and

Frank Virgintino



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DEDICATION

This Guide is dedicated

To all the cruising sailors who have a desire to sail far and wide. May this guide provide you with insights that will make your voyage to Cuba an unforgettable experience.

And a special dedication:

To a very special man who has worked so very hard to assist cruisers who want to visit Cuba.



Jose Miguel Diaz Escrich, Commodore of the Hemingway International Yacht Club (HIYC) and member of the Marinas Committee of the International Council of Marine Industry Associations (ICOMIA), expresses the willingness and readiness of himself and the Hemingway International Yacht Club of Cuba to assist, support and advise members of the international sailing community who wish to explore and enjoy the wonders of the Cuban Archipelago.

The Commodore is a Frigate Captain of the Cuban Navy, in which he served for more than 25 years. To understand the enormity of the Commodore's undertaking and his achievement for his country and for cruising sailors, it is necessary to summarize his life's mission.

Commodore Escrich founded the HIYC in 1992 and embarked on a mission to restore the nautical traditions of Cuba, establish friendly relations with the international nautical community, and develop the nautical recreational industry in his country.

The Commodore's outreach brought him to Fort Lauderdale for ICOMIA's Third International Marina Conference and where the mayor of Fort Lauderdale presented him with the Keys to the City; and to the Miami Boat Show many times. He has traveled to countries throughout North America, Europe, and the Caribbean to realize his goal of making Cuba part of the international nautical community.

His educational campaign has been both external, as a presenter on nautical recreation and its potential in Cuba at national and international academic forums; and internal, providing professional courses for the staff of Cuban marinas. These efforts have earned Escrich national and international awards and recognition.

To solidify Cuba's presence on the international scene, Commodore Escrich has promoted, organized, and hosted numerous nautical events such as local, offshore, and destination races; conferences, fishing tournaments, and seminars. He is also the Port Officer or representative of several cruising associations from around the world. He was a recipient of FIDALMAR's gold medal.

Today he is a representative of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) for which in cooperation with the Billfish Foundation in the Caribbean he introduced 'Tag and Release'. Further initiatives to save billfishes, such as the introduction of the 'circle hook' at the 63rd Ernest Hemingway International Billfishing Tournament, earned him the Preservation Award of the IGFA.

From July 2009 to December 2011 Commodore Escrich served as president of the Enterprise Group of Cuban Marinas, 'Marlin S.A.'

INTRODUCTION



Bienvenido a Cuba!



Vintage postcard available at the Newark Museum during the exhibition "Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul" (2011)

To effectively cruise through Cuba, it is necessary to spend the time to understand Cuba. This is not simple as Cuba is quite large; the largest island in the Caribbean and the 16th largest island in the world. Geographically and meteorologically Cuba can be challenging. Before you cruise to Cuba, it is best to define clearly the objectives you have in mind so that you can plan accordingly.

It is not necessary for you to become a student of Cuban history and politics; however, the more you understand about those areas as well as the diversity that makes for Cuba's culture, the bigger the dividend you will reap for the investment of your time and money.



Figure 1. Caribbean basin

Cuba is located in the northwest part of the Caribbean, what I refer to, in the cruising guides I write, as the north quadrant of the Caribbean

The north quadrant of the Caribbean has definitive characteristics that will be discussed in this guide; characteristics that determine the time of the year Cuba is best cruised in relation to factors such as weather and wind.

Additionally it should be noted that Cuba is the gateway to two of the four “entrances” to the Caribbean.



Figure 2. **GREATER ANTILLES**

Cuba is the largest island in the GREATER ANTILLES group. The Greater Antilles include Cuba, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, and Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic). Normally when North Americans say they are going to sail to the Caribbean, they generally are referring to the Lesser Antilles; the long chain of smaller islands that border the eastern Caribbean Sea.

The islands of the Greater Antilles, with the exception of the Cayman Islands, are larger than those in the Lesser Antilles. This does not make them better but it does make them different because their sizes and related attributes will impact the way you cruise. Moreover, in the case of Cuba, the island is so large and has so many cays and inlets that the shoreline can be measured in excess of 2,500Nm not including the cays. It is simply not possible to cruise through Cuba in a few weeks or for that matter, perhaps, even in a few months.

If your time is limited, you must decide where you will cruise and that will in large part depend on what your objectives are.

The Cuban cays are very different than the mainland and the mainland has distinct areas that are different from one another. For example, the northwest coast is totally unlike the northeast coast.



Figure 3. Cuba relative to Straits of Florida and the southern Bahamas

This is one of my favorite maps of Cuba. It illustrates well how close the island is to the Straits of Florida and the southern Bahamas. The Cayman Islands, just northwest of Jamaica, are also easily seen; note Grand Cayman Island with the Cayman “Sister Islands” just to the northeast. These two small islands are often overlooked by cruising boats. However, approaching Cuba’s south coast, they make an interesting stop. (See *A Cruising Guide to the Cayman Islands* available at www.freecruisingguides.com)

The map also allows you to see that there are essentially four areas of cays in Cuba roughly located at the north central part of the island, the northwest central part of the island, the southwest part of the island and the south central part of the island. These groups of cays offer cruising opportunities without end and represent one of the last untouched cruising areas in the Caribbean, especially as extensive as these. Fish and lobster are abundant and Scuba and snorkeling is in water so crystalline as to be indescribable by words; but rather needs to be experienced.

The map below provides a superb view of the Caribbean’s “backdoor” entrance at the west end of Cuba as well as the entrance through the Windward Passage at the east end.



Figure 4. Cuba and its two gateways to the Caribbean

The Windward Passage has been overlooked by cruising boats for years in their rush to get to “The Caribbean” with a landfall in Tortola. Those that overlook this easy way into the Caribbean either go across the top of Hispaniola to the Virgin Islands; a route that is both offshore in the ATLANTIC OCEAN as well as, at times, close hauled. Others pick their way through the thornless path to windward trying to outguess the trade winds and taking it on the bow day after day.

One cruiser posed the following question at www.cruisersforum.com, the online blog, regarding the recommendations I make in my book *A Thinking Man’s Guide to Voyages South~the Many Facets of Caribbean Cruising*:

“Does anyone know how many times Frank Virgintino who has written this guide has sailed the Windward Passage and south of the DR to Puerto Rico? It sounds like an option; however Bruce Van Sant did the thornless path about 20 times before he wrote his cruising guide.

We would love to hear from anyone who has taken this route as we are looking to go to Grenada from the Bahamas this winter?”

A Thinking Man's Guide to Voyages South makes a strong case to enter into the Caribbean through the Windward Passage from North America. I answered as follows:

*When we cruise we make countless decisions based on our experience and logic. Look at the very first map in the introduction presented here. **Based on the prevailing trade winds from the NE as well as not having to sail across lee shores for hundreds of miles, what does your logic tell you as to the best point to enter the Caribbean?** People ask me all the time as to why then do so many head for the eastern Caribbean from North America.*

The answer is simple. For many, many years, North Americans considered the Caribbean to be the Lesser Antilles. Therefore to go to the Caribbean meant to go to the Lesser Antilles. That is where the Carib 1500 rally, as well as the majority of sailors who choose the offshore route, heads for; so it must be right; right? Even those that choose the "Thornless Path" and don't use the offshore route are heading for the eastern Caribbean.

Add to that the "concerns" that USA flag boats have about Cuban' waters and their fears about Haitian waters and you can easily understand why the Windward Passage was overlooked.

The truth is, if you transit the Windward Passage you do not have to enter Cuban or Haitian waters. At its closest point, the two countries are 50 nm apart with the average being about 75 nm. For those that do not have such concerns or who realize how convenient the Windward Passage is, especially from the southern Bahamas, there are many excellent stops that can be made. From Cap du Mole at the northwest corner of Haiti to Ile à Vache at the southwest corner of Haiti, as well as Port Antonio, Jamaica, one can make for an excellent anchorage transiting international waters. The USA has a presence in these waters as well, with a base at Guantanamo, Cuba; plus ownership of a very small island off the extreme southwest tip of Haiti, Navassa Island.

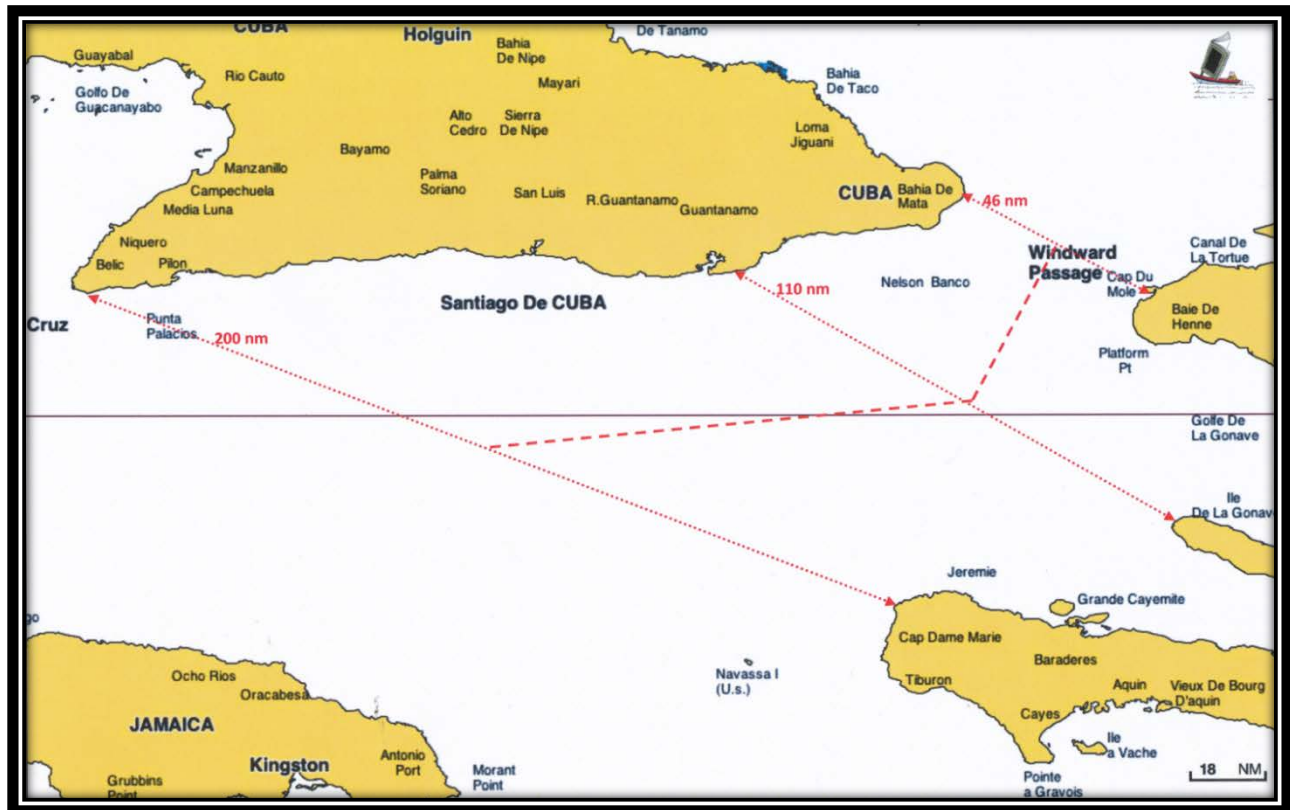
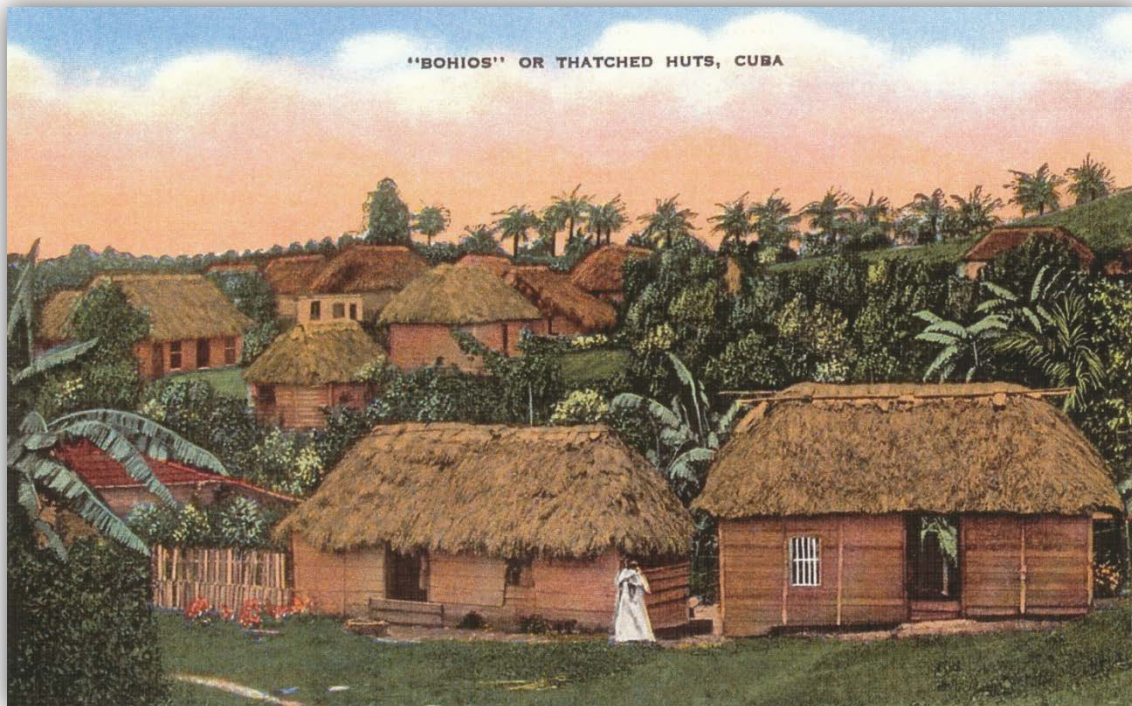


Figure 5. Tracking the midpoints through the Windward Passage

The Windward Passage is oriented to the southwest and trade winds tend to be easterly and northeasterly. That makes going through the passage a pleasure and certainly a lot easier and safer than the Mona Passage east of the Dominican Republic. Even if you are headed east to the Lesser Antilles, the Windward passage is a much better bet as you get to cruise along the south coast of Hispaniola, which is not a lee shore and which has a good number of protected anchorages and harbors along the way. Add to this that the katabatic winds (cold mountain air that slides down mountain ranges after the sun sets) often stall the trade winds after sunset and make for an offshore, and often, sailable breeze to take you east.



Vintage postcard available at the Newark Museum during the exhibition "Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul" (2011)

CRUISING STRATEGIES

If one were going to circumnavigate Cuba, it is best done counter clockwise. There are a number of reasons for this but the biggest factor is that you would be sailing west on the north coast; which is decidedly Cuba's roughest coast.

Then again how many readers of this guide are looking to circumnavigate Cuba? When we go cruising we have a route in mind. There are many reasons to visit Cuba and those objectives will determine your route.

During the winter months, "NORTHERS" come down frequently from North America. These are strong systems of cold heavy air that come from the north and head south and east. The north coast of Cuba is not the place to be during those months. Having said that, I need add that there is a qualifier and that is that there

are many cays on the North Coast where one can seek refuge in a strong norther. However, northers bring grey skies and rain and lower temperatures. The best time to cruise Cuba is during the spring and early summer, even early fall; when the northers are not blowing and the trade winds have their way, unaffected by northern winds.

THE GULF STREAM

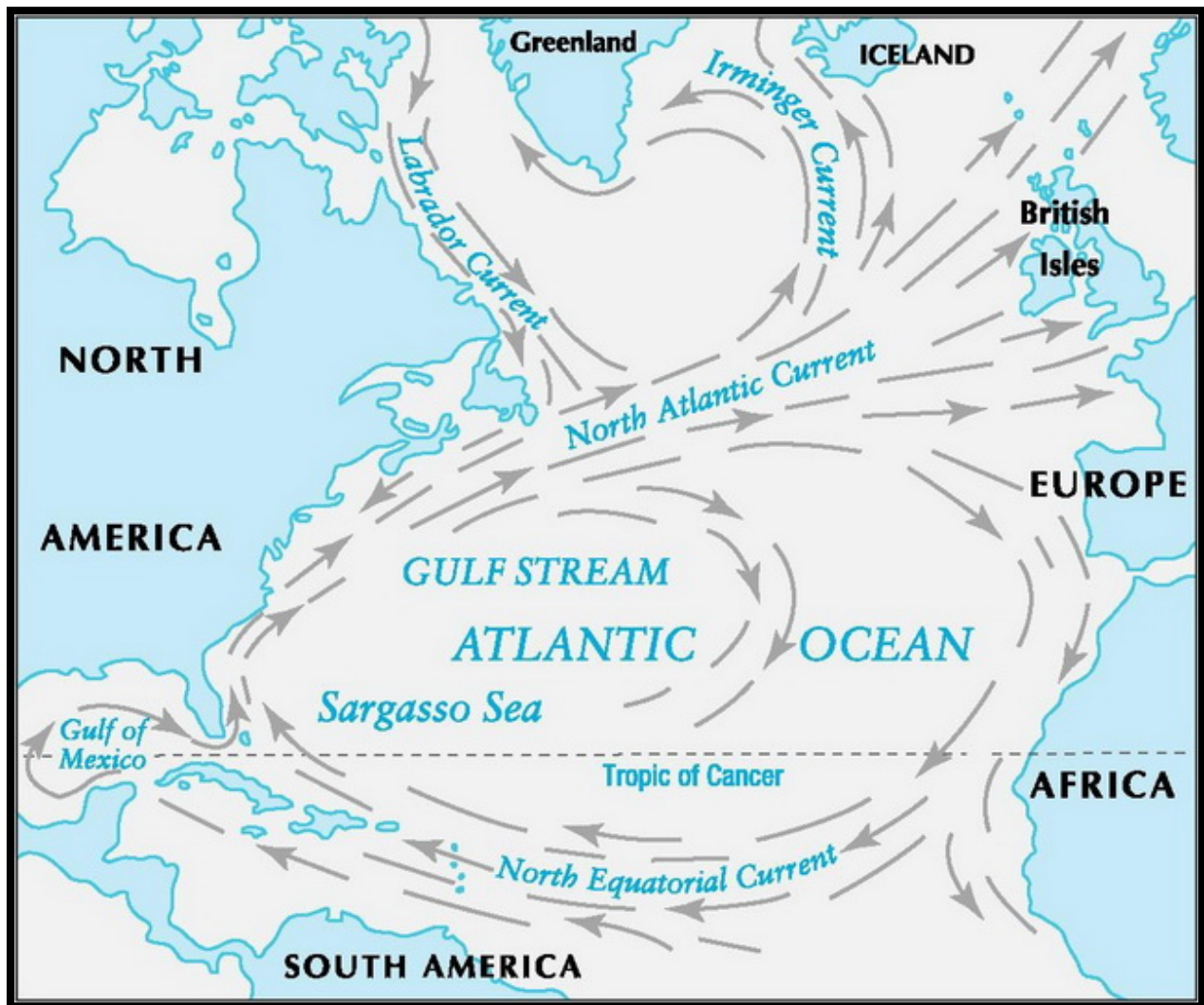


Figure 6. The Gulf Stream and related currents

Many cruisers are surprised to learn that the “Gulf Stream” is really only a small part of a large circle. When cruisers who are in Florida speak of a “weather window” to cross the Gulf Stream, what they really mean is the Florida Current,

for that is what the part that flows north along Florida is called. The mighty current is fascinating in many ways and the more you know about it, the better off you will be. The most basic lesson is that you should not cross it against the wind; i.e., if the wind is from the north or has a northerly component, that is not the time to cross the stream. It is best crossed right after a norther “blows out” or a southwest wind is well established.

Coming from North America, regardless of what part or parts of Cuba you decide to cruise, you must cross some part of the Gulf Stream to get there. Once in Cuban waters, north or south coast, the Caribbean Current will carry you north and west at an average of one knot.

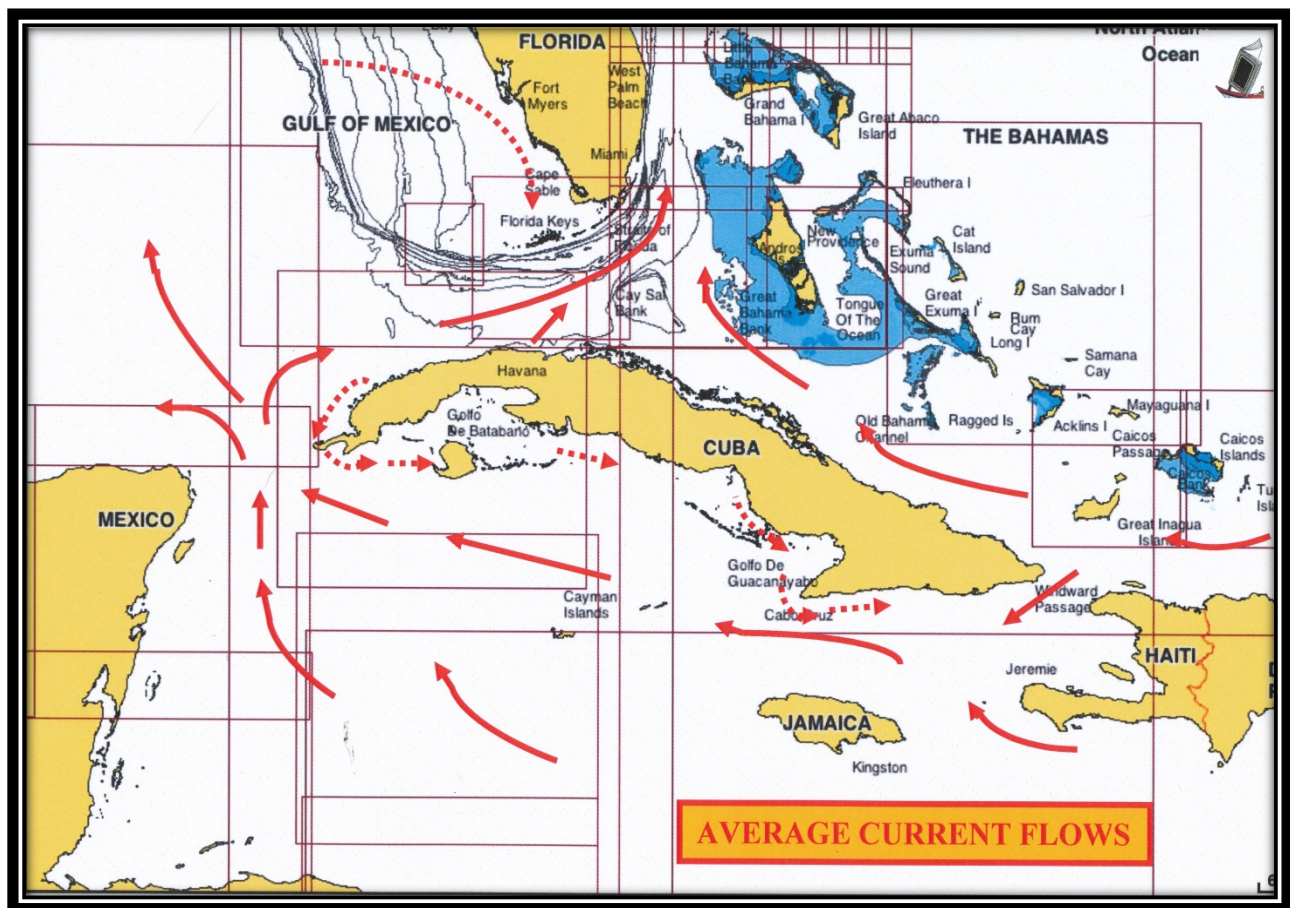


Figure 7. Average current flows around Cuba

It is noteworthy that while virtually all of the current flows north and west at the west end of Cuba, a counter current can normally be found inshore. This counter current can be used to advantage.

APPROACHES TO CUBA

NOTE: When you arrive within the Cuban territorial waters (12 miles) you must contact Cuban authorities. Use VHF channel 16. The Port Authority monitors channel 77.

HAIL “GUARDAFRONTERA” (WAD A FRON TEAR A).



Figure 8. Approaches to Cuba: Through the back door, through the Windward Passage, from the south, and west along Hispaniola's south coast

FROM NORTH AMERICA

From the United States and Canada, you can enter from the west end of Cuba by cruising the Florida Keys. The logical stop for this route would be Marina Hemingway just west of Havana.

22°05.19N, 82°30.38 W should put you at the entrance channel. If you head west around the southwest corner of Cuba, if you cruise about a mile off, more often than not, you will find a counter current. This current can take you to Isla Juventud. When the trade winds are strong and blowing 15 knots and higher, it is best to wait before employing this strategy, for strong wind against current is never pleasant.

FROM THE EAST

From almost any point east in the Caribbean Sea, you can make for Cuba's south coast with a favorable current and the wind normally aft the beam. Most times it will be a real joyride in every sense of the word. If you are following the south coast of Hispaniola, you can call at Ile à Vache, Haiti; a charming and safe anchorage. From there you can sail west to Port Antonio, Jamaica; another safe and wonderful stop. From Port Antonio you can either make for Santiago de Cuba or Cienfuegos via the Sister Islands of the Cayman; which can also be a pleasant stop if the weather is settled and no northers are forecast.

FROM THE SOUTH AND THE SOUTH EAST

The current must be taken into account as well as the strength and direction of the wind. Certainly from Aruba you are "high" enough to make a direct route to wherever you choose to make landfall in Cuba. However, once you find yourself in

Colombia and points west, it is difficult normally to make the east end of Cuba and it is generally best to head for the west end of Jamaica. Watch for the very formidable shoal, Pedro Bank, just south of Jamaica; a very large area. (See *A Cruising Guide to Jamaica*, available at www.freecruisingguide.com).

From the islands of Honduras the best you can hope for without too much work is Isla Juventud, at the southwest corner of Cuba. Once you are under the lee of Cuba, you can use the cays and the katabatic winds to work your way east or you can follow the current around the western tip of Cuba to Marina Hemingway, Florida and the Bahamas.



Vintage postcard available at the Newark Museum during the exhibition "Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul" (2011)

FOR UNITED STATES CITIZENS

The United States has no formal diplomatic relations with Cuba. Its citizens, under current law, may not “trade with the enemy.” Essentially what that means is that you may visit Cuba, but you may not spend any money there as a tourist or in any other capacity. There are exceptions for certain classes of individuals such as those who obtain a license. There is no license that allows a United States citizen to cruise Cuba on their boat. It is not enough to say you did not spend money; if challenged you must be able to prove it. If you have a non US citizen sponsor your trip, you must be able to demonstrate that they paid all the expenses. Otherwise you have violated the law and are subject to civil and criminal penalty. That is the current law and whether we like it or not, it is THE LAW.

Interestingly, while US citizens cannot “trade with Cuba” Washington can and does. Washington's sanctions prevent most trade with Cuba, but a law passed by Congress in 2000 authorized cash-only purchases of U.S. food and agricultural products. In fact the US is the major supplier of food and agricultural products to Cuba. It is difficult to understand how convoluted the Cuban Embargo is, especially in that its basis is in not permitting trade with a communist country; this, while the largest trading partner of the United States is communist China!

It is so convoluted that in 2012 the U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to condemn the U.S. commercial, economic and financial embargo against Cuba for the 21st year in a row.

The final tally was 188-3, with Israel and Palau joining the United States. The Marshall Islands and Micronesia both abstained. Last year's tally for the symbolic measure was almost identical, 186-2, with three abstentions. In other words, nearly the entire world disagrees with the embargo against Cuba by the USA. One day this section of the guide will no longer be necessary and US citizens will be able to set sail for this great cruising destination and business activities will be normalized between the two nations.

THE BASICS

WATER, FOOD AND FUEL IN CUBA

Cuba is not the best place to provision a cruising boat. While you will not go hungry in Cuba, you will not find well stocked supermarkets that have everything you need and want. It is best to plan in advance and stock your larder with all of your favorite things before you come to Cuba. Fresh fish is usually available as are fresh bread, fruits, vegetables and eggs in most ports although the variety can be limited at times.

WATER is also readily available in most ports on the mainland. Fuel is available at major ports; many times you will have to jerry jug it. While the price is reasonable, you may be wise to filter it before it enters your tanks.

PROPANE gas (*gas licuado* pronounced gas-lee-quad-O) refills are provided as part of a Cuban national's monthly ration and are at times difficult to obtain outside the marina. Make the request at the marina and they will handle it for you. Cuba uses US standard regulators; bring an adaptor if you use something else.

FISHING

Fishing is permitted for personal consumption, but it is illegal to catch lobster because all lobster catches belong to the government. Fishermen are not allowed to sell it privately. If, during lobster season, one or two find their way to your boat, I do not think you will be prosecuted but you are still breaking the law. In June and July, it is closed season for lobster and they are strictly off limits as the females are laying their eggs.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PHONE CARDS

There are plenty of public phones in most reasonable size towns. International calls can be made only using phone cards and the calls can be expensive; about \$2.50 US per minute. If you buy a phone card in the street in Cuban Pesos (NMs), they are only good for in-country calls. You must buy phone cards in CUCs to get the international call type.

INTERNET is not always easy to find and when you do find it, it can be really slow. You can find internet access at hotels at fees ranging from \$6.00 to \$12.00CUC per hour.

Cuba plans to install internet/WiFi connections in all marinas in the near future due to an underwater cable now in place from Venezuela; and in partnership with the Chinese, Venezuela has launched a satellite.

You can use international faxes for fast mail delivery or the Cuban mail system which is reliable but slow. You can also use DHL, the only courier service that operates in the country. All post offices offer DHL service.

TRANSPORTATION

Public buses run infrequently and tend to be crowded. They are, however, VERY CHEAP and use LOCAL CURRENCY. They are really designed for Cubans and a strict driver could deny you access. A more comfortable and faster alternative are the *maquinas* (pronounced MA-KEEN-OZ). They are privately owned and take fixed routes. You can stop them anywhere along the road by waving at any vintage car with a TAXI sticker on the windshield. The fare inside the town is between 10 and 20 pesos, local currency. Foreigners are sometimes asked to pay a higher fare or to pay in CUCs.

You can also rent a car at most hotels and resorts and around marinas. About \$75.00 US per day. While most roads are in good condition, the sign posts are, of course, in Spanish.

You can also hire a “guide” to drive you; many, if not most, are multi-lingual.

CREDIT CARDS AND CUC VS. CUP

Credit cards that are processed through American banks are not acceptable and will not be honored. In fact it is a very good idea to bring a reasonable amount of cash. Most currencies are accepted and can be changed into Cuban money. The best cash to bring includes Euros, Pounds Sterling or Canadian dollars. You will pay a tax of 20% to convert American dollars. The CUC (Cuban Convertible Peso) is used by tourists. The CUP (Cuban peso or MN) is really meant for use by local Cubans and while you may obtain a little bit for small tips; it is best to stick with the CUC.

CLEARANCE PROCEDURE

It is always a good idea to have a number of CREW LISTS made up and duplicated. The list should state:

- each person's name,
- passport country of origin,
- passport number,
- title (either "captain" or "crew"; NEVER "passenger"), and
- birthdate.



When contact is established, most often officials will request the following:

- ❶ Name of boat
- ❷ Flag
- ❸ Port of registration
- ❹ Last port of call
- ❺ Port of arrival in Cuba
- ❻ Estimated time of arrival
- ❼ Type of vessel
- ❽ Color of boat
- ❾ Number of persons on board

Once you arrive you will be boarded. The process takes some time but you will find the officials very friendly. Never be impatient or complain as it is the way they do their business and you are a guest in their country. Be patient and if your patience runs out, be patient about that as well. 😊

The following people will board your boat:

HEALTH AUTHORITIES: A civilian doctor will inquire about the health condition of the people on board and will make recommendations such as using bottled water.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE: A civilian representative will check all fruit and vegetables, fresh meat and plants on board to make sure they are acceptable.

VETERINARIAN: If you cruise with a pet, you have to produce health and vaccination certificates. If acceptable, your pet will be able to go ashore.

PORT CAPTAIN: He will check the boat papers and inspect the vessel. The procedure is to bring dogs on board to sniff for drugs.

CUSTOMS: These officers come with forms to complete that allow for the collection of a small tax; \$20CUC.

IMMIGRATION: Officers will stamp a visa card, not your passport, unless you request in the alternative. The boat will pay a small entry tax; \$10CUC.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT: These officers will issue a cruising permit (*bojeo*) valid for six months for a fee of about \$20CUC.

VISAS: *Except for Canadians, who are automatically granted a three month visa, the maximum for all others is one month.* The first visa is currently priced at \$10CUC and a one month visa extension is \$25CUC per person. Extensions for a second 30 days are not granted except in exceptional circumstances; poor health or boat problems requiring repair. You can depart Cuba for 24 hours and then clear back in and start the process over.

If you plan to apply for an extension, you must go to the immigration office at an international marina at least 3 days before visa expiration. You must have purchased a stamp beforehand which can be obtained at the dock master's office. Bring the stamp with you and evidence of valid medical insurance for every person on board.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

You must have medical insurance to cruise in Cuba. Bring your proof with you unless you have an American insurance policy which is not acceptable, because the company cannot make payment to Cuba under current USA law.

Cuban authorities have an agreement with an international insurance company to provide coverage at a cost of \$25CUC per person per week.

THE DESPACHO

In Cuba, in order to proceed from one stop to the next, you must have a *Despacho* issued by the Coast Guard in the harbor you will depart from. Once you get to your destination, you show this permission or dispatch to the Coast Guard office and then obtain your next despacho to the next location. Cruisers often ask if they can dispense with all of this paperwork and simply get a *Despacho* with “puntos intermedios”, i.e., a permission that will list a number of stops and allow you to visit them without having to check back in. The answer is NO. The Cuban Coast

Guard guards the coast of Cuba and they are interested in knowing where you are and where you are going at all times; both for your safety as well as the safety of the country.

Even though the *Despacho* is not issued with intermediate stops, it is good practice in Cuba to list all the stops you want to make from *Despacho* to *Despacho*.

Technically, you may only cruise from and to harbors that have a “marina.”

There are reasons for this including Cuba’s interest in controlling emigration and immigration. Under no conditions may a cruising boat take a Cuban citizen out of the country without express written permission. To do so without that permission is to commit a very serious crime. To even have Cuban visitors on your boat requires the permission of the local Coast Guard office. If you want to invite a Cuban friend on board, you need to request permission, which is not automatic. You apply at the marina office 24 hours prior to the visit. Failure to do so will put you outside the law.

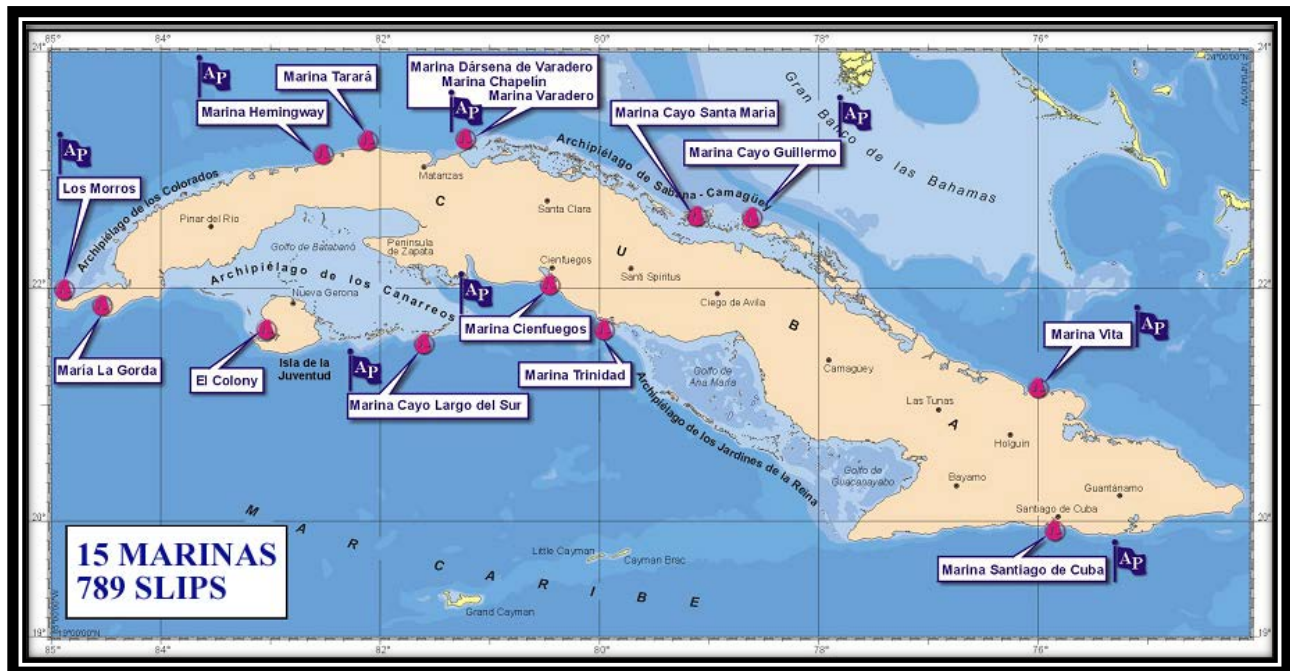


Figure 9. You may only cruise from marina to marina

What about harbors and anchorages that do not have a marina? You will find that the Cuban authorities are very decent about the need due to fatigue, mechanical breakdown and heavy weather for a boat to stop along the way in an anchorage that

does not have a marina. However, if you do so, it is always best to seek out the Coast Guard office in that anchorage and present yourself and your paperwork.

Your paperwork should include a *despacho* from the harbor you sailed from, a valid passport for each person aboard, as well as copies of your crew's list (which should contain all relevant information about each person on board); a copy of which you can leave behind, a practice that is always appreciated.

The cays are a different matter altogether, and cruising boats cruise through them without the need to solicit a new *despacho*; however, if you are approached by the Cuban Coast Guard your paperwork must be in order, and a copy of the crew's list is, again, always appreciated.

NOTE: Cruisers cannot go ashore in most ports in Cuba unless those ports have marinas where you can check in. In the cays you can pretty much wander around as you please but if you approach a settlement you will come under close scrutiny. Ironically, land based visitors can travel and go just about anywhere they like in the country; the difference being that it's unlikely a tourist arriving Cuba by air will leave with a Cuban hidden in his baggage.

FIREARMS, DRUGS, ETC.

All firearms must be declared on arrival including flares and flare guns. They will be taken into custody until the vessel departs the marina.

Illegal drugs and pornographic material are prohibited and may not be brought into the country.

WEATHER

Cuban weather is typically Caribbean, but its make up is northern Caribbean. The rainy season is May through October and the dry season from November through April.

The prevailing winds from November through April are trade winds from the northeast. They have a pronounced northeast set early in the trade wind season, are stronger as well during that time, and are referred to as the Christmas Winds. However, the wind is not constant during the early part of the trade wind season; there can be periods when it does not blow at all and then other periods when it “blows like stink!”

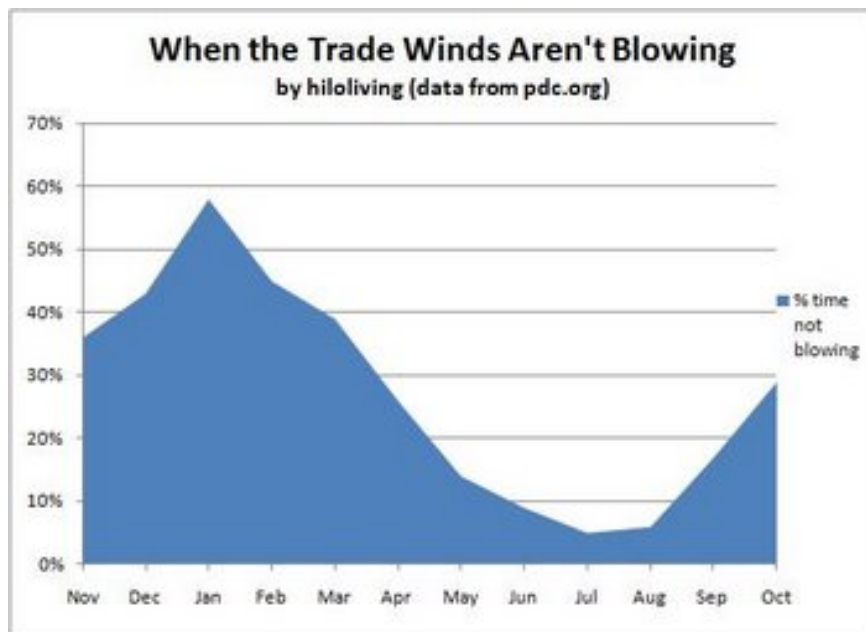


Figure 10. Profile of trade wind inactivity

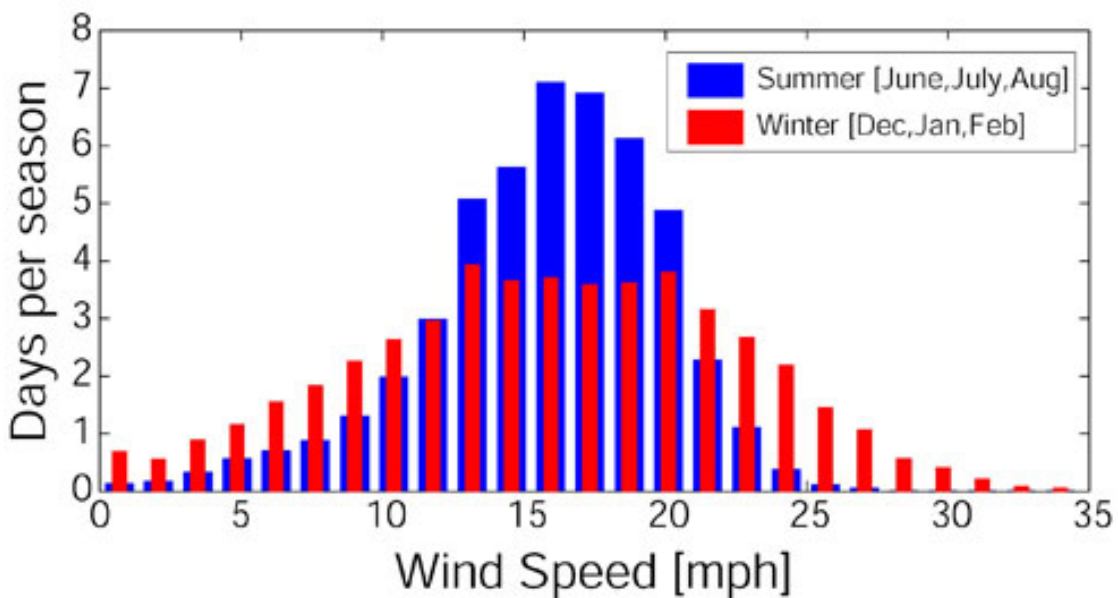


Figure 11. Relative wind speed, summer to winter

The two charts above demonstrate that there are periods during the dry season when the trade wind does not blow more than 40 to 50% of the time, while in the wet season it can blow as much as 90% of the time. The wind is not only more constant during the wet season but as the second illustration indicates, it is also stronger on average in velocity.

During the dry season, northers should not be confused with the trade winds; they are a different phenomenon. Trade winds are an easterly flow of wind. Early in the season they have a northerly component and as the season grows older, they move towards the south to become southeasterly; usually around the summer solstice. Northers are cold fronts that come south from as far away as Canada.

A Canadian high, also called a North American high, is a large, weak semi-permanent atmospheric high-pressure center produced by the low temperatures over northern Canada and covering much of North America. The high's location east of the Canadian Rockies shelters it from the relatively warm Pacific Ocean and helps it maintain its identity. The Canadian high often moves southeastward until it eventually reaches the Atlantic Ocean. If they are very strong they can extend deep into the southwestern Caribbean sea and as far east as the Virgin Islands. They can be very strong and can reach gale wind velocity. Their effect is to stall the trade winds. Since they occur with a certain frequency during the winter months, the wind "moves back and forth" as they arrive and dissipate and have been likened to the movement of a cat's tail by the famous author, Bruce Van Sant in his quintessential work *The Gentleman's Guide to Passages South: The Thornless Path to Windward*. In fact he uses them to go east by following them after they pass while the Trade Winds are stalled.

The rainy season coincides roughly with the hurricane season. Because Cuba is so long and large it does get hit by hurricanes and in particular those that pass along the south side of the Greater Antilles. This particular hurricane path is the one most dangerous for Cuba.

The "typical storm track" chart below portrays a typical south-coast-of-the-Greater-Antilles track. Normally such a track will hit the western part of the Dominican Republic, the southern part of Haiti and the largest part of Cuba on its way to Florida.

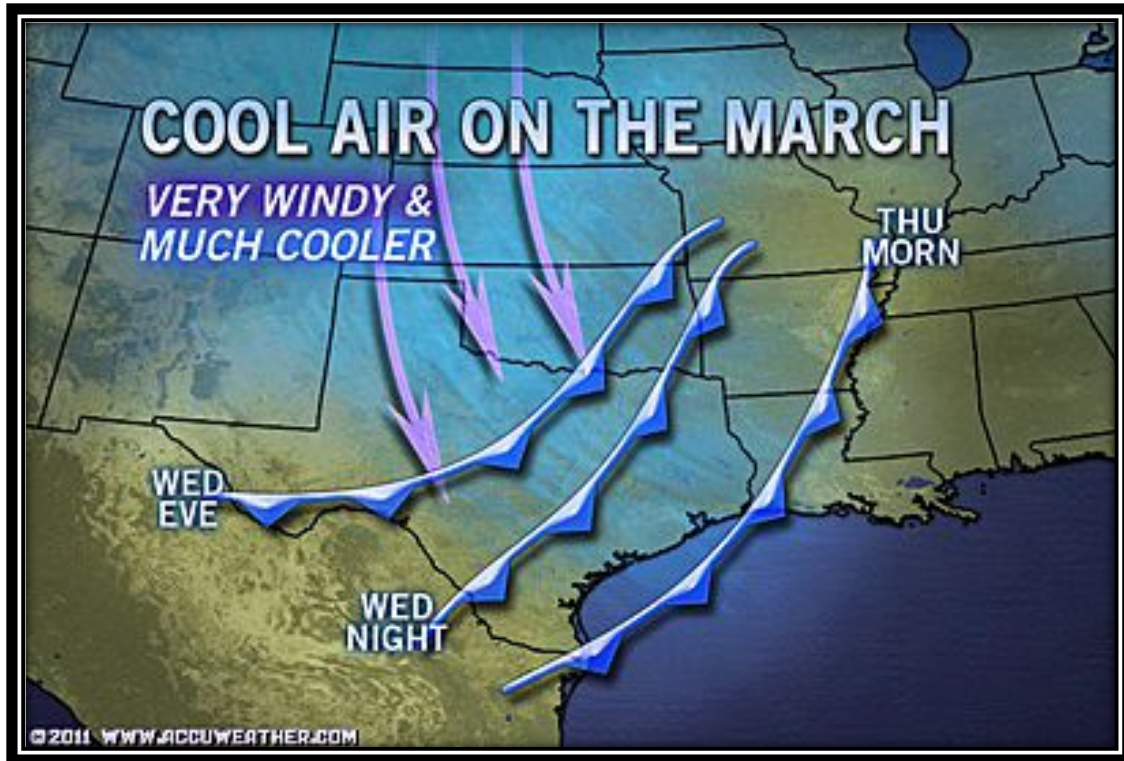


Figure 12. The reach of a Canadian (North American) high

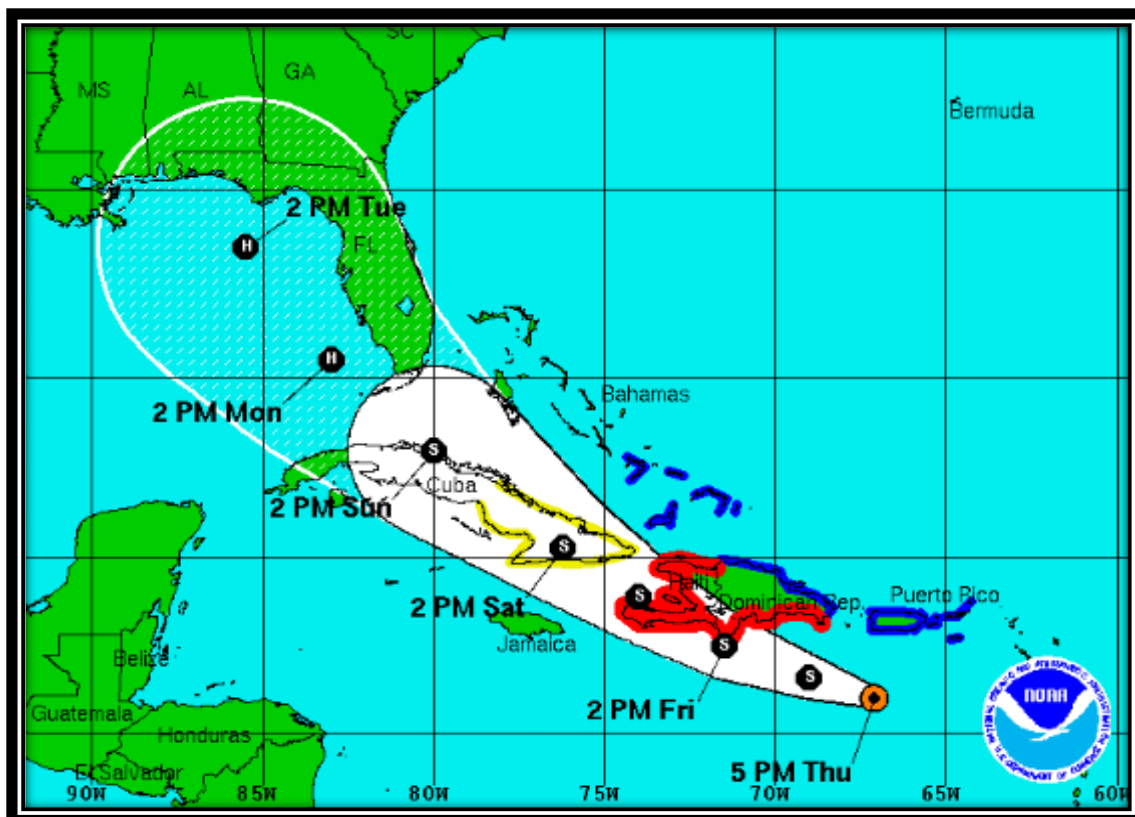


Figure 13. Typical storm track with a south-coast-of-the-Greater-Antilles start



Sometimes northers can be strong and cold and cause grey skies and rain

The next chart demonstrates during the height of hurricane season in September where the most likely tracks will be for hurricanes and tropical storms.

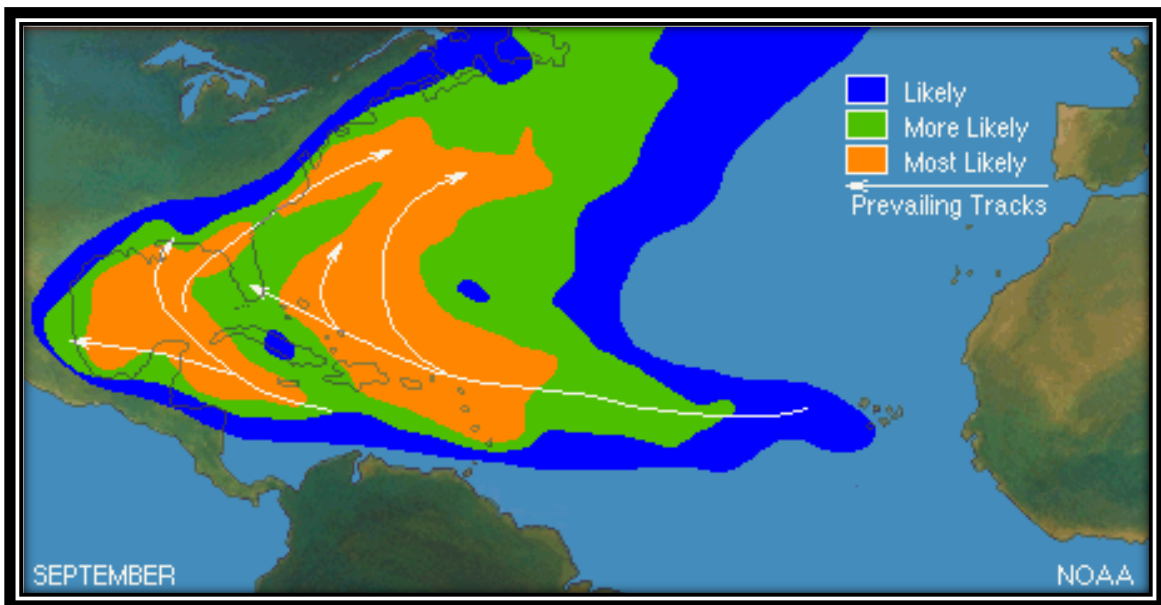


Figure 14. Likely paths of hurricanes and tropical storms during September

The following is a list of hurricanes and major storms that have hit Cuba in recent years (www.cubahurricanes.org).

HURRICANE HISTORY: CUBA	
2012	Hurricane Sandy Tropical Storm Isaac
2008	Hurricane Paloma Hurricane Ike Hurricane Gustave Tropical Storm Fay
2006	Hurricane Ernesto
2005	Hurricane Katrina Hurricane Dennis Hurricane Wilma Hurricane Rita
2004	Hurricane Ivan Hurricane Charley
2002	Hurricane Lili Hurricane Isidore
2001	Hurricane Michelle
1998	Hurricane Georges
1991	Hurricane Elena
1979	Hurricane Frederic Hurricane David
1975	Hurricane Eloise
1970	Hurricane Celia
1966	Hurricane Inez
1964	Hurricane Hilda
1963	Hurricane Flora
1960	Hurricane Donna

Figure 15. Hurricane History: Cuba

Cuban hurricane preparedness is excellent; way above par for the Caribbean. However this cruising area should be avoided during hurricane season. It is best in the Caribbean to be south of latitude **12° N** during storm season, July 1 through October 31. Keep in mind that hurricanes do not pay heed to dates and they can occur before and after the dates listed above, although that is highly unlikely.

CHARTS

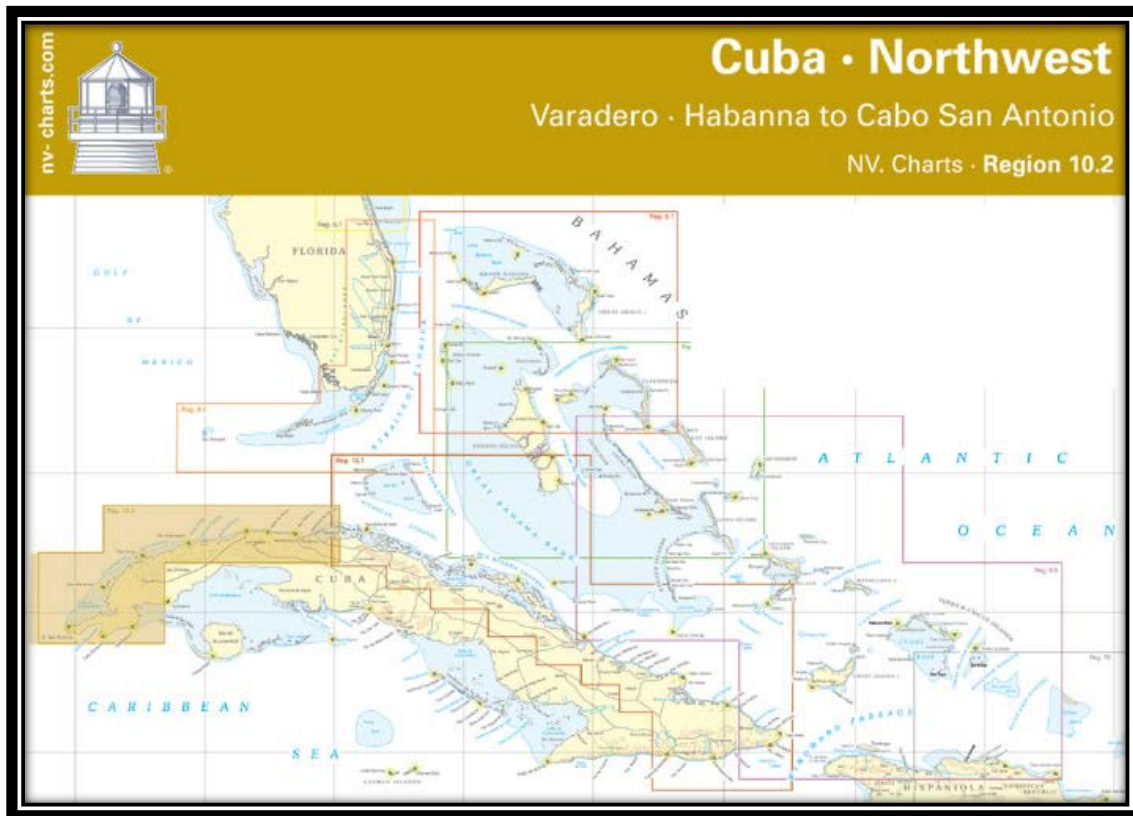


Figure 16. Sample Cuba Region (Northwest) Chart

This question comes up frequently and the answer is always the same. Many charts have errors and are not up to date as well. Nighttime entrances into harbors and anchorages should be avoided and using a chart plotter like a video game to navigate through Cuba, or anywhere else, would be irresponsible. Having said that, the prevailing opinion is that the best charts for Cuba are the paper charts sold as a set of seven books, published by Edimar, a division of the Instituto Hidrografico de Cuba (ICH), also known as GeoCuba.

While all areas require eyeball navigation and enough experience to discern what the varying colors of water means, it should be noted that on the north shore of Cuba, especially during a norther, entering a harbor in following seas can be extremely difficult and dangerous.

Entering a harbor or anchorage on the north shore of Cuba during a norther puts the wind and seas behind you and it is difficult to see the channel and the markers. Additionally, at times you will be pushed sideways and can end up hitting a reef. Be extremely careful making port during a norther, on the north shore of Cuba.

MOUNTAIN RANGES AND KATABATIC WINDS

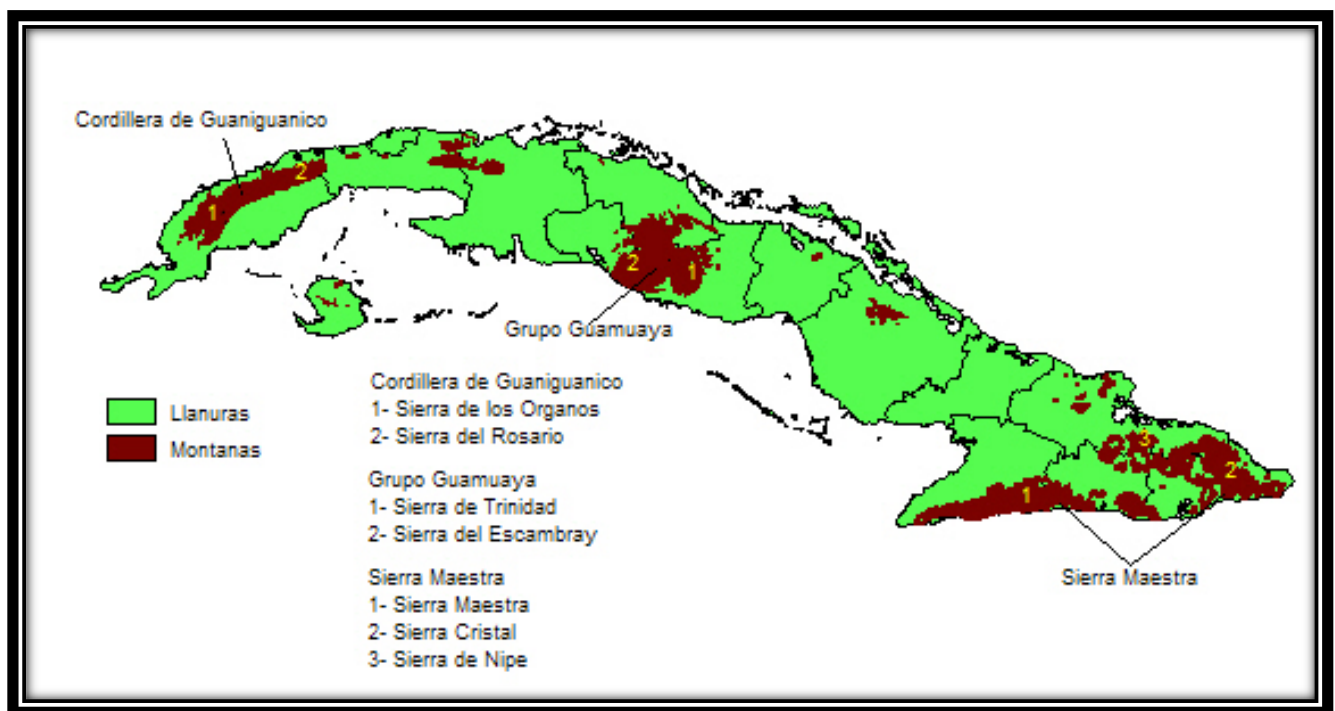


Figure 17. Mountain ranges in Cuba

Of the 15 highest peaks in the entire Caribbean, Cuba has 3. They are: Pico Real de Turquino at 6,476 ft., Gran Piedra at 4,098 ft., and Pico San Juan at 3,740 ft. They rank #7, #12 and #15. The mountain ranges and the height of the mountains create katabatic winds.

The word “katabatic” is from the Greek word *katabatikos* meaning "going downhill”. The air is heavier because it is cold. As the air at higher elevations cools after sunset, the wind literally slides down the mountain side. It can create an offshore breeze that stalls the trade winds and one that can also be used to sail

eastward. Aside from enjoying the beauty of the mountains, this makes cruising Cuba from west to east possible inshore when the trade winds have not blown too hard during the day.

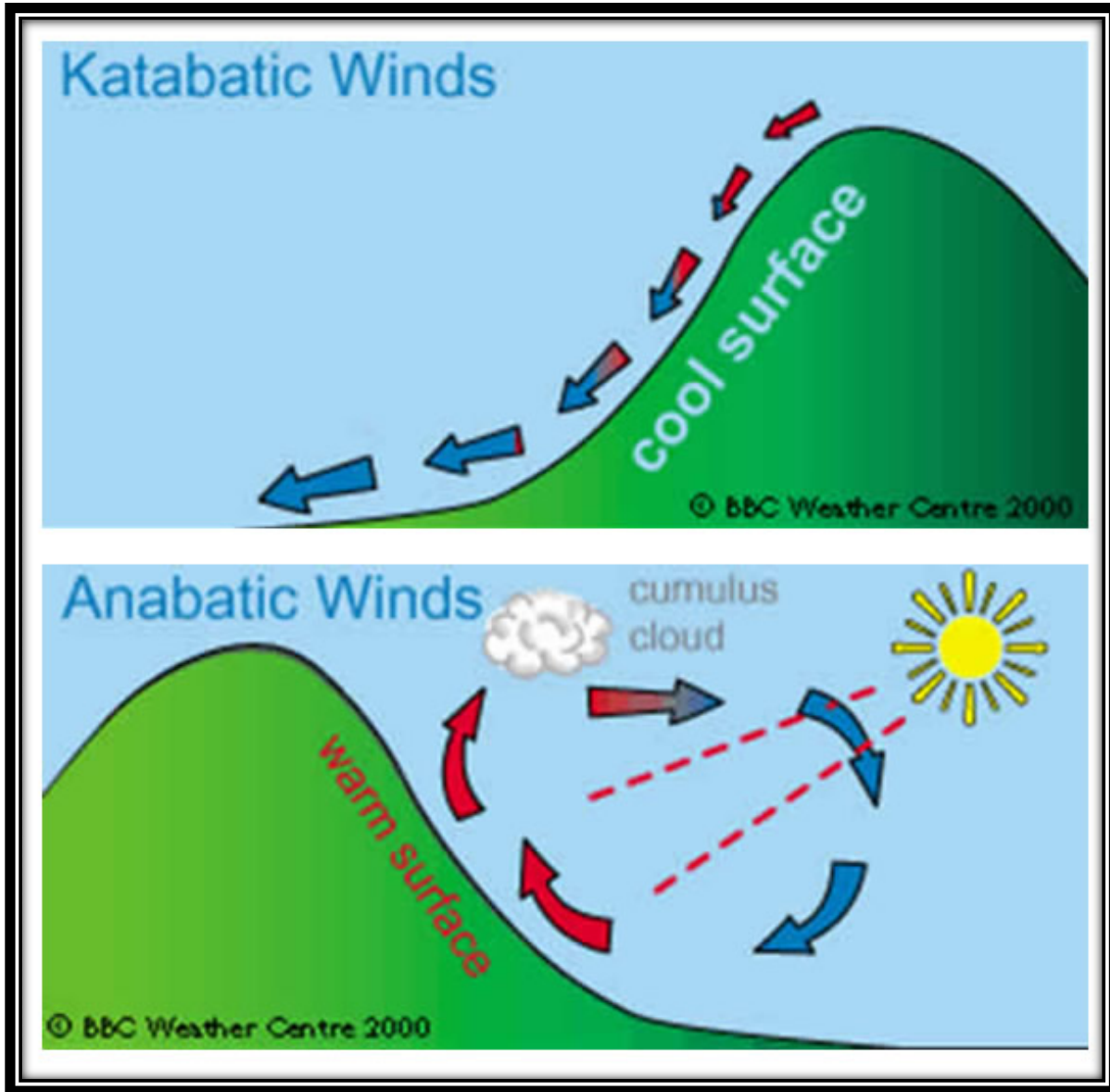


Figure 18. The katabatic/anabatic wind engine

PREFACE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

When you cruise through Cuba it is good to remember, as it is in any country you visit, that you are a guest and should comport yourself properly. It is said that good manners dictate that one should always avoid discussions of politics and religion when a guest in someone's home.

Cuba has a long and rich history that can be quite complicated. To share your strongly held feelings about someone else's country is simply bad manners and should be avoided.

For those that insist on doing it, most times you will find Cubans to be hospitable and patient. If you say something untoward, they may very well treat you like "a fool who fortunately was born with a fool's face".

The history and culture of an area are always of value to the cruising boat and this is especially true in the case of Cuba. What Cubans believe and think will affect your relationships with them as you cruise through the country. To understand Cuba is to understand something that can be very complex. Additionally most people who "understand Cuba" understand it from their own cultural viewpoint. As a result everyone has an opinion. However, opinions are not necessarily facts and there are certain facts regarding Cuba that cannot be overlooked.

During the time of European colonial exploration of the "new world", the Spanish colonized Cuba. In the process most Native Americans died due to either extreme brutality or diseases for which they had no defense.

The triangle trade brought many slaves to the Caribbean to work in the sugar industry. Slaves were subjected to extreme brutality and working conditions, and

many died. After slavery, waves of immigration brought in Chinese, as well as others from Asia, as indentured servants.

The United States' closest neighbor in the Caribbean is Cuba. The distances can be measured in less than 100 miles. As the United States grew and developed, it became more and more concerned with its own national security and as a result issued the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine is a policy of the United States was introduced on December 2, 1823. It stated that further efforts by European nations to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South America would be viewed as acts of aggression, requiring U.S. intervention. Many American presidents have relied on the Monroe Doctrine right through contemporary history. When the Monroe Doctrine is criticized by nations in the American hemisphere, it is because it allows for US intervention in their countries without their consent.

WHO IS JOSE MARTI AND WHY IS HIS STATUE IN CENTRAL PARK IN NEW YORK CITY?

Jose Martí campaigned for the liberation of Cuba from Spain and was imprisoned by Spanish authorities in 1868. Fleeing to New York in 1880, he continued to advocate for Cuban freedom while in exile and organized the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892. Martí returned to Cuba in 1895, at the beginning of Cuba's successful fight for independence. Although the statue was completed in 1959, the political climate between pro- and anti-Castro elements in New York necessitated the delay of the monument's unveiling until 1965.

What makes Martí larger than life is not only that he was a great leader in Cuba's fight for independence, although that certainly is significant in itself, but also because of his deeply held beliefs about the value of life and respect for his fellow man. He wrote extensively in the philosophical and political vein and his writings and speeches were very much founded on his statement "*Con Todos, y para el Bien de Todos.*" "With all and for the good of all".



Jose Marti, Cuban patriot, in New York City

Sculptor Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington (1876–1973) created this large bronze equestrian statue depicting the Cuban patriot and author José Martí (-1853–1895). Her last major work, Hyatt Huntington executed this piece at age 82, and presented the statue as a gift to the Cuban government for presentation to the people of New York City.

Martí dedicated his life to the cause of Cuban independence. To him, it was unnatural that Cuba be controlled and oppressed by the Spanish government, when it had its own unique identity and culture. On February 23, 1895, mounting discontent culminated in a resumption of the Cuban revolution, under the leadership of Jose Marti. Marti died in the cause leading a charge as remembered in the sculpture of Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington. One of Marti's great poems gives us an insight to his views about relationships:

“I CULTIVATE A WHITE ROSE
IN JULY AS IN JANUARY
FOR THE SINCERE FRIEND
WHO GIVES ME HIS HAND FRANKLY
AND FOR THE CRUEL PERSON WHO TEARS
OUT THE HEART WITH WHICH I LIVE,
I CULTIVATE NEITHER NETTLES NOR THORNS
I CULTIVATE A WHITE ROSE”

Jose Marti

The truth is that the U.S. always had an interest in Cuba. This was clearly expressed by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to U.S. President James Monroe in October of 1823. He said “I candidly confess that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States. The control which, with Florida, this island would give us over the Gulf of Mexico, and the countries and Isthmus bordering on it, as well as all those whose waters flow into it, would fill up the measure of our political well-being.”

The Spanish American War has other names. Among them is the Cuban War of Independence. Cuba had been fighting for independence from Spain for many years and the moment of the entry of the U.S. into the conflict was a watershed moment.

The U.S. government intervened on behalf of the revolutionists in April 1898, precipitating the Spanish American War. The sinking of the battleship Maine in the harbor of Havana on February 15, 1898, for which Spain was blamed, was what brought the U.S. to declare war on Spain. By the terms of the treaty signed December 10, 1898, terminating the conflict, Spain relinquished sovereignty over Cuba.

An American military government ruled the island until May 20, 1902, when the Cuban republic was formally instituted. The Cuban constitution, adopted in 1901, incorporated the provisions of the Platt Amendment, U.S. legislation that established conditions for American intervention in Cuba.

The Platt Amendment of 1901 dictated the conditions for the withdrawal of United States troops remaining in Cuba at the end of the Spanish-American War and defined the terms of Cuban-U.S. relations, until it was abrogated by the 1934

Treaty of Relations. The Platt Amendment outlined the role of the U.S. in Cuba and the Caribbean. It restricted Cuba in the conduct of foreign policy and commercial relations. It established that Cuba's boundaries would not include the Isle of Pines (Isla de la Juventud) until its title could be established in a future treaty. The amendment also demanded that Cuba sell or lease lands to the United States necessary for coaling stations or the development of naval stations.





SPEAK SOFTY AND CARRY A BIG STICK

After U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt withdrew federal troops from the island in 1902, Cuba signed the Cuban-American Treaty (1903), which specified the terms of a lease of land to the United States for a coaling and naval station at Guantánamo Bay.

No one likes to be forced or controlled and this is very much the case with all of the countries of the American hemisphere.

Many in the Caribbean resent U.S. hegemony and some speak against it forcefully. At the conclusion of the Spanish American War, at the Treaty of Paris, Spain and the US negotiated the cessation of hostilities and Spain gave to the U.S. the colonies of PR, Cuba, Philippines, and Guam. Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth to this day. While Puerto Ricans have gained a great deal in their association with the United States in so many ways, if you ask them who they are, regardless of where they live, the majority will say, *Yo Soy puertorriqueño*, -- “I am Puerto Rican”. And they say it with pride!

Mohandas Ghandi once said “I beg you to accept that there is no people on Earth who would not prefer their own bad government to the good government of an alien country.”

In the ensuing years a number of “presidents” ruled over Cuba; the last of whom, prior to the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro, was Fulgencio Batista. Batista’s last rise to power was based on a military coup. His record regarding human rights was dismal and at the end of his time in power he used secret police to carry out wide-scale violence, torture and public executions; ultimately killing thousands. During his time in office, the rich lived very well and the poor lived in abject poverty. This led to widescale discontent and Batista was forced to flee. He fled to the Dominican Republic with his family and the large fortune that he had amassed while in power.

In 1959 Fidel Castro came to power and established a new Cuban government. Fidel Castro is well educated and said to be bright of mind. He believed deeply, along with Che Guevara and others that were involved in the revolution, with the sentiments of Jose Marti.

What happened subsequently between Cuba and the United States is a lesson in bad relations between neighbors. It is best exemplified in many ways by the American folk story of the dispute between the Hatfields and the McCoys. That dispute went on for generations and was filled with anger, distrust and bad relations. Like the Hatfield and McCoy story, in the Cuba and United States story, everyone on all sides has valid points, with the net result that at this point no one seems to be able to find a solution. What has set in are deep seated bad feelings exacerbated by politics.

President Castro says that history will absolve him. He certainly can point to education and literacy which in Cuba are the best in the Caribbean and exceed that of many Western countries including the United States. In addition he can also point to medicine, and the training of doctors which is among the best in the world. According to the World Bank, life expectancy in Cuba has risen from an average 64 years of age in 1960 to an average of almost 80 in 2011, despite all the hardships Cubans endure. This is on par with most developed countries and beyond most levels in the Caribbean.

Critics say that the price the Cuban population has paid for such gains has been loss of personal freedom.

The United States has said that they cannot accept danger so close to American shores and has put Cuba on the list of countries that harbor terrorists. The situation went from yellow to red during the Cuban missile crisis which sent the USA to a level of fear unparalleled in its history.

There is a third party to the dispute; the Cubans who live in the United States. They would like to be reunited with their families and also would like to be recompensed for the property and businesses that they lost during the revolution.

The failure of this relationship is a monumental tragedy for all; the possibilities that have been lost in the interest of both countries are incalculable. The US has cut off its nose to spite its face and Cuba has come to odds with the largest and most powerful country in the world for more than 50 years.

One day, sometime in the future, all of this will change and the two countries will embrace each other and become best of friends. Cuba is close to the United States and Cubans have a long association with the United States. It is said that in the United States baseball is the national sport; in Cuba it is a passion.



THE DAY WILL COME

The Cuban American poet Virgil Suarez writes to Nancy, who is in Cuba, the following poem. Suarez is both poet and novelist; and a professor of English at Florida State University. He writes:

FOR NANCY MOREJON

*To tell the truth,
I used to think the word
meant some kind of fungus*

*like the mold that attacks bread
something that survives a hostile
environment, no matter.*

*You say that the word
Cannot embrace those Cubans
Who left the island to seek*

*Exile elsewhere, many in cold
Places, that the word only applies
To the cruel punishment inflicted*

*On African slaves. Okay, But
I have Cubans everywhere,
Scattered from Tierra del Fuego*

*To Iceland. I have seen the ones
perishing in snow, these wounded
fish and when I look into their eyes*

*Nancy, like when I look into yours
I see the possibility of reconciliation
not the fixed gaze of hatred, but like mold*

*We have taken root where exile threw
us, like this persistent and determined
growth. We will prevail. We hang on.*

*The longing in our faces cannot end
until both shores unite, yours and mine
the sting of these subtle definitions.*

Virgil Suarez

WHY VISIT CUBA ~ SHOULD I MAKE THE TRIP?

For cruising boats, Cuba is a paradise. It is the safest country in the Caribbean beyond any measure. While petty theft is always possible anywhere you go, there is no record to date of muggings and violence against cruising boats.

Additionally, Cuba is large and can be cruised indefinitely. There are many, many interesting harbors and anchorages. The offshore cays are themselves cruising gems and you can anchor in water that is pristine; swim, sun and eat fresh fish and lobster.

Furthermore, Cuba is not an expensive date. Local products are relatively inexpensive and most other items, such as fuel, are moderately priced.

The mystique of Cuba is a big factor in itself. Cubans are vivacious and love music and dance, family and life. To be with Cubans is to celebrate life; not what was in the past or what may be in the future, but in the present. For without doubt Cubans are experts at living in the present. If you want to get rid of some anxiety, go to Cuba; drink some rum, smoke a good cigar and dance until the sun comes up.

Few people have explained it better than Tom Miller in his 1992 book, *Trading with the Enemy: A Yankee Travels Through Castro's Cuba*. He said

“I went to Cuba because I was curious; because no one agrees on its strengths; because I'd read so much about it; because it is forbidden; because it's heartbreakingly lovely; because so many people have championed it while so many others have abandoned it; because Cubans make great music and aromatic cigars; because they've thumbed their noses at their former patron for more than three decades; because I'd grown weary of writing about Latin American “democracies” where forlorn illiterate campesinas sit on city street corners selling combs, nail clippers, and undervalued handicrafts while their malnourished barefoot youngsters turn their palms up and say “gimme” instead of learning how to hold a pencil or read a sentence; because of its rich literary tradition;

because my favorite players on the Washington Senators in the 1950s were Cuban; because I'm an incurable romantic; because we still have a navy base there; because Cuban women are astute and alluring; because in the last five hundred years of travel writing few cities in the world have been so effusively praised as Havana; because Teddy Roosevelt led the charge up San Juan Hill; because I liked Our Man in Havana and The Old Man and the Sea; because I got a kick out of Desi Arnaz; because I was distrustful of Cuba's bashers and its cheerleaders; because I liked the twinkle in Fidel's eyes; because I'd never been to a Communist country; because I wanted to learn to rumba; because Columbus landed there; because it has hundreds of miles of unspoiled beaches; because of its mystique."

CUBAN CULTURE ~ AJIACO STEW

The culture of the Caribbean is a very interesting topic because it has developed its own culture out of a number of different "ingredients" and the result is the same --but different -- for each country. It is the same for each country in that they were originally settled by Native Americans. Those populations were decimated either by genocide when the European countries colonized the area or by infectious diseases that were brought by the Europeans to which the indigenous population had no defense.

According to most anthropologists the population estimates range from a low of 8.4 million to a high of 112.5



million people who were living in the Americas in 1492. (See Figure 19.)

Essentially when the Europeans came in discovery, they found a land that was already occupied. Because they had gunpowder and because they defined the local populations as savages, what happened subsequently is so foul, so completely beyond imagination, that no book or description could adequately describe it. From the north of Canada to the tip of South America, Native Americans were, and in some cases still are, being exterminated. Unfortunately for the Native Americans, with the arrival of Christians would come intolerance for their beliefs.

Hatuey, a Taíno cacique (chief), had escaped in canoes with about four hundred men, women and children from Hispaniola to Cuba. He wanted to warn the Cuban Taino about what to expect from the Spaniards. He explained the need to join against their common enemy, the white men who had inflicted so much suffering on his people.

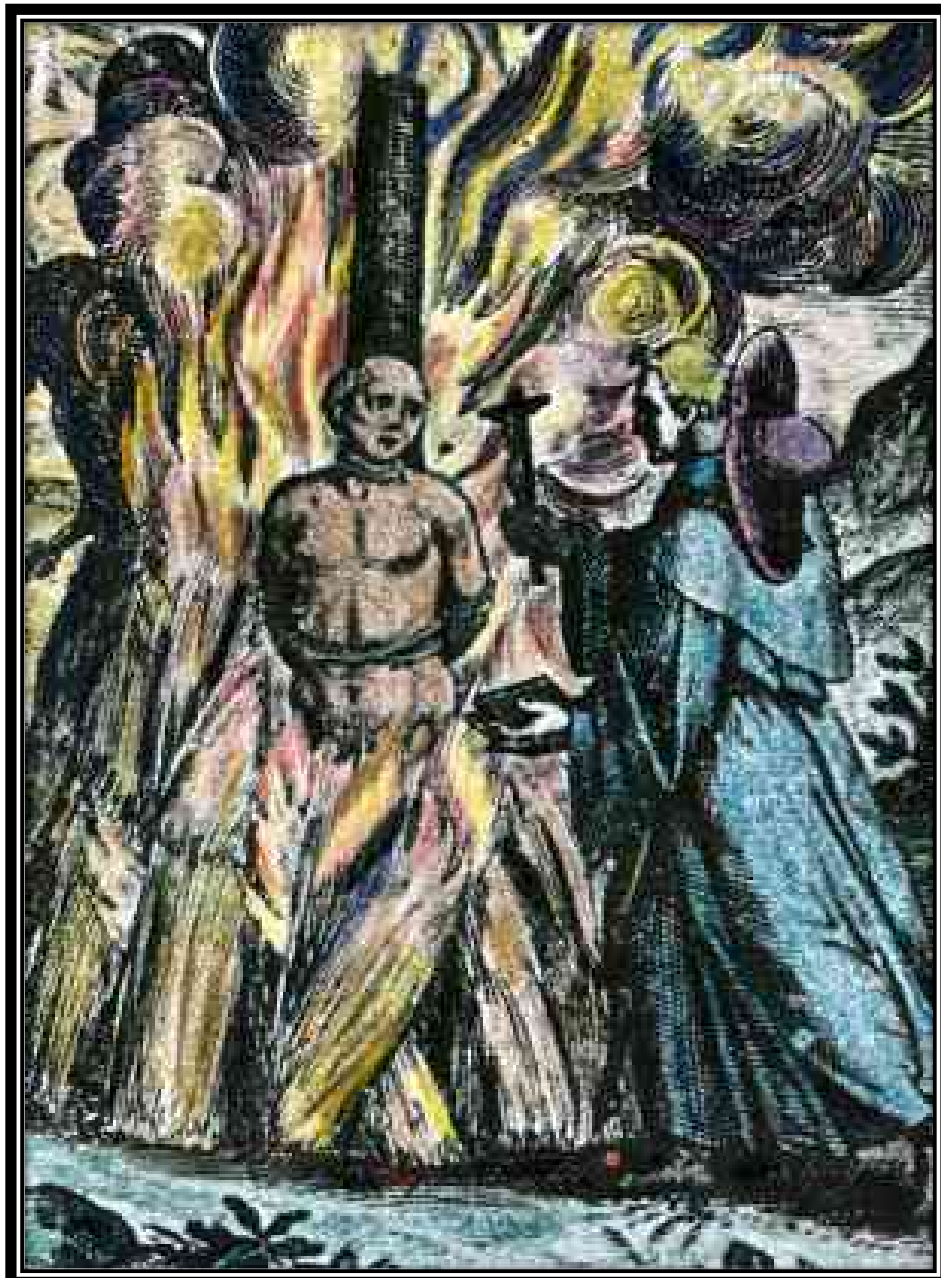
As later recorded by Spanish priest Bartolomé de las Casas, Hatuey showed the Cubans a basket full of gold and jewels. "Here is the God the Spaniards worship," he said, "for these they fight and kill; for these they persecute us and that is why we have to throw them into the sea...."

The Spaniards finally succeeded in capturing him and as "they were tying Hatuey to the stake, a Franciscan friar urged him to take Jesus to his heart so that his soul might go to heaven, rather than descend into hell. Hatuey replied that if heaven was where the Christians went, he would rather go to hell."

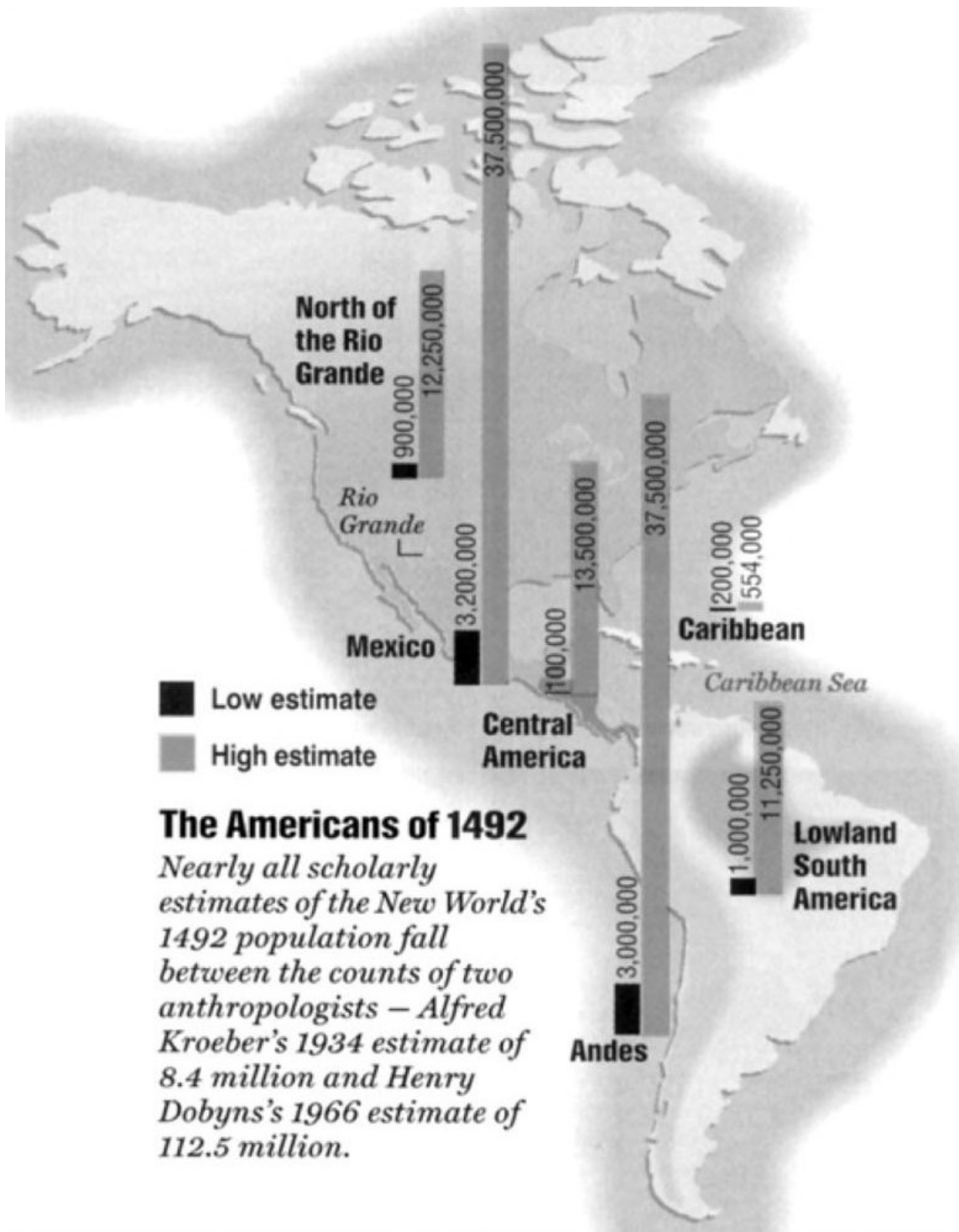


Spanish style courtyard

The Native Americans were replaced by various European populations that came from Spain, Great Britain, Portugal, Holland, France and even Denmark. The displacement and replacement of the indigenous population took place over a comparatively short time. As the native population collapsed, in order to work the land and in particular conduct certain industries such as the sugar industry, the European powers brought in over 10,000,000 West Africans as slaves in what is known as the triangle trade. Of this number about 5,000,000 were settled in the Caribbean.



Hatuey at the stake



GRAPHIC BY STEPHEN ROUNTREE—USN&WR

Sources: American Anthropologist, Current Anthropology

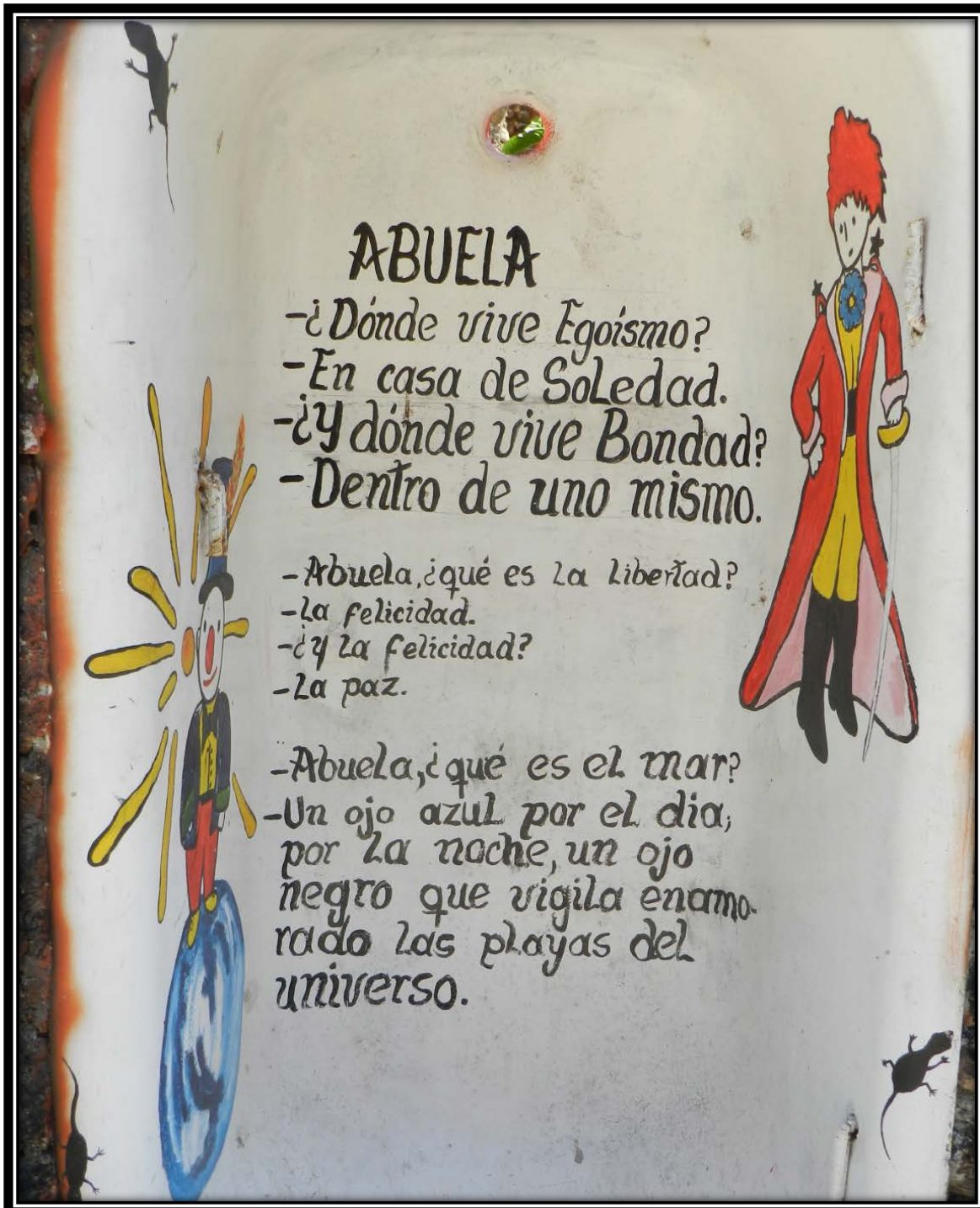
Figure 19. 1492 population estimates across the Americas

Put all of these cultures together, each with their unique attributes, and you have what anthropologist Fernando Ortiz characterized in the case of Cuba as an AJIACO. Ajiaco is a rich stew consisting of a large variety of ingredients. The stew becomes thicker and richer as the extensive number of ingredients is added. Cultural factors include foods, different religions, music and even the way people walk and talk. Syncretism is the combining of two or more different belief systems and it is the basis of Cuban art. Santeria is the fusion of West African religion with Catholicism and focuses heavily on saint worship which is where the word Santeria comes from; Spanish *Santo* meaning saint.

In Havana you can go to CALLEJON DE HALLEL, a street where a number of artists live and paint. They paint on canvas but also on the walls of the buildings on the street. It is a very interesting place to visit. If you enter one of the studios, you will see a number of West African religions expressed in the art.

There are many sayings painted on the walls as well and they are all interesting to read. In one, a grandchild is asking his grandmother important questions about life. In the second part of their conversation, he asks "Where is Liberty?" She responds "It is in happiness." He asks "And Happiness?" And she answers "In Peace."

One of the things that makes Cuba so fascinating is this extensive cultural mixing with a result that is beyond description. I can think of few things better than listening to Cuban music while eating Cuban food on a balmy night in Havana. Suenos son Suenos (dreams are dreams) and this one is a very big and colorful dream. Cubans, no matter where they live, love family, life and FIESTA!



Questions for Grandma, and her answers: "Where is liberty?" "In happiness."
 "And happiness?" "In peace."



Afro Cuban art at CALLEJON DE HALLEL, Havana

Estimated population and distribution [edit]			
Continent or region	Country population	Afro-descendants	^[9] Black and black-mixed population
Caribbean	39,148,115	73.2%	22,715,518
Haiti	9,719,932	95%	9,233,935 + 476,277
Dominican Republic ^{[10][11]}	10,090,000	84%	1,109,900 + 7,365,700
Cuba ^[12]	11,239,363	34.9%	1,132,928 + 2,794,106
Jamaica ^[13]	2,909,714	97.4%	2,653,659 + 180,402
Puerto Rico ^[14]	3,725,789	15.7%	461,998 + 122,951
Trinidad and Tobago	1,047,366	58.0%	607,472
The Bahamas ^[15]	307,451	85.0%	209,000
Barbados	281,968	90.0%	253,771
Netherlands Antilles	225,369	85.0%	191,564
Saint Lucia	172,884	82.5%	142,629
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	118,432	85.0%	100,667
US Virgin Islands	108,210	79.7%	86,243
Grenada	110,000	91.0%	101,309
Antigua and Barbuda	78,000	94.9%	63,000
Dominica	71,293	95.7% (86.8% Black + 8.9% Mixed)	
Bermuda	66,536	61.2%	40,720
Saint Kitts and Nevis	39,619	98.0%	38,827
Cayman Islands	47,862	60.0%	28,717
British Virgin Islands	24,004	83.0%	19,923
Turks and Caicos islands ^[16]	26,000	> 90.0%	18,000

Figure 20. Afro-descendant population across the Caribbean

This table provides an insight into the distribution of African descendant populations in each country of the Caribbean. With the exception of Puerto Rico, Cuba has the lowest number of black and black mixed population; a little more than a 1/3 of the total population. Keep in mind that Cuba has over 11,000,000 people on the island. When we speak of African population in the Caribbean we refer to the Diaspora forced by the triangle trade. Diaspora comes from the Greek and it means “scattering”. Black slaves were scattered across the Caribbean. There are certain strong influences that can be seen and heard in Cuba, and West African culture is one of them.

Language in Cuba is Spanish but many Cubans are multilingual. There are many areas of Spanish overtone and in particular in architecture in the older buildings.

The Chinese in Cuba have had a difficult time as well. Starting in 1847 and continuing until slavery in Cuba was abolished in 1883, Chinese contract workers, reportedly in the hundreds of thousands, were brought in to replace and supplement African slaves in the sugar fields. They came as immigrants on eight year service agreements only to find out that when their time was up, they were caught between two worlds. It was too costly to be able to return home if they wished and the only way to stay whether they wanted to or not was to sign another indenture agreement. Chinese culture survived in ghettos and sought to find ways to reach out to the African and Spanish communities. The Chinese brought their own art and religion along with their own point of view. It was added into the stew as well and today there is a strong Chinese community in Cuba; with a beautiful Chinatown area in Havana.

The following painting is by the celebrated artist Flora Fong, whose father is Chinese and whose mother is Cuban. The title of the work is *Ocho Rojos y Uno Negro* (Eight Red and One Black). The 8 red fish represent the good things in life while the black fish reminds us that there is always something that can offset the good. The number 8 in Chinese is considered a lucky number. Fong manages to work Caribbean colors into the painting and is a master at displaying the Chinese point of view in Cuban Culture.



Ocho Rojos y Uno Negro by Flora Fong



CAPITOL DOME IN HAVANA

The culture of the United States also finds its way into the daily life of Cubans. Many Cubans have family living stateside. In addition, Cubans have always held a strong fascination for the United States and vice versa. The reason the Cuban flag is flying over the capitol dome is because this capitol dome is located in Havana. El Capitolio, or National Capitol Building, was the seat of government in Cuba until after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and is now home to the Cuban Academy of Sciences. It shares many resemblances with the Capitol building of the United States.



Look up from the inside of the capitol dome in Havana and compare it to the one in the United States.

The United States played a big part in the War of Independence that Cuba fought with Spain; so big a part that in fact to this day, it is normally referred to as the Spanish American War rather than the Cuban War of Independence. The United States occupied Cuba after the war until 1902 when they withdrew. However, the Platt Amendment of 1901 and subsequent, as previously discussed, allowed unilateral U.S. involvement in Cuban affairs and mandated negotiation for military bases on the island including Guantánamo Bay Naval Base.

The seeds of dissatisfaction were as though planted during this time and Cuba's relationship with the United States would remain strained over what amounted to being strong armed. Batista was supported by the United States and was president just prior to the revolution in 1959. He can be seen as the culmination of many years of murder, opportunism and corruption supported by the United States Government in their interest.

Once Fidel Castro took over Cuba there could be no going back; the two nations grew ever more hostile to each other. The hostilities reached the high note during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 which brought the world to the doorstep of nuclear war.

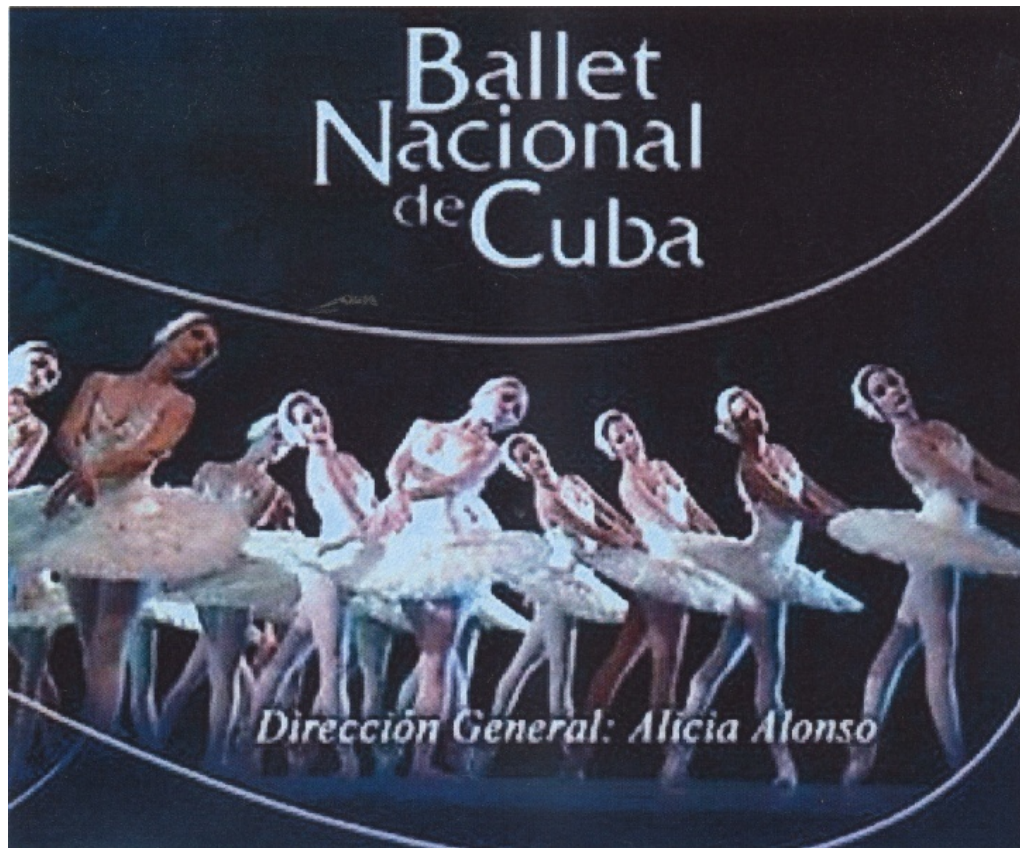
The United States embargo against Cuba has been the product of a failed relationship between two close neighbors for over 50 years. The inability of political process to reach a solution in everyone's interest is noteworthy.

The American author, William Blum wrote in 2007: "One must first understand the following: The United States is to the Cuban government like al Qaeda is to Washington, only much more powerful and much closer. Since the Cuban revolution, the United States and anti-Castro Cuban exiles in the United States have inflicted upon Cuba greater damage and greater loss of life than what happened in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001."

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson (former chief of staff to the US Secretary of State Colin Powell) on US policy toward Cuba said in 2006 "It is the dumbest policy on the face of the earth. It's crazy."



It is very hard in this day and age to be a supporter of the embargo because its justification now works mostly in reverse. In the words of former Reagan Secretary of State, George Schultz, “I think our policy of sanctions against Cuba is ridiculous.” When the Hatfields and McCoys, or in this case, the Hatfields and Gonzalezs, make peace, these two close geographical neighbors will become just very close neighbors and the possibilities will be too numerous to list.



Cuban National Ballet: One of the world's leading ballet companies.

If you recall I mentioned the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz earlier in this guide. He said in 1939, that Cuban culture was like AJIACO, a rich stew. He was ever so correct and those lucky enough to cruise Cuba will get to savor it as they cruise through the cays, harbors and anchorages. It must be savored slowly and not rushed if it is to be understood and enjoyed. Cuban culture is varied and complicated and should not be underestimated in any way. Let it unfold, like a ballet.

Get out and meet the people. Eat in the local restaurants and walk the streets. This will give you a good idea of Cuban life. At the same time, visit the museums and try to see a ballet, which is extraordinary in every way. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. Be sure to take a good street guidebook to Havana and Cuba with you.



LUNCH!

Whether you eat in the city or in the country, you will find the food alive with color and taste. The large meal in Cuba is the midday meal~*Almuerzo*.



In a few short years, they will be leading the way



The third Sunday in July is when “Children’s Day” is celebrated in Cuba. Cubans hold children in high esteem and invest heavily in their education.



Vintage postcard available at the Newark Museum during the exhibition “Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul” (2011)



Cuban slave ship *La Amistad*. 1997 U.S. replica sails into Havana harbor March 25, 2010. So many slaves saw Morro Castle at the port side entrance to Havana Harbor on their arrival in infamous slave ships such as *Tecora*.



Vintage postcard available at the Newark Museum during the exhibition "Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul" (2011)

LA PROVINCIA DE LA HABANA



If you are going to cruise to Cuba, the likelihood is that you are going to visit Havana, Cuba's capital. Whether you use the English spelling with the V or the Spanish spelling with the B, the city is the same.

Havana is on the sea; it is bordered by the Straits of Florida and the Old Bahama Channel at the west end. Before you visit Havana, find a guide book that you like and read it carefully. Havana is a major metropolis and a city with a great deal to offer. If you are going to invest your time and your money, you want to be sure to see and experience those parts of Havana that interest you.



There is culture in Cuba and it is interesting and diverse. Havana is the center hub of that culture and depending on your interests, you could spend a considerable amount of time in this grand city.



You do not want to miss CALLE OBISPO. It is filled with people, restaurants, shops and activity of all types. The top of the street is where the famous La Floridita bar is located; one of Hemingway's favorite haunts.



Not far away is La Bodeguita Del Medio, another of Hemingway's favorites. It is both a bar and a really wonderful restaurant.



LA BODEGUITA DEL MEDIO

Aside from its color and its history, you can order traditional Cuban food from an exceptional menu -- Black beans, Ropa Vieja (stewed ripped beef), plantains, and so much of what constitutes the Cuban menu. And if you have only a drink here, you will not be disappointed.

Man does not live by bread alone and you really do need to walk around Havana. One of the things that will strike you over and over again is the architecture; most of it from another time.

The architectural styles vary and speak of different epochs.



EL CAPITOLIO



Cathedral of St Cristóbal of Habana

The Cathedral of St Cristóbal of Habana is located in the beautiful square “Plaza de la Catedral”. It is the greatest example of the so-called “Cuban baroque style”.



EL CAPITOLIO ~ HAVANA, CUBA

EL CALLEJON DE HAMEL

There is a great deal of art to see while you are in Cuba and it covers a broad spectrum of tastes and feelings. For example, there is a place, a kind of secret place called EL CALLEJON DE HAMEL, briefly discussed earlier but worthy of so much more. It is an urban block of buildings where artists live and make art; working to define the influence of West Africa in Cuba culture, as interpreted through this Afro-Cuban art project. It is one of the top draws in Havana.

Easy to find and full of mystery. Enjoy yourself translating the sayings on the walls.



Translated:
The child of Hamel enters and departs the narrow street and no one sees it.

The sentiment is that people without power and resources are overlooked by the world.



ARTIST AT WORK





DO NOT MISS CALLEJON DE HAMEL ~ AN EXPERIENCE!





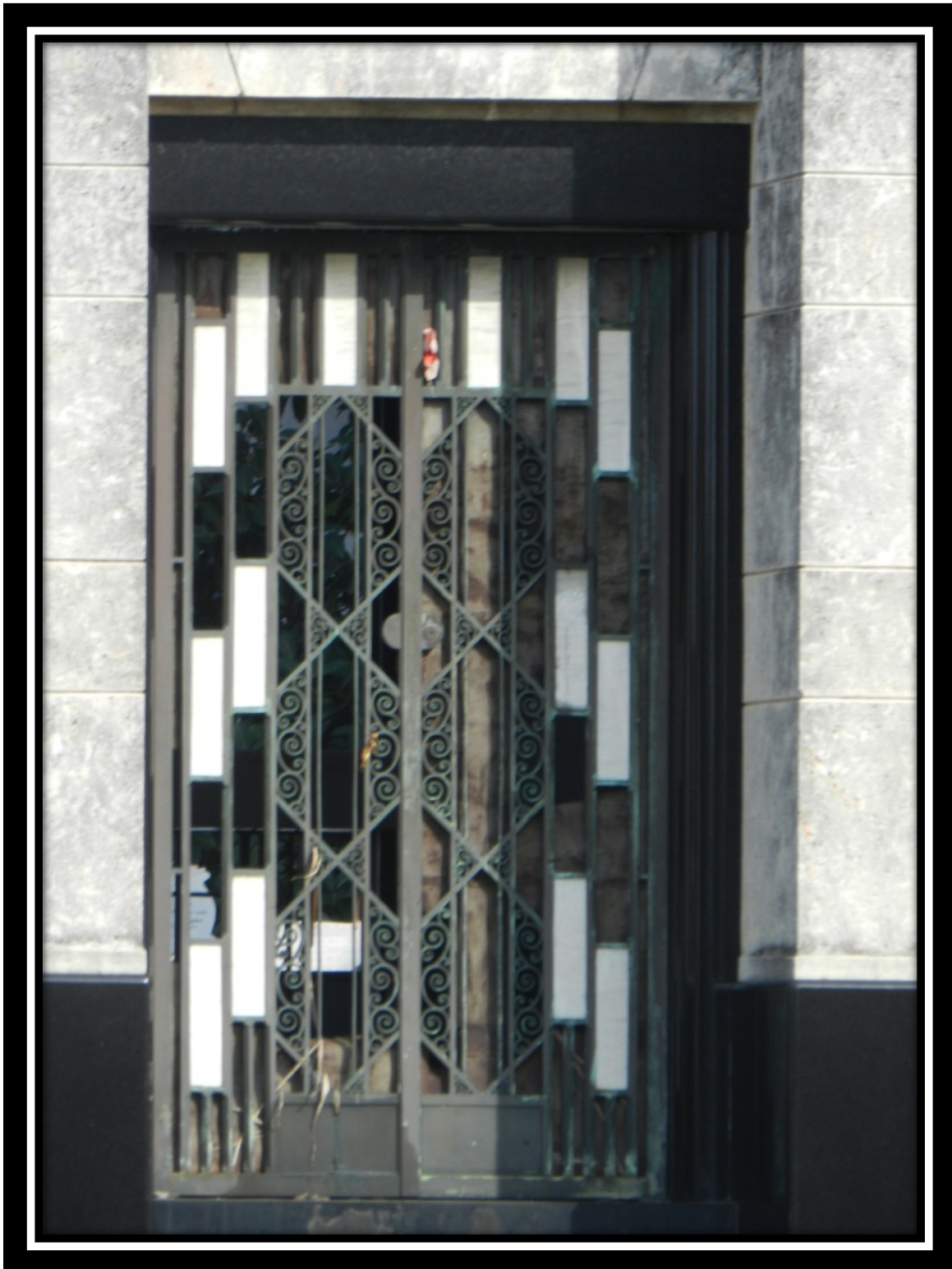
AND DO NOT MISS THE CEMETERY

For those that love the confluence of architecture, history, culture and religion, the cemetery in Havana is something exceptional. There is a small fee to enter but it is well worth it. It is opulent and you get an immediate sense of great wealth invested here. It struck my mind that after the revolution in 1959, a location as “over the top” as this was left intact. In fact it has become part of Cuba’s history and it is like walking through a museum. Regardless of your beliefs, one cannot fail to be taken aback by the quality of materials and workmanship that was expended to create “an afterlife” that has survived into modern day Cuba.

The Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón was founded in 1876. It is named for Christopher Columbus. The 140 acre cemetery is noted for its many elaborately sculpted memorials. It is estimated that today the cemetery has more than 500 major mausoleums, chapels, and family vaults.



When you leave, somewhat hot and exhausted, there is a shop across the street where you can get something to drink while you sit and people watch. It is a busy intersection and the action is non-stop.



A PORTAL TO CUBA'S PAST



STANDING GUARD ~ SO MANY YEARS ~ WAITING

HEMINGWAY HOUSE



YACHT PILAR

Hemingway would take his boat during WWII and go looking for German submarines along the coast of Cuba.

Finca Vigia was purchased by Ernest Hemingway in 1940. It is located approximately nine miles from Havana and is easy to get to. Hemingway's time in Cuba and at this home is the subject of a number of books for those interested. For me, I enjoyed walking the grounds and trying to get a sense of what it must have been like for him. His boat, Pilar, is permanently "docked" on the grounds and easy to view.





The house is neat and tidy with interesting touches here and there; while there is much of Hemingway's "things" around, you get the sense that he left a long time ago!

HOTEL NACIONAL

The Hotel Nacional is a veritable landmark hotel as it is both a national monument and a World Heritage Site. There are newer, but few that have the history that this hotel has. I enjoyed going to the open courtyard and having a Cuban sandwich in the afternoon or early evening and listening to the bands. The chairs are comfortable and no one is in any rush; truly one sandwich can feed two or three people. Enjoy!





At the Nacional I saw one of the famous Cuban shows, *La Parisien*. There are a number of such shows in Havana and if you like color and cast, you will love them. They sweep you back into a different time when grandiosity reigned and extravaganzas were the ultimate in nighttime entertainment. Today Havana has many clubs with many different types of entertainment to suit all tastes but these classical shows are worth the time and the money as they are “history on stage.”



MUSIC AND THEN SOME



CASA PARTICULARES



Aside from being very clean, the floor was as pretty as the house itself.

There are many of these private homes to choose from where you can have a meal. The hospitality is extraordinary. The food is good and it is a great experience. Check the pricing as they are not bargains; you get what you pay for.



The staff and members of the household

Many a *casa particulares* also offers rooms for rent and often for a price that is extremely competitive for something that is clean and safe.

Like any big city, there is much to see and do in Havana. It is an exceptional city and I strongly recommend you catch it early in the morning as well as later in the day. Stop in the parks and sit in the shade and look at the people. They are filled with laughter and movement and if you reach out to them, in my experience they will reach back; don't forget to smile and remember everyone says "Good morning"; actually "*Buenos Dias.*"

Here are some of the people I met along the way; be sure to send me some of yours!



Singing ~ Obispo Calle



GIVE ME A BIG SMILE



CHISMOSA



THE MEN'S CLUB



YA SE FUÉ, UNO TAN GRANDE!



It all happens on Calle Obispo



MOTHER AND CHILD





WAY TO GO



EL MALECÓN



La niña de la esperanza

Child of hope

CIENFUEGOS AND TRINIDAD

SOUTH CENTRAL COAST

These two towns should NOT be missed!

Cienfuegos offers a wonderful facility with a nice marina. You can clear in and you can clear out at Cienfuegos. Because of its strategic location, it is easy to make landfall at Cienfuegos. The town is a neat town with a great deal of history and architecture. If you are on the south shore, this is a must stop.

Founded in 1819 following earlier French settlement, Cienfuegos is relatively young by Cuban colonial standards. It earned its inclusion on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites as the best surviving example of the application of early 19th century Spanish Enlightenment ideas and ideals to urban planning in the Americas.



Marina management of marina at Cienfuegos

Access to the harbor is straightforward and the marina is well protected. The staff is friendly and anxious to help. Most are bilingual but if you speak a little Spanish that is even better.

One of the things that is so striking and so overwhelming is the old yacht club at the marina. Its classic architecture might easily pass for the Taj Mahal -- with a restaurant on the ground floor no less.



Cienfuegos Yacht Club

ON TO TRINIDAD

As the crow flies it is just over 30 miles from Cienfuegos east to the far older Trinidad de Cuba. Trinidad de Cuba is extraordinary and while there are many tourists about, there are also many locals who add so much to this town.

Founded in 1514, Trinidad today is one of the best preserved cities in the Caribbean from the sugar trade era; a virtual museum of Spanish colonial architecture and a visual feast. Consequently, together with the nearby *Valle de los Ingenios* (Valley of the Sugar Mills), Trinidad is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site also.

Do not miss Trinidad de Cuba!

You can reach it by taxi from Cienfuegos or you can go by boat and enter the harbor which has a marina. The marina is small but protected and is accessed by a long and narrow channel. (21°43.37N, 79°57.32W)



Trinidad marina management

What the marina lacks in size or high tech it more than makes up for with friendly staff who will do everything they can to assist you.



Trinidad has both superb architecture and quaint streets





The small park at the center of town is really beautiful; kept clean and neat





Just a short distance from the park is a square where you find wonderful entertainment. Cubans like to dance and live life to the fullest and if that is what you like; you will be in your element here.





Los dos Rafaels

Rafael Baez, owner of Marina Zar Par, Boca Chica, DR and a sponsor of Free Cruising Guides, here in the park with a retired Cuban also named Rafael. You will find Cubans very social and very approachable.

They are pleasant and welcoming and in no rush; los dos Rafaels conversed about a broad range of topics for over an hour.

CUBA HAS FOUR COASTS



Figure 21. Cuba

ORGANIZATION OF HARBORS AND ANCHORAGES

The organization of harbors and anchorages in this guide will be by coast as follows:

SOUTH COAST



Figure 22. Cuba's entire south coast

This coast, point to point is a bit over 400 nm. The coastline itself is far longer due to all the indentations, islands and cays. The south coast is a relatively protected coast in most trade wind conditions; i.e., NE to E. Additionally one can use the katabatic wind that arrives after sunset that creates an offshore wind. Do not move the boat at night unless you are sure there are no reefs or obstructions in your route and *never* make an entry into an anchorage or harbor at night unless absolutely necessary.

SOUTH COAST ~ West



Figure 23. Cuba's SOUTHWEST coast

This is an extraordinary area that includes the Isla de la Juventud as well as many cayos and other anchorages. For the purpose of this guide we define this area as west of Cienfuegos. You could spend months just in this area and never get bored.

Maria La Gorda	p. 156
Cayos San Felipe	160
Isla de la Juventud	165
Marina Siguanea	165
Nueva Gerona	173
<i>Bahia de San Pedro</i>	180
<i>Ensenada de Los Barcos</i>	183
<i>Ensenada Chacon (Estero Simón)</i>	186
<i>Bays east of Nueva Gerona</i>	191
Cayo Campos	191
Cayo Tablones	198
Cayo Rosario	201
<i>Cayo Largo (Port of Entry)</i>	210
Cayos de Dios	219
Cayo Sal	219
Cayo Guano Del Este	223

SOUTH COAST ~ East



Figure 24. Cuba's SOUTHEAST coast with the "Queen's Gardens"
(Los Jardines de la Reina)

This area includes Cienfuegos as well as the wonderful town of Trinidad.

NOTE: The *Golfo de Guacanayabo* is a large and complicated area that requires very careful eyeball navigation.

<i>Cienfuegos (Port of Entry)</i>	p. 229
Cayo Blanco de Casilda	246
Cayo Machos de Fuera	249
Cayo Zaza de Fuera	255
Archipiélago Jardines de La Reina (listed separately, next page)	
<i>Golfo de Guacanayabo</i>	274
Cayo Granada	274
Cayo Rabihorcado	277
Cayos Manzanillo	281
(anchorage at Cayo Jorobado)	

Niquero	287
Cabo Cruz	299

SOUTH COAST ~ East: Islands and Cays

There are a great many cays that stretch east from Trinidad. More than 70Nm in all! They are extraordinary. Most are to be found in the Archipelago of the Queens Gardens (Archipiélago De Los Jardines De La Reina). They constitute a national park and they are worth considerable time in your cruise.



Figure 25. The Queen's Gardens

Cayo Blanco de Casilda	p. 246
Cayo Machos de Fuera	249
Cayo Zaza Fuera	255
Archipiélago Jardines de La Reina	258
Cayo Breton	258
Cayo Alcatracito (Cinco Balas)	262
Cayo Caballones (Punta Escondida)	265
Cayo Anclitas (Palapa Tortuga)	267
Cayo Chocolate	271

WEST COAST



Figure 26. Cuba's WEST coast

For the purpose of this guide we consider the West Coast to be the area west of Marina Hemingway to *Cabo De San Antonio*. Technically Marina Hemingway can be considered to be on the north coast at the west end as well, but it is better placed here as the normal route from Hemingway would be west and not east. The distance is over 150 nm as the crow flies. There are a number of interesting cays that make for good anchorages as well as other attractive anchorages along the way.

<i>Marina Hemingway (Port of Entry)</i>	p. 129
Bahia Honda	133
Cayo Levisa	137
Cayo Jutias	143
Cayo Buenavista	145
Marina Los Morros	149

NORTH COAST

NORTH COAST ~ West



Figure 27. Cuba's northwest coast

This area is from Marina Hemingway to Varadero; a distance of about 70 nm. There are a few harbors and anchorages along the way with Varadero being the main boating area. Varadero is an exciting area with a number of marinas and many interesting local sights.

NOTE: This stretch of cruising area has a potentially dangerous span of coastline with numerous sections of drying reef. With currents that are not always predictable, and sea conditions which can cause the water to lose clarity, you must navigate very carefully to avoid contact with rocks, reef and other hazards.
(east to west)

Punta Hicacos (Mega Marina Gaviota)	490
<i>Varadero (Marina Darsena) (Port of Entry)</i>	490

NORTH COAST ~ East (east to west)



Figure 28. Cuba's northeast coast

<i>Ensenada de Mata</i>	p. 353
Baracoa	360
<i>Ensenada de Taco</i>	376
<i>Ensenada Yamanigüey</i>	380
Cayo Moa	387
<i>Bahía de Sagua de Tánamo</i>	392
<i>Bahía de Nipe (Cayo Saetía)</i>	396
<i>Bahía de Banes</i>	404
<i>Bahía de Samá</i>	408
<i>Bahía del Naranjo</i>	412
<i>Bahía de Vita (Port of Entry)</i>	416
<i>Bahía de Bariay</i>	421
Gibara	426
<i>Bahía de Puerto Padre</i>	428
<i>Bahía de Manatí</i>	438
<i>Bahía de Nuevitas</i>	451
Archipiélago Jardines del Rey (listed separately, next page)	

From the eastern tip of Cuba to Varadero is a distance of over 400Nm. This area is bordered by the *Old Bahama Channel*. There are many cays along the way; some of considerable size.

NOTE: This is not an area for novice cruisers and the area requires eyeball navigation at all times. Additionally, during the height of the trade wind season, from December through April, this area is frequented by northers which arrive from North America with remarkable frequency. Some can be quite strong and, given the direction of the wind, this entire coastline becomes a dangerous lee shore. The trade winds from the east and northeast also hit this part of the coast incessantly although anchorages can be found that provide protection if carefully planned. Currents can be erratic and swift. Detailed planning is required, taking weather and distance into account to make sure that you reach a safe anchorage before nightfall. Do not underestimate the challenges that this area can produce.

The northeast end of Cuba is remote and pristine. You will get the feeling that you have “sailed off the charts.”

NORTH COAST ~ East: Islands and Cays



Figure 29. Islands and cays of the Jardines del Rey Archipelago

The cays here are too numerous to name each one. The entire area, largely unpopulated, is a national park.

The archipelago is developed on a general north-west to south-east direction, and stretches for 295 mi from the Hicacos Peninsula and Varadero to the Bay of Nuevitas. The entire system covers more than 29,000 sq mi and is composed of more than 2,500 cays and small islands. The western islands are grouped in the Jardines del Rey archipelago. The eastern side is part of the archipelago but not part of the Jardines del Rey. It is a very isolated area and suitable only for those



Figure 30. Province of Camaguey

that are capable of cruising very remote areas. This part of the archipelago is named for the province of Camaguey that borders it.

(From East to West)

Punta Piedra	p. 461
Cayo Confites	463
Cayo Paredón Grande	466
Cayo Coco	469
Cayo Guillermo & Cayos Guillermitos	471
Cayo Caiman Grande	476
Cayo Francés (Brujas)	478
Pasa Boca Chica	482
Cayo Esquível del Sur	484
Cayo Falcones	486

In Figure 31 the Archipelago can be seen to the left and the Windward Passage to the right, with Haiti to the East and Great Inagua Island (Bahamas) upper right.



Figure 31. Orienting the Camaguay Archipelago to the Cuba mainland and to the Bahamas

EAST COAST



Figure 32. Cuba's east coast

The east coast extends from Cabo Cruz at the west end to the northeastern tip of Cuba and it borders the Windward Passage. Santiago de Cuba is **THE port of call for cruising boats**. Guantánamo Bay, the American Naval Base is also located here to the north of Santiago de Cuba. It is **OFF LIMITS** and unless you are in dire straits, do not call there. For the entire distance of the East Coast, over 200Nm, there are really no good harbors or anchorages other than Santiago de Cuba.

Note: This coast can be rough sailing if you are headed northeast in a strong Trade Wind flow from that direction.

Marea del Portillo	p. 311
Chivirico	318
Santiago de Cuba (Port of Entry)	328
Mahomilla Bay (NO ENTRY-MILITARY ZONE)	346
Puerto Escondido (NO ENTRY-MILITARY PORT)	346
Baitiquiri	348

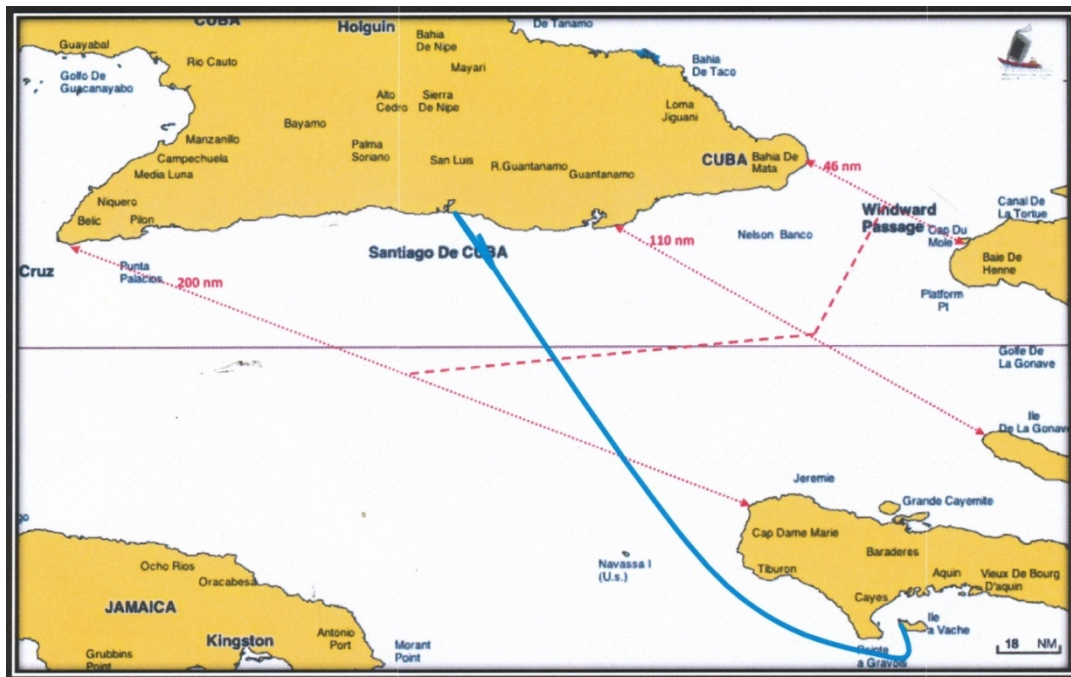


Figure 33. Santiago de Cuba is an easy sail from Ile a Vache, Haiti



Vintage postcard available at the Newark Museum during the exhibition “Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul” (2011)

CRUISING CUBA

A NOTE on PORTS OF ENTRY

It bears repeating that in Cuba, the only places you can stop and go on land from a boat are, by law, ports with a marina (it need not be an “*international marina*” or port of entry, but it does need to be a marina). Only some marinas (international marinas) can be ports of entry for recreational vessels. In practice, you can stop and go onto all the cays.

Why are the marinas key to setting foot on land? Because there is only a minimal chance of a Cuban national attempting to flee the country through a marina. Why the cays accessible? Because they are uninhabited and therefore there is no one there who would attempt to depart illegally.

There are some long stretches between stops where, even if you were allowed to go on land, there are no stores of any size or type from which to provision. You can fish or perhaps trade, but you cannot shop.

Always bring a plastic bag (*jabita*) as you may bump into an item that might not be found the next time you intend to purchase. Plastic bags are scarce so you are expected to bring your own to all stores except the CUC stores which provide them.

If you are desperate, and there are no stores of any kind or size to be found, hotels and tourist resorts may be the answer to your prayers. If you go to the kitchen and speak to the cook, and if they can spare it, you may be gifted with some food, or you may pay a little, just a little, for it.

DESIGNATED PORTS OF ENTRY

North coast (west to east)

Marina Hemingway (23°05.15N, 82°30.32W)

Marina Dársena Varadero (23°08.12N, 81°18.77W)

**Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo (22°25N, 78°28W as per cruiser information;
22°34.09N, 78°38.58W as per government publication)**

NOTE: Maximum depth at high tide: 6.3'

Vita (21°05.48N, 75°57.36W)

West coast

Marina Los Morros (21°53.46N, 84°54.20W) at Cabo San Antonio

South coast

Marina Cayo Largo (21°35.00N, 81°33.95W)

Marina Cienfuegos (22°02.00N, 80°27.42W)

East coast

Marina Santiago (19°58.18N, 75°52.35W)



Figure 34. Magical Cayo Largo, marina lower right

GENERAL INFORMATION

The captain or owner of each boat is responsible for all passengers and crew on board and he/she must fulfill the following obligations:

Returning by plane or other boat

If a person on your boat wants to return by plane before the boat leaves the present port, that person must go to the immigration office accompanied by you and show the confirmed plane ticket; if a person from your boat wants to return by plane after the boat departs, that person must also show the immigration officer the reservation for the accommodation where he or she will stay until his departure.

If a person on your boat will return on a different boat, he/she must obtain authorization from the immigration officer in the company of the captain or owner of the departing boat.

Visitors

If you want to invite a Cuban friend on board, you need to request permission, which is not automatic, at the marina office 24 hours prior to the visit.

If you wish to invite a non-Cuban visitor to stay with you on your boat, your visitor must be accompanied by you to obtain authorization from the immigration officer at the immigration office. The visitor must document where they are otherwise staying.

NOTE: If no response on Channel 16 or 77, then contact the Tourist Authority on VHF Channel 19.

In most fishing and commercial ports you will be allowed to anchor, but you will not be allowed to disembark.

Where should you go if you wish to reenter?

If you are in the Cienfuegos area, consider going to the Cayman Islands and back as the passage is N-S giving you the advantage of the easterly winds. And Cienfuegos is a port of entry.

If you are in the Santiago area, Port Antonio, Jamaica should be your port of choice.

From the north coast, the best destinations are Key West or the Bahamas. **Note that there are many islands in the Bahamas, but not all are Ports of Entry.** Fortunately for cruisers on the north coast of Cuba, Great Inagua Island is a Port of Entry and lies only 125 Nm miles from the nearest port of entry in Cuba. Note, however, that the fee for clearing in to the Bahamas, whether you plan to stay for 3 minutes or 3 months (the maximum), is \$300 USD.

More specifically with regard to Havana, one may clear out, sail about overnight, and then clear in again in Havana the following morning – on a new visa.

On shore lodging and eating out

During the last 10 years in an attempt to improve the country's economy, the government has been progressively opening the system to new private ventures. As a consequence, many Cuban families have set up little home restaurants and room rentals to help with the household economics. These family run restaurants are called *paladares*. They usually serve very tasty comfort food payable in MN. So you would pay about \$2 -- \$3USD for a nice meal. If you go for beer, that might cost you as much as the meal since it is paid for in CUCs, around 1.5CUC per bottle. Do not expect much variety as the choice may be limited to two brands.

All hotels have restaurants that are open to the public. They are usually buffet style, but they can also be *a la carte*. Prices might range from 10 to 20CUC and drinks like wine and beer are sometimes included in the buffet price which makes it a good deal. The food is usually of good quality and good variety.

There are also state owned restaurants which tend to vary in food and service quality. They usually charge in MNs, but as a visitor, if you are in a touristy area, you may be charged in CUCs.

In La Havana, Santiago, and Cienfuegos, but especially in La Havana, you have a wider choice of restaurants, both private and state owned.

Don't miss an ice cream in one of the COPPELIA ice cream shops which are all over the country. The menu of diverse flavors has been reduced dramatically over the last few years, but the ice cream is still delicious, the portions are huge, and the price – ridiculously cheap.

You may have to endure queuing like all Cubans in order to get a seat, but the waiting time is worthwhile.

Lodging

Apart from tourist hotels, there are privately owned rooms in family houses, all nicely decorated, frequently restored, colonial houses, and usually with their own bathroom. They are conveniently located downtown or in nice areas and some also offer meals. They are a very good choice for lodging, for their cozy atmosphere, fixed price (20 – 25CUCs for a double room), and the unique opportunity to get immersed in local life. Your host or hostess may very well be an artist or sports figure of note.

Private rental rooms can be spotted by their signs – a sort of anchor on a background of blue when they are meant for visitors and red when they are meant for Cuban nationals.

PORTS and HARBORS

Some places you can anchor, but you cannot set foot on land if you arrive by boat. (You can visit them from the land side, however.) In any commercial fishing port you can anchor but you cannot go on land. Entry is NOT permitted to the bays of Guantánamo and Puerto Escondido.

Many of the stops along the north coast are anchorages at or near pocket bays. All pocket bays are restricted areas because they are usually populated, and especially so around their inner side, where any commercial ports (all off limits) are also located. No landing. As will be apparent in the following pages, populated pocket bays are only used as sheltered rest stops so you do not usually go too far into the channel and you anchor in the safest and most sheltered spot closest to the entrance.

The collective experience of cruisers in Cuban waters includes many groundings in a variety of anchorages and passages. For this reason many waypoints (WPs) are given below. Cruising should be pleasurable and the Cuban coastal waters are beautiful although challenging for their rapid changes in depth and reef surprises. While the skipper *always* bears final responsibility for the safe navigation of his/her boat and should always use current navigation charts, the courses and waypoints given below can be a helpful guide.

WEST COAST

Marina Hemingway (Port of Entry)



Figure 35. Marina Hemingway layout

This main port of entry into Cuba stands by on Channel 77. There is easy entrance into Marina Hemingway through a marked channel which is lit at night. However, the port is closed at night and no one is let in or out from sunset (about 7:30-8:00 pm) until dawn (around 6:00 am).

The red and white approach buoy is at **23°05.40N, 82°30.60W**. Lit at night, its white light flashes at 10 second intervals.

From that point, bear **140°** to the marked channel and into the marina. You will see the dock with the Guardiafronteras headquarters to your port side as you enter. Then the channel turns E along the Clearance dock. The blue buildings there are the Customs and Immigrations offices. You must dock alongside and wait for the officials to come to you. Have good fenders ready as there are metal bars protruding from the wall.

Once clearing is completed, you will be directed to one of the channels to berth, probably Canal #2, near the marina offices and most of the facilities.

The village you can see to starboard is Santa Fe. You may visit from land, but *by no means are you permitted to approach it by boat or dinghy.*

NOTE: Dinghies *must* be lifted on board at night and they may *only* be used inside the entrance channel and the marina premises. Any attempt to stray toward the town (Santa Fe) will be heavily fined (1500CUC).

Hemingway Marina is a huge complex including 3 restaurants, 2 grocery stores, and condominiums. It also has 2 hotels: *Hotel Acuaris*, an all-included vacation resort; and *El Viejo y El Mar*, closed to the general public (as of July 2011), to lodge medical patients and their families from overseas, mainly Venezuela.

The marina also houses the Club Nautico Hemingway, host of the International Billfishing Tournament every spring. It has capacity for about 400 vessels, up to 63m long and 10m in the beam. The boatyard has a TraveLift and fuel dock. All docks, except those in Canal #1, have fresh water and metered 110v and 220v electricity stands. On average, a boat up to 45' will pay 0.50CUC/foot/day. Electricity is 0.25CUC/kW, and fresh water is 0.05CUC/gallon.

Canal #1 is meant for storing boats long term. It has no water or electricity, but it is half price (0.25CUC/foot/day).

Any payments due on leaving will be paid with your clearance charges, at the marina office.

The fuel dock is just in front of the clearance dock between Canals #2 and #3; the price of fuel as of June 2011 was 1.20CUC/liter. For propane refills, ask at the marina office. Expect to be charged about 10CUC/bottle; we paid that much for a 2.5 kg bottle of camping gas with European regulator.

There is a currency exchange booth at *El Viejo y el Mar Hotel* next to the reception desk, open from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

Phone cards and stamps can be purchased at the small souvenir shop and post office branch located next to the yacht club at Marina Hemingway. You can also make national and international phone calls from the public phone by the shop.

For internet, go to *Acuario Hotel* and buy a card (6CUC/hour) at the reception desk. The hotel's two computers are located just behind the lobby bar.

The *Acuario's* swimming pool bar offers hamburgers and snacks all day long. There is a 5CUC/person/day charge for the use of the swimming pool. As an all-included resort, the hotel has an *a la carte* restaurant for which you must make reservations at the reception desk before 12 noon. And, there is a hair salon and a massage parlor.

For provisioning, there is a mini-market right at the end of Canal #2 where you can purchase basic groceries (cheese, ham, some frozen foods, canned foods, rice, pasta, different grains, soap, etc.) and beverages such soft drinks, wine, and rum; the latter at very good prices.

There is another small grocery store next to the chandlery in the marina office area where you can really get down to basics -- some canned food, but mainly beverages. For bread and fresh food, you can go (on land) to the nearby town of Santa Fe where there are various bakeries and street markets or *agros*.

Palco Supermarket, near "*la estrella*" (the first big roundabout on the 5th Avenue to La Havana) is a well stocked CUC supermarket just a 10 minute ride from the marina. There are more on the way to the capitol city, and plenty of *agros*, grocery stores, and MN and CUC supermarkets in and around La Havana.

Transportation to La Havana

Public bus: Bus stop is on the main road (5th Avenida) just past the bridge. Take Bus #420 or #194 to PLAYA (a big roundabout with a gas station on the right side and plenty of vintage cars parked along the road waiting for customers). There you transfer to Bus #P4 to downtown Havana. Each ride is 20 cent MN.

Local taxis or *maquinas*: Wave at any vintage car along 5th Avenida. They will take you to PLAYA (10 pesos MN). There you will take another local taxi to La Havana (usually right up to the Capitolio – the capitol building itself). This fare is 20 pesos MN.

Official metered taxis: Usually yellow, these are another choice. The ride can be around 20CUC.

Private car: You can also arrange a ride at the marina with a private car owner. The round trip can cost around 20CUC. The driver will take you around and wait for you for a little extra. Ask other cruisers, or marina employees.

Hotel Acuaris has its own shuttle service to La Havana. You can try a ride into the city and back for about 5CUC. The shuttle runs as follows:

Departure from hotel:	11:00am/3:30pm/7:30pm
Return from Palacio de Artesania:	12:20pm/5:00pm/8:30pm

Other marina services

Ask at the office for laundry service. You might pay 4CUC per load, soap included; or you might have to provide washing powder/liquid.

Until recently members at Club Nautico Hemingway Yacht Club were entitled to good discounts on slip rental and other services on the marina premises. Membership entitles one to have the benefit of a nice comfortable gathering place where you can meet other cruisers or local members, have a drink or snack at their bar, watch cable TV, or just enjoy a drink in their pleasant air-conditioned sitting room.

The membership is 10CUC/week/boat. Do not miss the opportunity to meet Comodoro José Miguel Diaz-Esrich. For an introduction to Commodore Esrich, see the Dedication page in this guide.

Bahía Honda

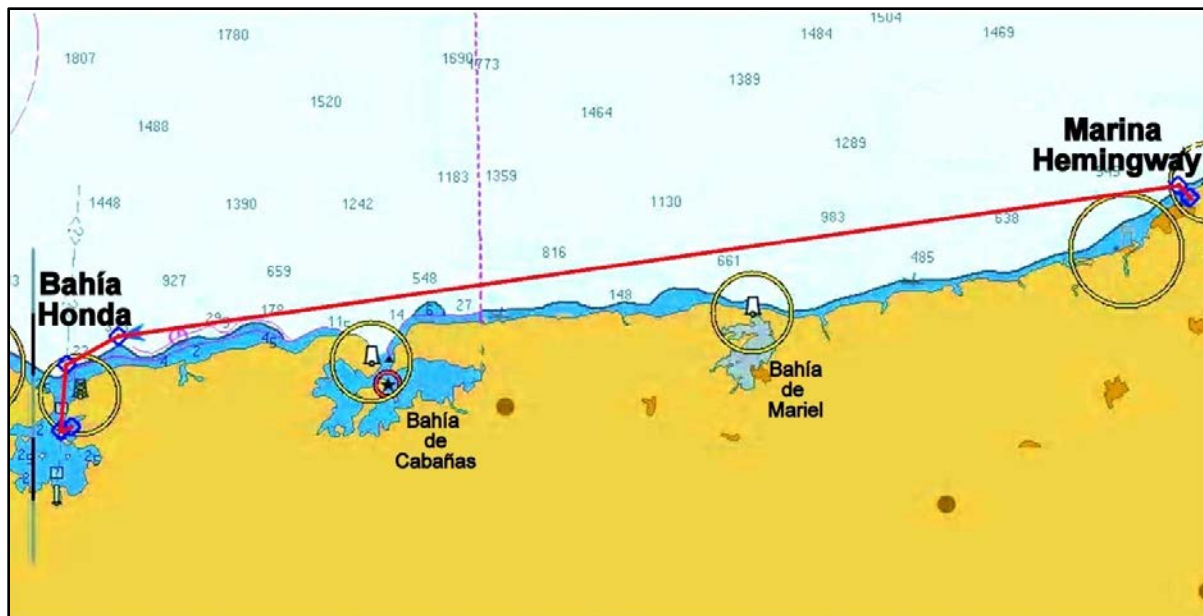


Figure 36. Marina Hemingway to Bahía Honda

Bahía Honda is a rest anchorage 37 Nm W from Marina Hemingway where going ashore is NOT permitted. During March and April the winds usually blow from the E during the morning, then shift to NE around midday and through the afternoon, around 15 to 20km. So, if going W, you will have a pleasant sail.

About 15Nm W from Marina Hemingway lies *Bahía de Mariel*, a huge commercial port with a marked entrance channel. It offers excellent shelter from all winds, but unless the weather is bad or you have an emergency, you will probably not be permitted to enter.

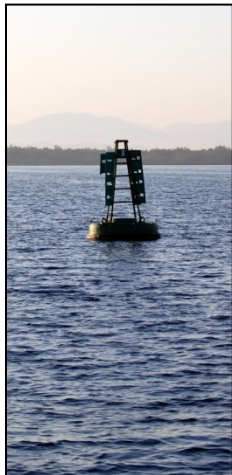
Another 12Nm W from *Bahía de Mariel* is *Bahía de Cabañas*, a military port that is strictly off limits.

Ten Nm W from *Bahía de Cabañas* lies *Bahía Honda*, a large, well sheltered bay with a marked channel, lit at night, and with various possible (rest) anchorages.



Punta Gobernadora Light

If approaching from the E, the light at *Punta del Morrillo* (10 seconds, 8Nm, white), next to the San Fernando Fort ruins can be a good landmark. If coming from the W, look for the red and white lighthouse at *Punta Gobernadora*, at which point you should be at least 1Nm off the coast to avoid the reef that extends north. A WP at **23°00.66N, 83°09.68W** will put you safely right in front of the channel entrance.



From that point, bear **183°** to head into the bay. The approach buoy shown in most charts has been missing for the last 15 years and its replacement does not appear imminent. The outermost pair of nun buoys is at approximately **22°59.20N, 83°09.70W**.

A very conspicuous landmark is the wreck of a big floating crane stranded on the W shore side of the bay entrance, near those buoys. Just follow the marked channel into the bay. If the weather is calm, you can drop anchor in front of the Guardafronteras dock on the E side of the bay right opposite *Punta Caimán*. It is in shallow water, so do not go too near the dock.



Crane wreckage near entrance to Bahía Honda

To get to the anchorage, follow the channel to a WP at $22^{\circ}58.33N$, $83^{\circ}09.79W$ and turn E toward the dock until you are over 3m of water. Drop anchor there. The Guardafronteras premises are not used presently, but there is always some official around to check on your boat and hand you a new *zarpe* or stop record.



NOTE: It is considered a polite practice to call the Guardafronteras on VHF 16 to report your intentions *any* time you are about to enter a bay.

Guardafrontera at Bahía Honda

If you prefer a quieter anchorage and especially if northers are setting in, continue S along the channel to a WP at **22°57.65N, 83°09.79W**, then turn E to a WP at **22°57.65N, 83°09.55W** and bear **26°** to enter into *Ensenada Ste. Teresa*. Once there, feel your way into the lagoon to find a suitable anchorage. *Ensenada Ste. Teresa* is a hurricane hole and a peaceful and beautiful anchorage. It is a pity you cannot go on shore here.

However, most of it is mangrove so you probably would not be able to find a place to land your dinghy in the area. You will see wooden stake fences along the shore;



Shellfish farm -- stake fencing along shore

these are shellfish farms. Here fishermen harvest the *ostion*, a delicious shellfish similar to oysters which grow attached to strings hanging from the fences into the water.

You will find good holding mud at **22°57.93N, 83°09.33W** in 3.5m of water.



Floating fishing station for the *ostion* (shellfish) farm; note fence line in background along the shore.

Cayo Levisa

Located at **22°53N, 83°31.50W**. 25 Nm from *Bahía Honda*.

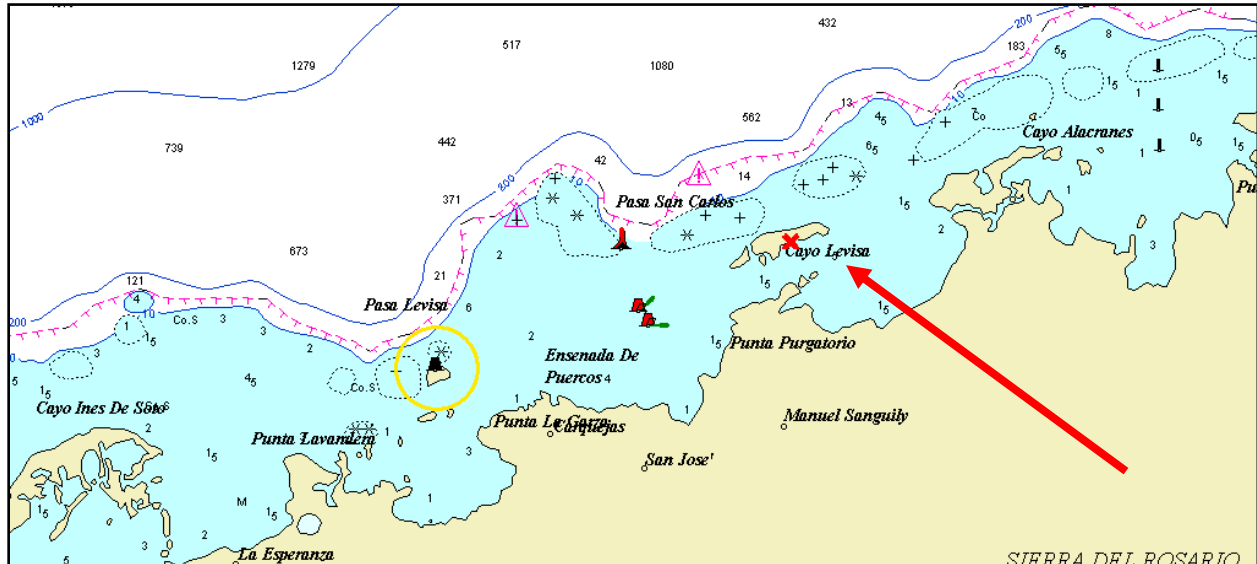


Figure 37. Cayo Levisa

Cayo Levisa is a small cay covered by mangroves on its south side but with a beautiful long beach on the north shore. Because the beach is too shallow and exposed for boats, the anchorage is on the south side. It makes a wonderful stop on the way to or from Havana.



Path to the resort from the anchorage



Sunset at the north beach

A palapa-style beach hotel and water sports resort has been developed there and sailors are welcome to the premises. The hotel has a small shop where you can get soft drinks, biscuits, souvenirs and some few basic items. There are two computers with internet access in the hotel reception area.

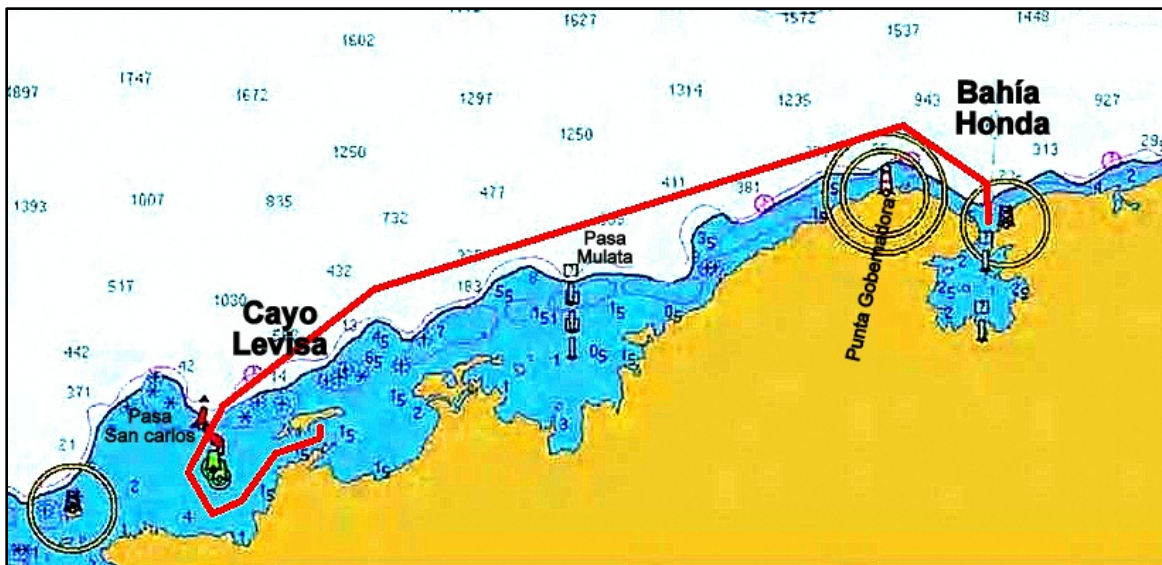


Figure 38. Accessing Cayo Levisa's south side anchorage

To get there from *Bahía Honda* there are two entries through the reef; one is east of Cayo Levisa, between the latter and Cayo Paraíso. The other entry is approached west of Cayo Levisa, through *Pasa San Carlos*.

When coming from *Bahía Honda* – or anywhere east -- the west entry is about 1Nm longer but much safer because it is marked, whereas the east approach is unmarked and quite shallow. The east pass is mainly used by power boats taking tourists to and from the resort at Cayo Levisa. We were told by locals that the pass has a maximum depth of 7' but would not risk discovering that it was less.



Resort boat at Cayo Levisa



Hotel rooms at Cayo Levisa



When approaching from the west, you will have wind and current (about 1-1.5Kn) on your side. An outer reef runs all along the coast down to Cabo San Antonio. To pass through the reef via *Pasa San Carlos*, start at **22°54.20N, 83°34.52W**, about 1Nm outside the reef entry, and bear **200°** for the next 1.5Nm.



Resort dock

Midway, you should spot the red approach buoy, located at **22°52.80N, 83°35.14W** (red, lit at night, 4 second intervals). With the buoy around 100m to your starboard, head **175°** toward the next markers. You will sail between a blue patch of water over a sand shoal to the east and the reef to the west, the length of the 200m channel whose depths range from 8 to 12m, to the next marker, a broken beacon consisting of a pair of sticks popping out of the water, located at **22°51.60N, 83°34.84W**. This must be kept to your port. From there, bear **130°** to a midpoint between two green beacons visible to the SE.

The following WPs are helpful landmarks to sail in safe waters along the entrance channel:

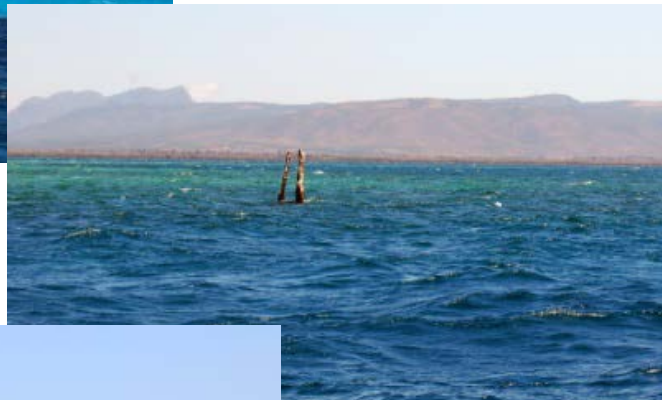
Approach WP:	22°54.04N- 83°35.00W
WP next to the red buoy:	22°52.79N – 83°35.06W
WP next to the broken beacon:	22°51.60N – 83°34.58W
WP between green markers:	22°51.33N – 83°34.58W

From that midpoint between the 2 green markers, bear **172°** for the next 1.5Nm to a WP at **22°51.87N, 83°31.89W** and set an **85°** course to the next WP at **22°51.94N,**

83°31.89W. At this point depths will drop from 8-6m to 4-3m. Although you will see the resort dock right in front of you, do *not* make a straight line approach as there are still a couple of shoal patches to be avoided on both sides; the one to the west being mud, the patch on the east being coral. Turn to a position at **22°52.48N, 83°31.47W** and head north in 2.5–4m of water to approach the dock.



Blue patch of water



Broken Beacon



Green starboard beacon

You can anchor anywhere around the dock as long as you are not in the way of the resort boats which use the east pass. Take care to avoid a coral patch just S of the dock at **22°52.79/ 80/ 81/ 82/83/ 84/ 85N, 83°31.33/ 35/ 36/37/38W**.

We dropped anchor at **22°52.89N, 83°31.35W** on good holding sand and mud in 4m of water.

Cayo Jutias

Located at $22^{\circ}42.22\text{N}$, $84^{\circ}01.40\text{W}$
35 Nm from Cayo Levisa.

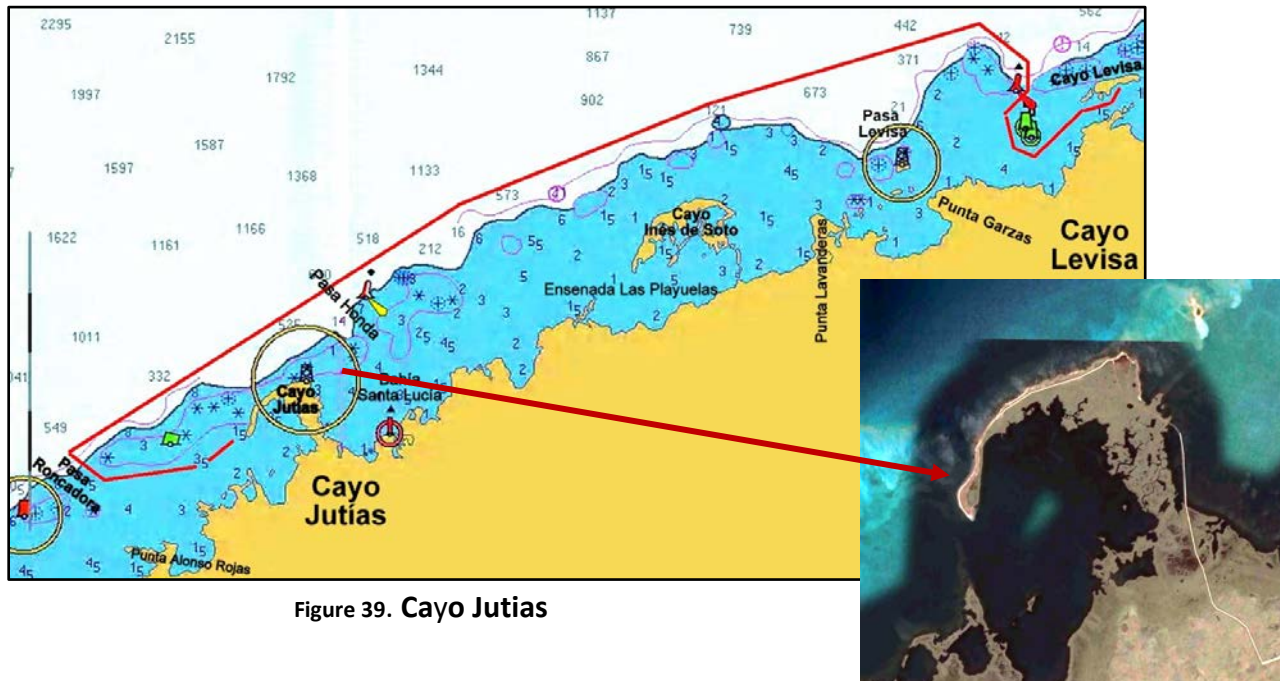


Figure 39. Cayo Jutias

Cayo Jutias is entirely covered by thick pine woods. The south shore is very well sheltered from all seas but there are plenty of scattered shallow patches and the bottom near shore is mainly rock. Besides, the woods are so thick that there is hardly any place to land the dinghy.

The north coast has a long, lovely, sandy beach which runs toward the western tip of the cay. There are two possible anchorages; one on the NE near the lighthouse ($22^{\circ}42.90\text{N}$, $84^{\circ}01.39\text{W}$) and the other on the NW side of the cay. The NW



anchorage is open to northers and rare west seas but the approach is marked and easy. If you choose to try the NE anchorage, bear in mind the extensive shoal that extends well to the east.



Anchorage at Cayo Jutias

To approach Cayo Jutias from the west, you will go through *Quebrado La Galera*, a straightforward pass marked with a green buoy. Go to a WP at **22°41.4N,**

84°06.75W and bear **127°** to a WP at **22°40.82N,**
84°05.96W leaving the green buoy to your starboard. Then set a **100°** course for the next 2Nm and head toward the beach to find a suitable spot to drop anchor. We anchored at **22°40.69N, 84°03.57W** in 3m of crystal clear water in good holding sand and grass.



We did not see any here, but we assumed that the cay must have been named *Jutias* due to the presence of these large rodents, very common in many of the Cuban cays. Apart from them, the cay -- it is not exactly a cay but a peninsula -- is uninhabited but used by fishermen from the mainland as a fishing camp.



Solitary beach at Cayo Jutias

Cayo Buenavista

35Nm from Cayo Jutias.

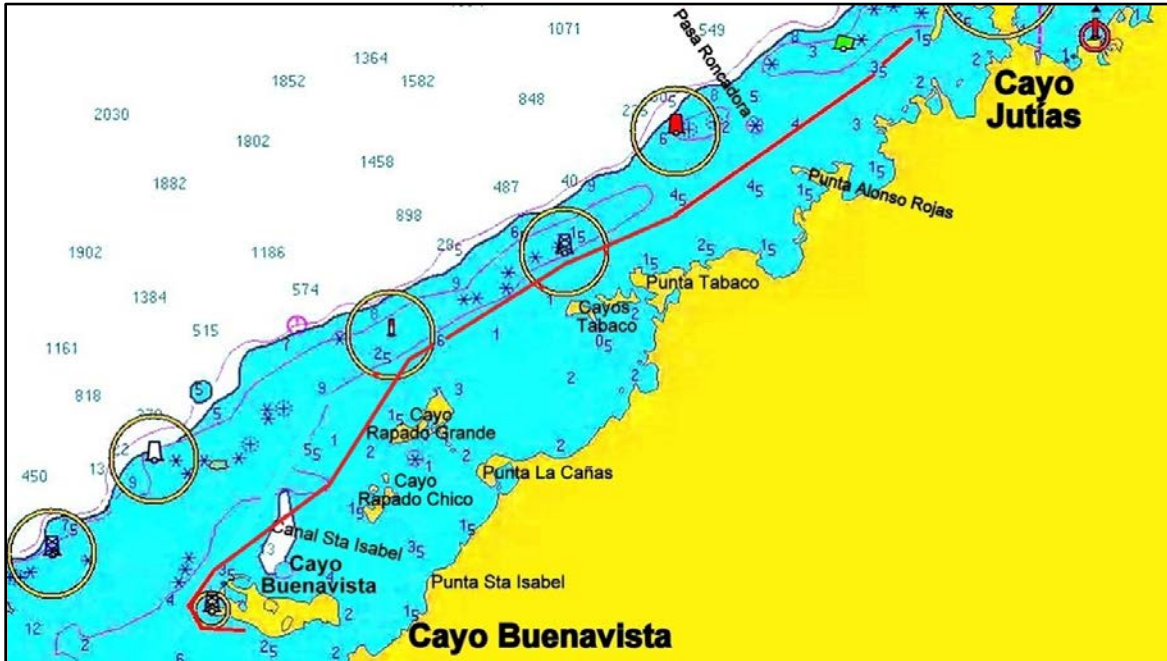


Figure 40. Route from Cayo Jutias to Cayo Buenavista

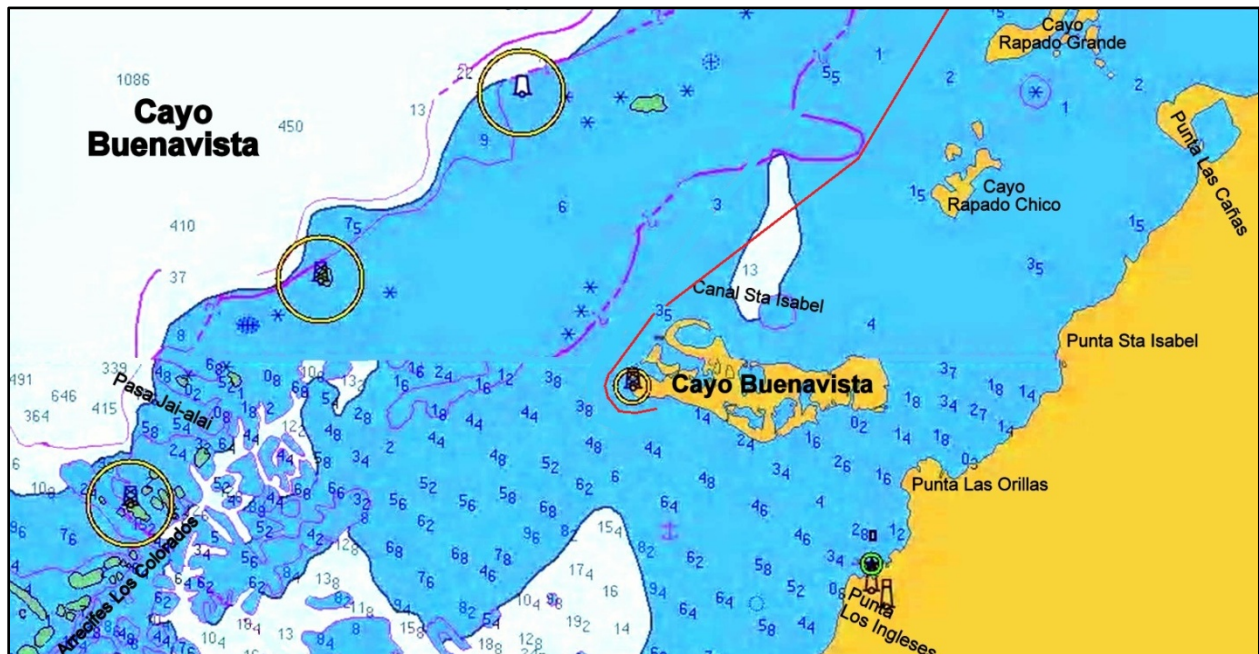


Figure 41. Cayo Buenavista

You can sail from Cayo Jutias to Cabo San Antonio all along the inner channel, between the reef on the west and mainland on the east. The water is crystal clear, especially on the first half of the channel, and depths vary from the shallowest 4m around the *Punta Tabaco* area to 20m between Cayo Buenavista and Los Morros.

To get to Cayo Buenavista from Cayo Jutías, head a **240°** course from the anchorage for the next 12Nm. You will see the *Pasa Roncadora* markers on the reef side of the channel –approximately at **22°37.92N, 84°15.17W** – and a series of red buoys on the south side, marking a series of shoals. When you get to WP **22°34.55N, 84°11.46W**, you will be between Cayo Restinga de Carruyo along the reef –marked with a lighted beacon on its west side- and Punta Tabaco on mainland, also marked with a lighted beacon.



Lighted beacon at Cayo Restinga

Bear **235°** to the next WP at **22°30.87N, 84°20.8W**. Do not stray to either side if you want to avoid the shoals extending well out of Punta Tabaco light and *Bajo del Medio*, a long shoal running parallel to the channel between Punta Tabaco and Cayo Rapado Grande on the SW.

Then change course to **216°** for the next 2Nm to WP **22°29.32N, 84°22.02W** and then bear **202°** to the following WP at **22°27.37N, 84°22.9W**, 2Nm further SW.



Cayo Tabaco off Punta Tabaco

At that point, set a **235°** course for the next 4Nm to a WP at **22°25.04N, 84°26.52W** on the NW side of the cay and proceed towards the SW to a WP at **22°24.1N, 84°27.17W** just in front of the lighted metal beacon.

From there, just go round the W side tip of the cay toward the anchorage. Do not go too near the mangrove as the bottom shoals rapidly from 3m to 1m. We dropped anchor at **22°23.7N, 84°26.33W** in 2.5m of good holding sand and grass.



Metal beacon at Cayo Buenavista

The cay is completely covered by mangrove. There are no beaches or any appropriate spot to leave the dinghy, but it makes a good resting stop between Cayo Jutías and Los Morros at Cabo San Antonio.



Cayo Buenavista

Marina Los Morros – Cabo San Antonio

This is the westernmost Port of Entry into Cuba.

<http://www.gaviota-grupo.com>

Tel: (53 48)75 0123, (53 48)75 0124

Email: comercial@mlagorda.co.cu

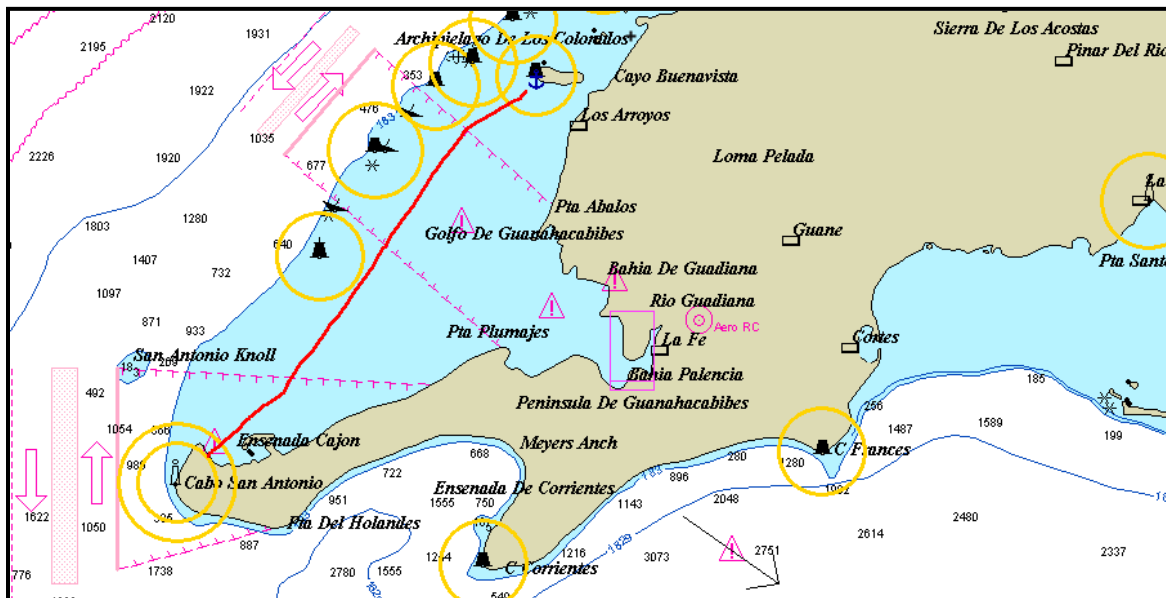


Figure 42. Cayo Buenavista to Cabo San Antonio



Figure 43. Entry to Punta Morros and Cabo San Antonio with Cayos de la Leña to NE

If you are coming from the south, bear in mind that winds and current will push you to the west. Give a wide berth to *Punta Cajón* as the shoal extends about 1Nm out. The approach is easy, marked and lit at night.

If coming from Cayo Buenavista, a course for the next 38Nm will place you at the approach WP at **21°54.48'N, 84°54.24'W**, just in front of the beacons marking the entrance channel to Marina Los Morros.



Beacons marking entrance channel to marina

From there bear **203°** to approach the dock. However, if you draft more than 6 feet, you will bump on the sand bottom, as we did. In that case, weather permitting, you can drop your anchor on the east side of the dock –we anchored at **21°54.12N, 84°54.38W** in 3m of good holding sand and grass. Do not go further south into the bay as the bottom gets rocky. In northers and strong east winds, this anchorage may become untenable, in which case locals make for Cayos de la Leña, 4Nm to the NE. *Canal de los Barcos* on the east side of the cays – entrance WP **21°55.5N, 84°48.5W** – is an extremely well sheltered hurricane hole where local boats are taken in bad weather conditions.



Anchored off Los Morros



Marina Los Morros dock



Marina dock at sunset



Anchorage east of the dock at Los Morros

The marina has a limited capacity of no more than 3 or 4 free berths alongside for visiting boats; 2 of them are used by the resort diving and fishing boats.

Marina fees:

- 0.40CUC/foot/day during the first 30 days
- Electricity: 0.22CUC/kw/hour
- Water: 3CUC/m³
- Diesel: 1.10CUC/l
- Gasoline: 1.15CUC/l

You will find a bar and restaurant, a small grocery and souvenir store with the usual basics – rum, soft drinks, some canned food, salt biscuits... and a dive



center. Osvaldo and Luis, the experienced dive instructors, and the rest of the staff there are very friendly and professional, AND speak a variety of languages.

Marina premises



Guanahacabibes National Park -- view from Marina Los Morros

As of April 2011 internet access was expected “soon”. In the meantime, international calls can be made with phone cards purchased at the *Hotel Villa Cabo San Antonio*, a very pleasant 4km walk west from the marina.

Euros and dollars can also be exchanged at the hotel. *A la carte* lunch and dinner are available at the hotel from a snack at 3CUC to lobster for 20CUC.



Hotel Villa Cabo San Antonio

**Hotel beach**

The only road leading to the marina is a dirt track that runs through the Guanahacabibes National Park, part of one of five UNESCO designated Biosphere Reserves in Cuba. It is named for the Guanahatabey people, believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the island, for whom the western peninsula was the last refuge from the advancing conquistadors.

The Reserve is one of Cuba's largest. It contains numerous lakes and is home to boa constrictors, crocodiles, domestic cattle gone wild, and more than 190 bird species. About one mile east of the marina pier lies a small cay which is the nesting habitat for local frigate birds. It is thought that as many as four of only seven species of marine turtles in the entire world, such as the hawksbill and the loggerhead, survive on this westernmost tip of Cuba.

Approximately 3 km from the marina on this road you will arrive at Las Tumbas, a small hotel/beach complex. The beach is nice but steep.

In prevailing settled weather, Los Morros can be a pleasant stop and a good jumping off point for rounding Cabo San Antonio for the south coast or for hopping across the strait to the Yucatan Peninsula. Those arriving from Mexico will find it a convenient place to clear into Cuba.

SOUTH COAST

SOUTHWEST COAST

Maria La Gorda

Port of Entry until 2008. NO LONGER!

21° 49.16N, 84° 29.93W

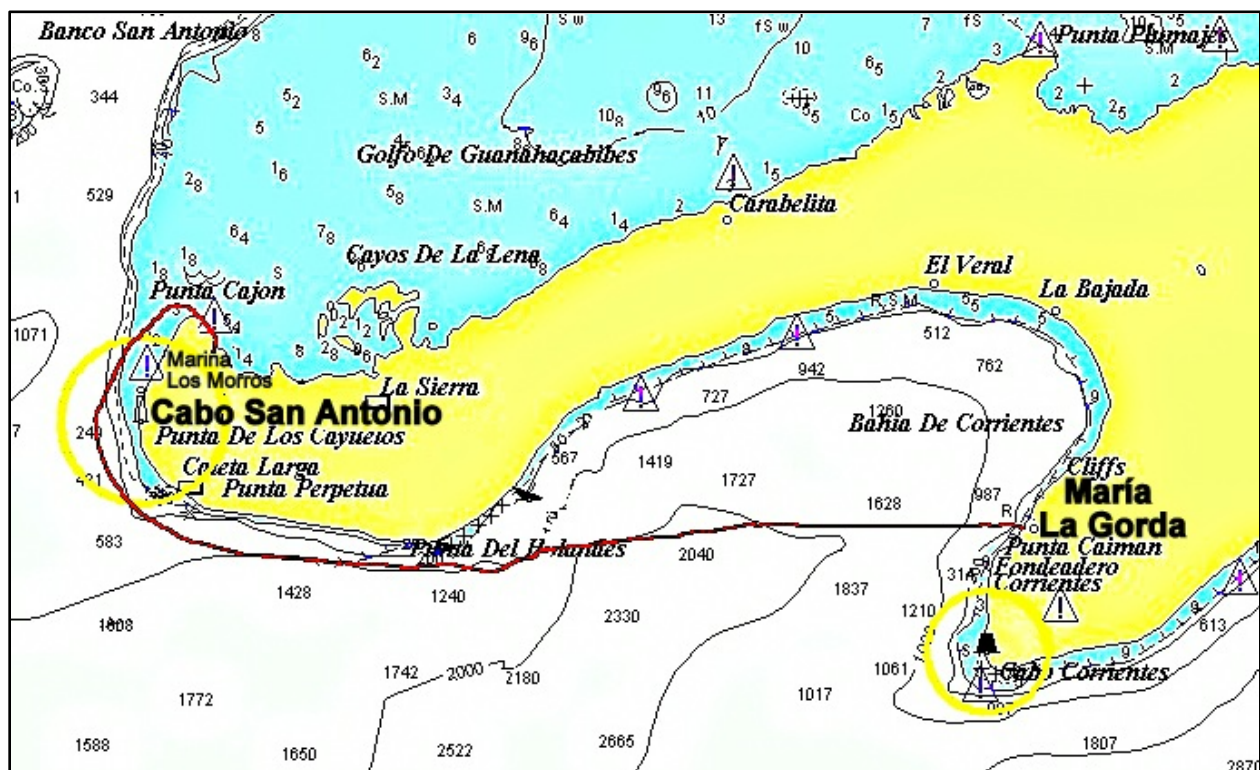


Figure 44. Cabo Santonio to Maria La Gorda

Maria La Gorda lies 30Nm from Los Morros. When sailing eastward, it is best to do so at night when prevailing trade winds blowing from the east calm down. It really makes a difference. We sailed the entire south coast at night or very early morning and had very pleasant motor sailing all the way to Santiago. Once the cape has been rounded there is some mild current to the east down to *Punta Perpetua*. Do not sail too near shore and leave at least 1Nm, especially off *Punta*



del Holandés, where the counter current coming from *Bahía de Corrientes* breaks in the shallow waters extending off shore. From *Punta Holandés* to *Cabo Corrientes* the current is westwards but not excessively strong.



Maria la Gorda resort

Maria la Gorda is a hotel and diving resort located in Guanacahibes Bay, a national park. There are 3 mooring buoys located at **21°49.15N, 84°29.93W**, **21°49.24N, 84°29.90W** and **21°49.20N, 84°29.90W**. The bottom is sand and coral. There is also a small dock on the beach to dock alongside but it is usually occupied by the resort diving boats, on one hand, and it does not seem too deep, on the other.



Hotel dock

Although we were told the depth around the dock was 6 feet, we could not tell and it did not look that much. Although there is no electricity or water or any other service, the fees are the same as in any other marina -0.40CUC/foot/day.



Sunset at Guanacabibes Gulf.



Guardafronteras office

Whether at anchor or at one of the mooring buoys, a fee of 0.15CUC/foot/day has to be paid. As soon as you land, you are expected to report at the guardafrontera at the hotel premises, in one of the last buildings on the south side of the beach.



Go ahead. Make a move on the giant chessboard

There is a restaurant and a snack bar. You can make and receive international phone calls but there is no internet. You can exchange \$ (both Canadian and US) and € at the hotel reception.

BEWARE! If you travel with your pet dog, keep him/her away from the stray cats wandering about at the resort; they are a dangerous wild lot, unafraid of dogs, and behave like a street gang! Do not take them for granted.

Cayos de San Felipe

21°57.9N. 83°37.85W

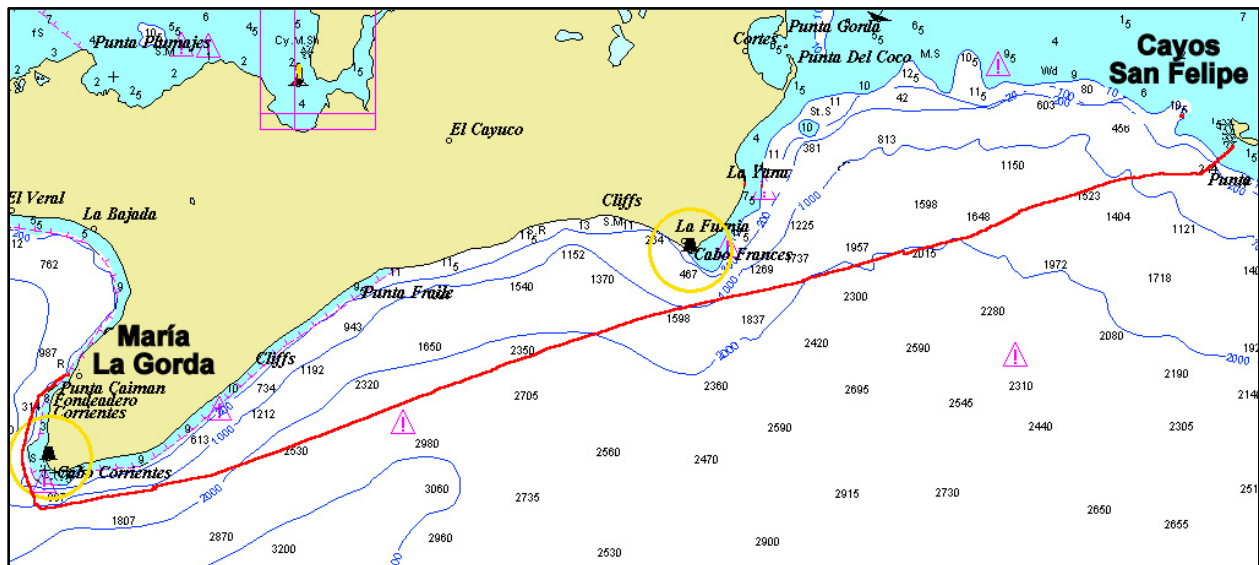


Figure 45. 60Nm from *María La Gorda* to *Cayos San Felipe*



If you leave *María La Gorda* anchorage around 10 pm, you'll take advantage of the usually calm seas and winds at night. Sail south, leaving at least 1Nm between boat and shore to avoid the

shallow waters around the shoreline. Make it 2Nm when rounding *Cabo Corrientes*, some 4Nm south of the anchorage, to avoid the potential rough seas due to the countercurrent. If motor sailing, you should be at *Cayos San Felipe* in good morning light.

We were stopped by the Coast Guard on the way, at about 4 am in the morning – I was on watch when, suddenly, they appeared out of the blue just beside our boat,

flashing a blinding light...I got the fright of my life. They just wanted to check on the boat and, after the usual questions, bid us a good journey and let us go on.

Although the whole of the Cuban coast is zealously controlled and patrolled by the military, the southeast coast down to Jardines de la Reina, is quite unpopulated, with hundreds of uninhabited cays they do not bother to visit. Bear in mind that some of the main worries of the Cuban authorities are illegal emigration and drug trafficking; they are extremely serious about both.

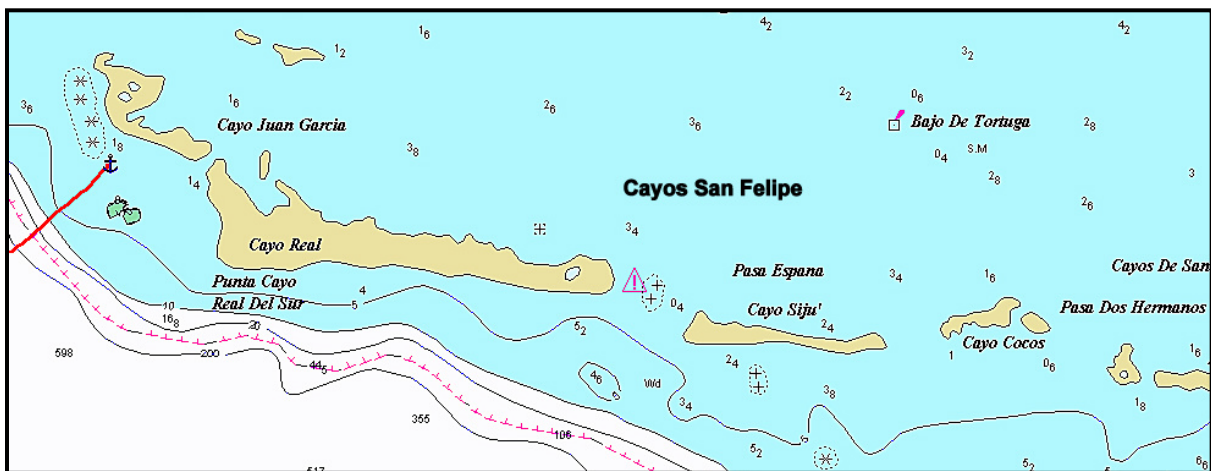


Figure 46. Cayos de San Felipe

You can sail the rest of the way on a rhumb line to the approach WP at **21°57.58N, 83°39.32W**. Then, bear **50°** towards the anchorage at Cayo Juan García – one of the numerous little cays that make up Cayos San Felipe. Half way to the anchorage the depth will drop rapidly from 100m to 20-ish m and then to 6m. From that point on, the bottom shoals very rapidly as it nears the shore. Fortunately, the water is crystal clear and the bottom is mainly sand and grass. Nevertheless, you shouldn't stray too much to either side – port or starboard -- as you run the risk of bumping on coral.



View from the anchorage at Cayo Juan Garcia.

We dropped anchor at **21°58.69N, 83°37.94W**, over 2.50m of transparent water and good holding sand and turtle grass, just in front of a small wooden hut, site of *Estación Biológica Juan García*, headquarters of Cayos de San Felipe National Park and home of the welcoming and friendly resident park guards.



With the park guards at Estación Biológica Juan García

Cayos de San Felipe is a string of cays that runs east-west. Its northern side is very shallow and full of scattered coral reefs and heads and sand shoals. There seem to

be many passes to the north side of the reef between the little cays but we dinghied some of them, sounder in hand, and can confirm that they are impracticable for keeled boats. You might be able to find a 4-5m deep channel along the gap between two cays, only to discover the water boiling on top of a reef at the mouth of the channel. Only local fishermen who know the area well venture along those passes.



Brown patches in the water warn of shoals



Pasa de los Barcos. Only suitable for cats with guts.

All the north shore is mainly mangrove but it also has plenty of long, white sand, solitary beaches, for the most part from the Biological Station toward the east. The NW side beach is essentially white, sticky, smelly mud. Fishing is excellent and so are snorkeling, swimming, walking... a very nice rest stop.



Mangroves and birdlife of Cayos de San Felipe

Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Pines)



Figure 47. Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Pines) and surrounding waters

Marina Siguanea (Isla de la Juventud)

21°37.168N, 82°59.179W

40 Nm from Cayos de San Felipe.

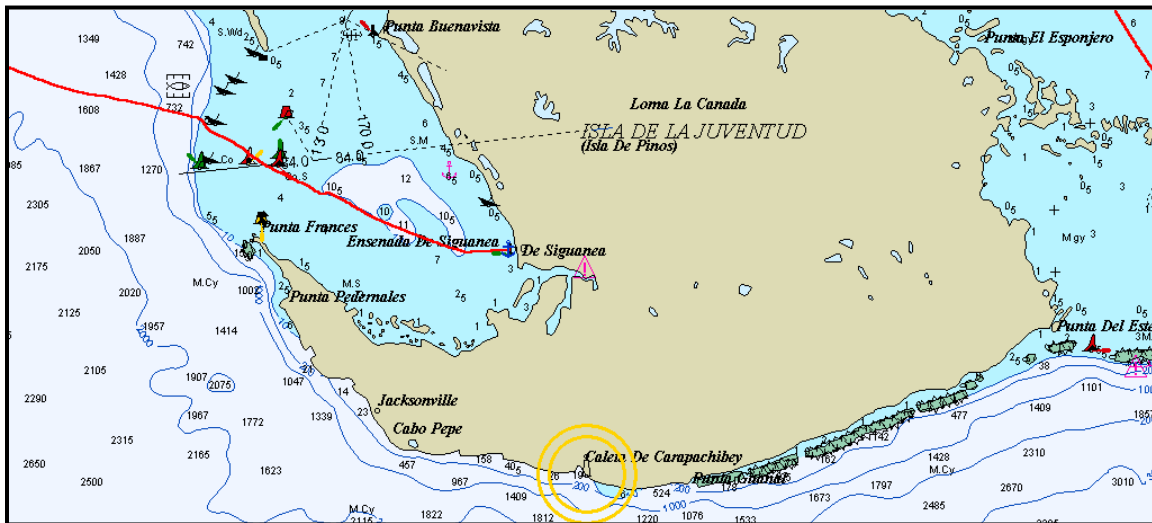


Figure 48. Ensenada de Siguanea at Isla de la Juventud

Ensenada de Siguanea is a big sheltered bay -- 17Nm long & 8Nm wide -- in the SW of Isla de la Juventud. It contains Marina Siguanea and a Guardiafronteras military base. It used to be a Port of Entry but it is no longer so. This may be your first chance in many miles to spread your sails open and alter your course southward to benefit from the trade winds. Or you can simply take a straight course towards the approach WP at **21°43N, 83°14W**. Along the way you will see a series of beacons marking different channels in and out of the reef. The approach buoy – which must be left to starboard – is red and white, and located at **21°41N, 83°13.90W**. Another pair of red and green beacons to port – at **21°41N, 83°11.88W** – marks the entrance to the channel leading to the north side of the island and its capital city Nueva Gerona.

Unless on board a catamaran or a low keeled vessel, do not attempt to enter the marina; one of the relatively frequent hurricanes that hit the island in recent years pushed the bottom sand into the channel, making it impracticable for boats with drafts more than 1.5m. If you want to enter, stick to the line of stakes on your starboard, as that is where the channel runs deeper.



**View of Marina Siguanea from the entrance channel.
It is inconspicuous from the anchorage a bit further north.**



Line of stakes along the south side of the channel

Once inside the marina, the bottom drops to 4-5m on the north side – just beside the Guardiafronteras base -- and gradually lessens towards the south end.



Guardiafrontera base in Siguanea

Not only the entrance channel but all the area around the channel markers is quite shallow –below 2m well up northwards, especially around *Hotel Colony*. The same applies to the whole periphery of the island, so when sailing around Isla Juventud, leave a good 2Nm from the shore to avoid shallow waters.

We anchored at **21°37.17N, 82°59.18W** in good holding muddy sand and 2.7m of water, a bit far from the marina; but the only place where you physically can – and are allowed, anyway -- to land. At the dock, a couple of Guardiafronteras officers will be waiting for you to take them out to your boat for the usual paperwork and back. You'll have to repeat the procedure when ready to leave.



View of the anchorage off Marina Siguanea from Hotel Colony beach



Landmark at the marina dock; unfortunately, usually out of sight hidden behind some boat

The marina works mainly with charter boats for sightseeing, fishing and diving tours operating out of the *Hotel Colony*. Diesel is available at 0.90CUC/l.-- the cheapest in our Cuban voyage -- but there is no gasoline. Docking is alongside the new docks and it costs 0.65CUC/ft/day, water and electricity included.

One km further north, the *Hotel Colony*, a luxury hotel in Batista times, has been transformed into an all-included diving resort, worth paying a visit. You can walk along the paved road that connects the marina to the hotel. Just do not attempt it around sunset, unless you want to battle the ferocious local mosquitoes -- or take the hotel bus and tip the driver 1CUC for the ride.

**Hotel bus****Hotel Colony**

Sailors are welcome to the hotel premises and can enjoy the long beach; hire a car from 60CUC/day, or a tour; make use of the swimming pool, shops, bars and restaurant at 10CUC for the buffet lunch and dinner, drinks not included.

International calls can be made but there is no internet.



Fishing on a lazy afternoon



Sunset at Colony beach



Hotel Colony. Dock to the end of the world

This is the only port in the entire island from which you will be in easy reach of Nueva Gerona by land. However, it can accommodate only a limited number of vessels and leisure boats are not allowed entry except in cases of emergency.



Nueva Gerona

Nueva Gerona is the capital city of Isla de la Juventud in the Department of Pinar del Río and the only real chance for provisioning in many miles to come. Do not miss it!!!

Once the “bread basket” of the country, several hurricanes in the last years have devastated the island, ruining farms and people’s lives. Their effects still show today. Nevertheless, the city, as all the populated places we have visited in Cuba, is immaculately clean and retains a lingering colonial beauty worth enjoying.



Calle 39 or José Martí

To get to Nueva Gerona, both from the marina and the hotel, take the regular local bus, which runs several times a day at 1 local peso per ride. The first ride to the city is at 6 am. We really enjoyed the trip to the city, making stops in the scattered little villages, sightseeing the beautiful landscape.

The hotel bus makes several trips a day, too, but the driver will want to charge you an abusive fare of 10CUC/ride/passenger. Since a taxi costs 20CUC/ride, the best deal is to take the local bus, enjoy the ride inland and contract a private car in the city. Ask around to anybody driving a car; they charge the same as a regular taxi but will wait for you as long as you need while you do your shopping, help you with your bags, take you safely back to the marina and help unloading your stuff.



Figure 49. Map of Nueva Gerona

For vegetables, fruit and meat go to the *agro* (street market). Tell the bus driver to leave you nearby. The stock was quite limited when we were there but there is no other choice, unless you drive inland and try to buy at the farms.



Agro in Nueva Gerona



Stock of the day: bananas, dry peas, squash, lemon, homemade tomato sauce, peppers, homemade vinegar, leeks and guava jam.

For the rest of your groceries, there are various stores in CUCs and MN (local pesos) all along the pedestrian Calle José Martí or 39 Street. There you can get the usual bare cans of tuna or Chinese meat, along with some pasta, beans, rice, some frozen meat and/or chicken and basic household items.

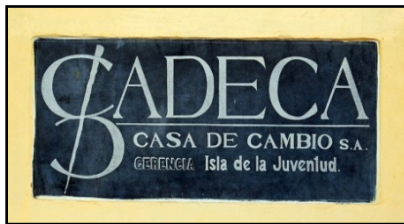
There are also some handcraft and artisan souvenirs shops with various nice handmade products on sale; and assorted restaurants, both in CUCs and MNs, which have a limited menu of chicken or delicious pork on offer. Try the latter. For bare crackers, even cheaper rum, guyaba and mango jam, go to the local grocery on the same street. Bread can be purchased at the bakery next door but you should be there early because they usually run out of it well before midday. Another good source of frozen meat, mainly chicken, are the Cupet, the national network of petrol stations. The one in Nueva Gerona is located at the end of 39 Street.



Bici-taxis are a common means of transport



Take a bici-taxi from the market to the city center; enjoy a ride and a chat, 10 pesos



Exchange booth sign, Calle 39



Calle 39, the heart of the city



Post Office in Calle 39 between 18 y 20



Escape from the afternoon heat at the *cine* (movie theater)



Watching the time go by in the heat of the afternoon



Nuestra Señora de los Misterios Church



If you read Spanish, do not miss the chance to get lost among books of all genres at ridiculous prices at the town bookshop



Figure 50. Map of Isla de la Juventud

Bahía de San Pedro

21°36N, 82°58W

Two Nm south of Marina Sigüanea, *Laguna de San Pedro* is set in an extremely well sheltered bay, used as a hurricane hole. This is where you should head in bad weather. Apart from that, it is not a particularly interesting anchorage; the surrounding roly hills are covered by mangrove and, in the case you do find a spot to land the dinghy, there is nowhere to go but a dense mass of buggy mangrove.



Figure 51. Bahía de San Pedro – excellent hurricane hole



Rolly hills of Bahía de San Pedro

The bottom around the inner shoreline is very shallow. That is especially so at the mouth of the bay where successive hurricanes have built up more sand. There is no marked channel or marking buoys in the lagoon, so you have to feel your way in.

An approach WP at **21°35.88N, 82°58.95W** will set you in front of the channel into the inlet. From that point, bear **84°** into the center of the bay and stick to the center line to avoid shoals. At some points along the entrance channel, the depths can be as little as 2.3m. The center of the lagoon has minimum depths of 3m.

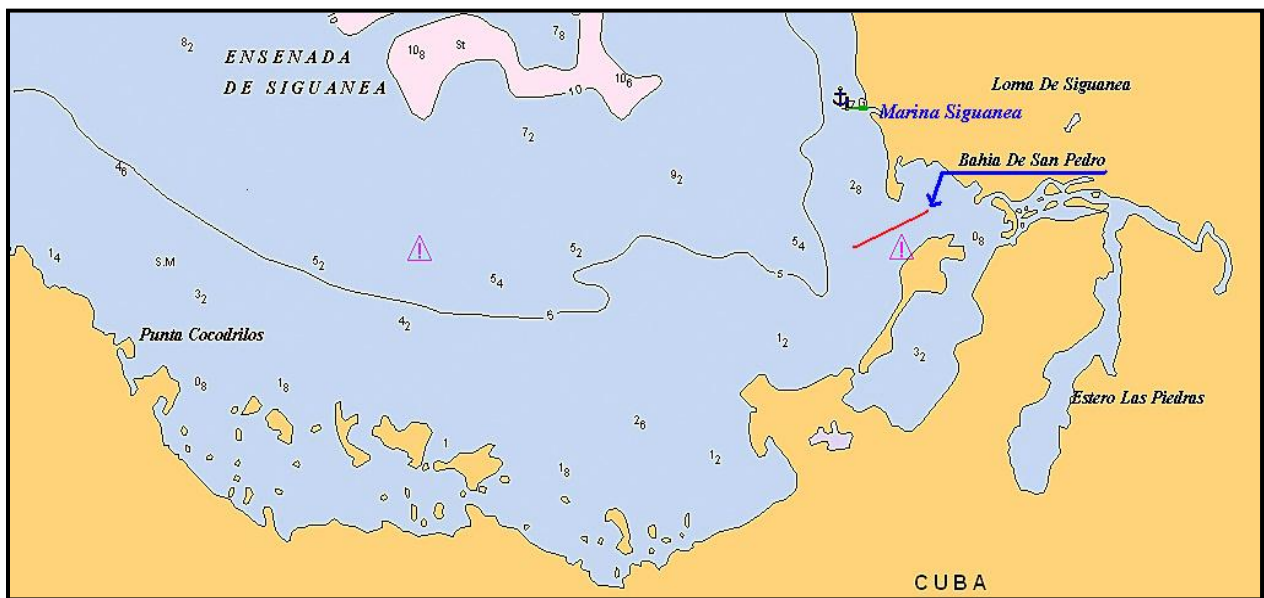


Figure 52. Accessing Bahia de San Pedro from Ensenada de Siguanea

Once inside, you can drop your anchor in good holding mud anywhere you feel comfortable but as far as possible from the buggy shores.

Ensenada de Los Barcos

21°55.165N, 82°58.281W

22Nm from Sigüanea. Interesting only as a rest stop.



Figure 53. Ensenada de Los Barcos

The length of coast from *Punta Buenavista*, 12Nm north of Sigüanea, to *Pasa Quitasol*, the E pass through the break in *Los Canarreos Archipelago*, is marked with buoys and beacons that indicate minimum depths of 6m. It is not necessary to round them but always leave at least 0.5Nm distance from the coast line, as it is very shallow.

Ensenada de los Barcos is 10Nm to the NE of *Punta Buenavista*. The first thing you will see from the distance when approaching the bay is a long strip of land stretching to the west.

In fact, a submerged mud and sand shoal extends for another 2Nm to the SW and the unmarked channel is quite narrow and shallow at that point, with depths of 2.2m and shoals on both sides. The tip of the submerged shoal is marked by a stake at **21°54.242N, 83°00.645W** that should be left 150-200m away. To enter, bear **60°** into the bay (**240°** on departure) from an approach WP at **21°53.80N, 83°01.20W**.



Northern strip of land of Ensenada de los Barcos

There is a minimum depth of 2.5m in the central area of the ample bay that shelves rapidly toward the shores. In spite of being protected in all winds but wests, it still can be a bit roly in strong easts.



Figure 54. Ensenada de los Barcos

NOTE: At this point, the wind pattern will change; all the way down to Manzanillo, nights will usually be quite windy from the E, so you will want sail in the heat of calmer daylight.

We anchored at **21°55.165N, 82°58.281W**, as far away from the reach of mosquito and puri-puri (no see'em) bites as possible, in good holding grey sticky mud which had to be washed off on deck.

The flat landscape around is covered by dense mangrove and there isn't a single beach to land the dinghy.



There is heavy sea traffic in the area. Keep an open eye!

Ensenada Chacón (or Estero Simón)

3 Nm E of Nueva Gerona).
22Nm from Ensenada de los Barcos.

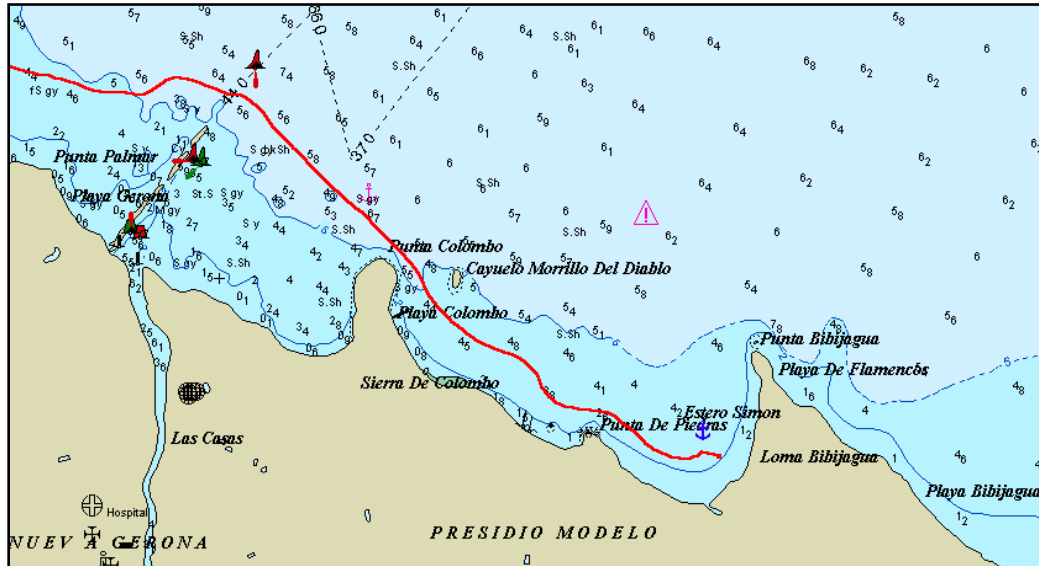


Figure 55. Ensenada Chacón, otherwise known as Estero Simón

The whole area around *Ensenada Chacón* or *Estero Simón* is very busy with sea traffic of all sorts of boats, from small cargoes to passenger ferries, fishing boats and even boats handcrafted of polyethylene! Keep an alert eye to avoid accidents.



Returning to Nueva Gerona from a day out fishing



Sierra de los Caballos mountain range in Nueva Gerona approaching from the west

Once past the entrance channel to Nueva Gerona, head to *Punta Colombo* (at **21°54.69N, 82°46.72W**) and pass between it and Cayuelo Morrillo del Diablo -- an oblong rock that pops out at **21°54.58N, 82°46.28W**.

The beach on the west side of the bay is *Playa Colombo* or *Playa Paraíso*, very popular among locals. A road runs from the beach to the village of Chacón, and to Nueva Gerona, some 5km inland.

**Cayuelo
Morrillo del
Diablo, locally
known as Isla
de los Monos**



**Playa Paraíso**

The hills above the beach, actively quarried for marble, exude a cloud of dust that can be seen from miles away. This part of the bay is free of hazards and the depths stay over 3m quite near the beach. The ruined pilings of an old dock mark the depth limit. However, you will be better sheltered from the prevailing trade winds and the dust from the quarry, at *Ensenada Chacón* on the east side of the bay. You will have over 4m in most of the bay but the bottom shoals rapidly once under the 3m level.

We anchored at **21°53.81N, 82°44.94W** on not so good holding sand and turtle

**Anchored at Ensenada Chacón**

grass. Be sure to check the holding as east winds blow very hard at night. We dragged into a sand shoal in the middle of a windy night and had a hard time attempting to get out.



Gunkholing in Estero Simón

The surrounding vegetation is mangrove and low bush sprinkled with little beaches and strips of sand where you can land your dinghy.

If you missed the chance to visit the *Prisión Modelo*, or Model Penitentiary, when it was a working prison, the peculiar circular buildings of the subsequently abandoned prison are now a museum of Batista regime horrors, and they are in walking distance from the anchorage.

As shown below, there is a dirt track (in red) at left that leads from the beach to the road (in green) heading for the village of Chacón and the prison itself, 3km further away.



Figure 56. Nueva Gerona and the route from the beach to the prison museum



View of Presidio Modelo from the anchorage at Ensenada Chacón

Bays east of Nueva Gerona

At $21^{\circ} 53.82\text{N}$, $82^{\circ} 44.92\text{W}$ there is 3m of water over sand and grass.

There is generally good to excellent protection from all directions except NW and N (northers). The water is deep and free of hazards until fairly close to shore. On the first bay just W of *Puerto Colombo* there is a small beach at its south end. The hills above are actively quarried for marble and the pinkish cloud of dust can be seen from miles away (as far as the western tip of *Isla Juventud*).

The second bay SW of *Puerto Bibijagua* is free from the dust as wind from the W is extremely unlikely.

Cayo Campos

2Nm from *Ensenada Chacón*.

Approach WP: $21^{\circ}36.44\text{N}$, $82^{\circ}18.35\text{W}$



Figure 57. *Ensenada Chacón* to *Cayo Campos*

To get to the next anchorage at Cayo Campos you have to cross through **Los Canarreos Archipelago**. It stretches from Cayo de la Pipa in its NW to Cayo Largo in the SE. There are two main passes through the reef; **Pasa de la Manteca** to head N and **Pasa de Quitasol** leading E.



Figure 58. Pasa Quitasol



NOTE: *Pasa de la Manteca* at $22^{\circ}00'N$, $82^{\circ}43'W$ is the pass north of the reef, along the well marked *Monterrey Channel*, running from Nueva Gerona to Surgidero de Batabanó on the SW coast of mainland Cuba. Most sea traffic in the whole *Batabanó Gulf* runs through this channel. It marks the northernmost pass through the *Canarreos Archipelago* into the gulf.

Pasa de Quitasol at $21^{\circ}56'N$, $82^{\circ}38.21'W$ is mainly used by fishing boats to and from Nueva Gerona and the east side of the *Batabanó Gulf*. This well marked channel has lighted beacons on both ends and various intermediate markers along the way.

From the anchorage at *Ensenada Chacón*, you can sail in a rhumb line to the channel entrance at $21^{\circ}55.80'N$, $82^{\circ}39.40'W$.



Pasa de Quitasol viewed from the west

Then, set an 80° course towards the opposite end of the pass. The channel runs north of the red beacons and south of the green ones, so leave the red markers to starboard and the green ones to port, when sailing east.



Markers along Pasa Quitasol channel. Punta Colombo, off Nueva Gerona, can be seen on the background

There is an unmarked wreck some distance south of the channel entrance at approximately **21°55.30N, 82°39.70W**.



Red beacon at Pasa de Quitasol channel

On the west side of the channel, the waters- over 5 – 6m deep all the way down to Cayo Campos - become an amazing turquoise blue.





As you come near the approach WP at **21°36.44N, 82°18.35W**, depths will drop from 6m to 4-3m. A **220°** course from that point will lead you straight into the anchoring area. The deepest part of the channel runs very near the west shore of Cayo Campos, whereas the west side of the channel itself is very shallow. There is no pass to the south of the reef on the south end of the channel and the bottom shelves rapidly in that area. We dropped anchor at **21°34.13N, 82°20.50W** in 2.5m of water and good holding sand bottom. Bear in mind that the current can be quite strong in the channel area.



Figure 59. Reaching the anchorage at Cayos Campos

Some distance south of the anchorage there is a little sandy beach where you can leave the dinghy and take the path that leads to the *Biological Research Center (Centro de investigación biológica)* where the resident staff takes care of Korean monkeys transplanted onto the cay for biological research. There are hundreds and it is not difficult to see them, as well as the usual iguanas and *jutias*, if you pay a visit to the research center or take a walk along one of the numerous tracks inland. The best beaches are some meters further east the research center.



Figure 60. Trail to biological center, Cayo Campos



Monkey among mangroves



Entering lobster territory



South end of the channel. Can you spot the TWO herons?



Fishing station at Cayo Campos



Same fishing station by morning light



Sunset at Cayo Campos

Cayo Tablones

14Nm from Cayo Campos.

Approach WP: $21^{\circ}43.86N$, $82^{\circ}05.80W$

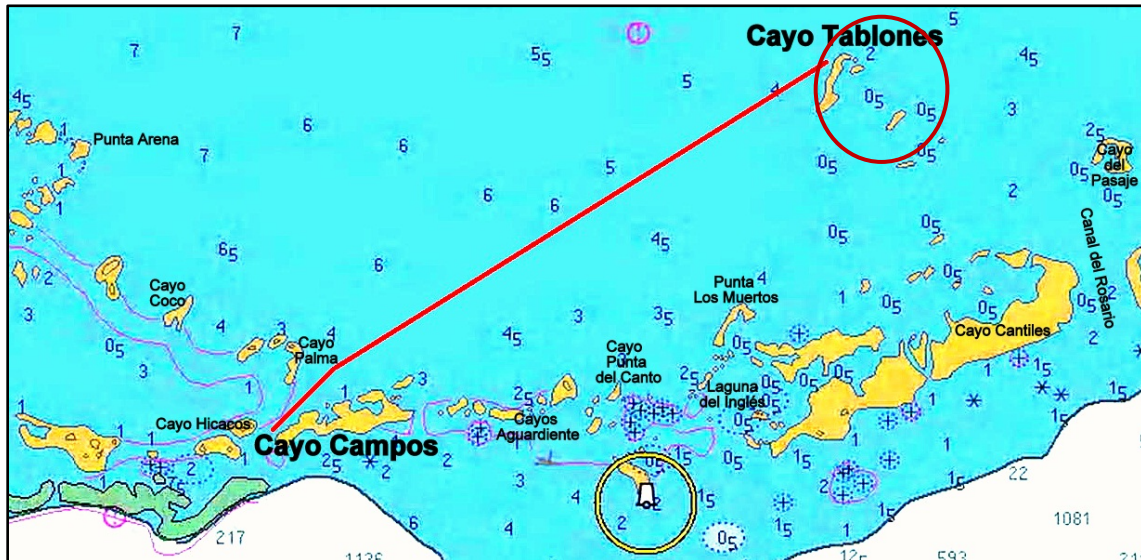


Figure 61. Cayo Campos to Cayo Tablones

The anchorage at Cayo Tablones is only interesting as a rest stop as there are no beaches to land and it only offers shelter from East winds.

The approach way point is at **21°43.86N, 82°05.80W** and you can sail there on a rhumb line over 5-6m of water all the way from Cayo Campos, weather permitting; we were not that lucky, as you can deduce by our track. From there, when coming from the W, approach the shore until you're over 3m of water. You can drop anchor on good holding sand at about **21°43.20N, 82°05.24W**.



Anchored at Cayo Tablones

We stopped here on our way from Cayo Campos to Cayo Cantiles just to get a rest from the uncomfortable sailing against E-NE winds. In the late afternoon, the winds and seas calmed down and we departed to Cayo Cantiles anchorage about 4:30pm.

We were told by local fishermen that E winds blow stronger in the first quarter after the full moon (“*menguante*”).



Figure 62. Cayo Tablones



Blue on blue

When leaving Cayo Tablones eastward, we set a course of 15° to a waypoint at $21^{\circ}45.00\text{N}$, $82^{\circ}04.71\text{W}$ and then bore E (90°) for the next mile or so to avoid the shoal that extends to the E on the N side of the cay. (You can see the lighter blue strip of water over the shoal to starboard.).



Waiting for the afternoon calms at Cayo Tablones

Cayo Rosario and Cayo Cantiles

24Nm from Cayo Campos.

10Nm from Cayo Tablones.

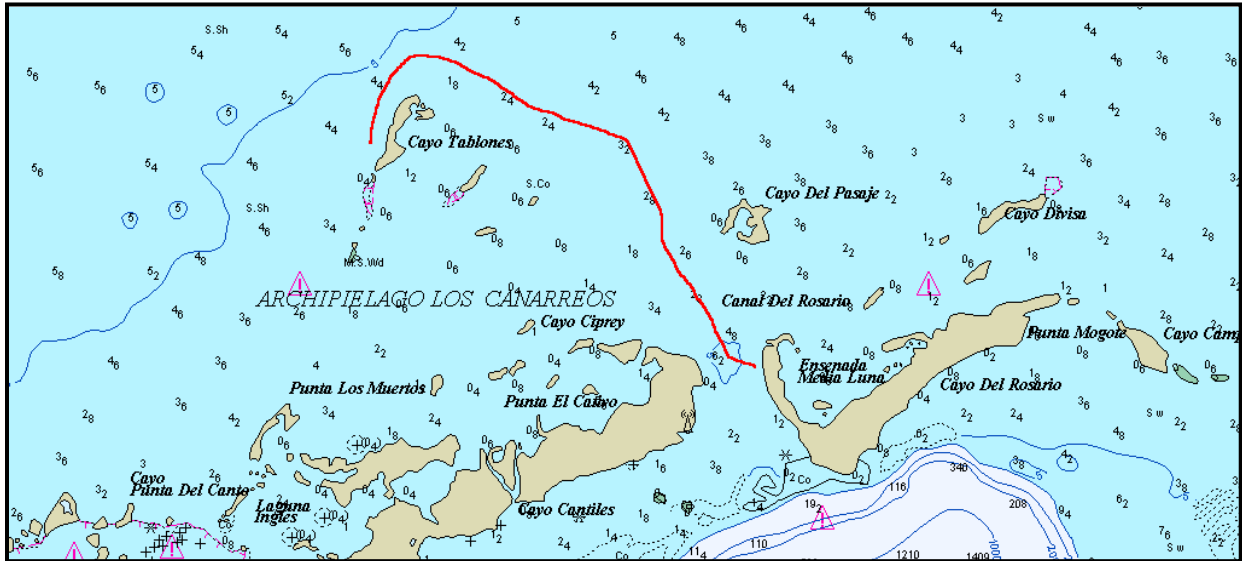
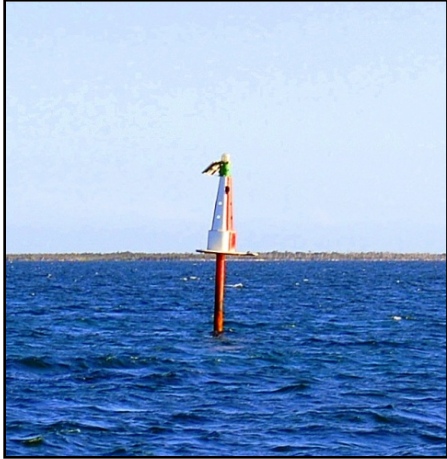


Figure 63. Cayo Tablones to Cayos Rosario and Cantiles



Figure 64. Cayos Rosario and Cantiles closeup

Once you are safely away from the shallow waters around Cayo Tablones, you can set a **115°** course for the next 4Nm. Then, approximately at WP **21°42.61N, 81°59.12W**, turn to a course of **155°**, so you are over 3m of water all the way to the first red and black beacon (lighted, 10 second interval, range of 4Nm) one mile W of Cayo Pasaje. Do not stray to starboard in order to avoid the shallow waters to the SE of Cayo Tablones all the way down to Cayo Cantiles.



Red and white beacon off Cayo Cantiles

The depth around the beacon off Cayo Pasaje is just over 2m immediately E of it, but it is even shallower if you stray either to port or starboard. Local fishermen told us they pass to the west of the beacon where the bottom is apparently deeper. Once past the tricky beacon area, you can breathe again as the water gets progressively deeper as you approach Cayo Rosario and Cayo Cantiles.



Anchored at Cayo Cantiles

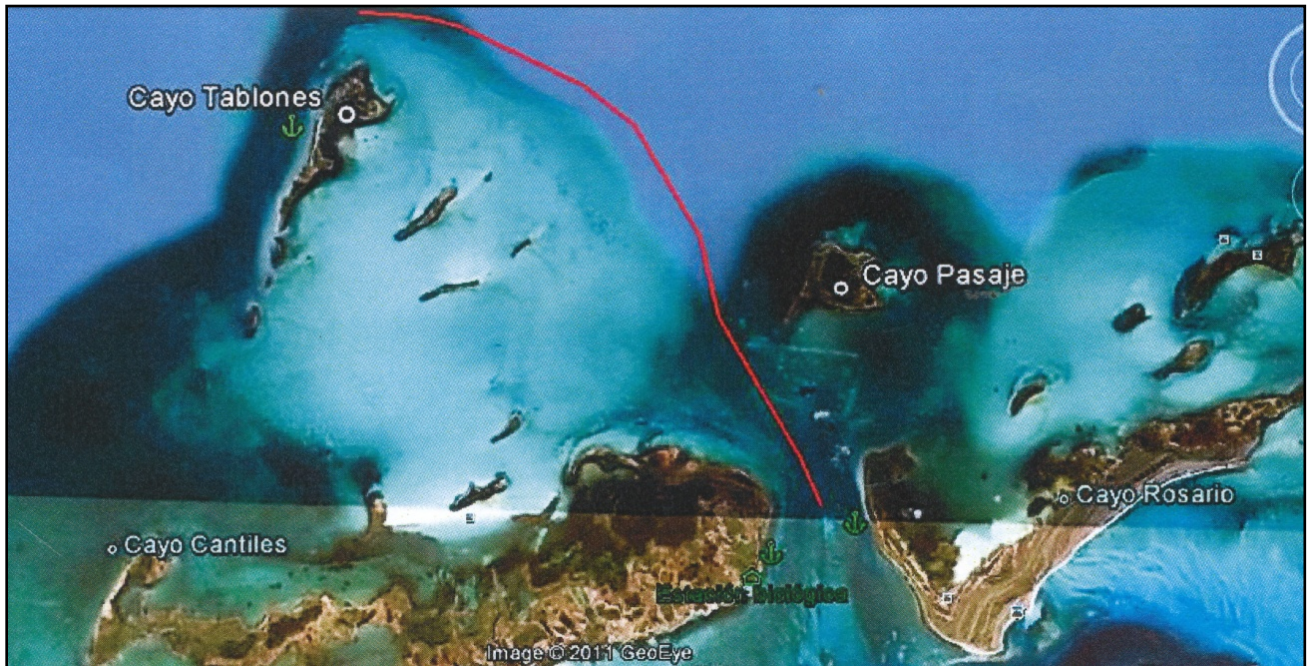


Figure 65. The course to Cayo Rosario

You can anchor by the west coast of Cayo Rosario where you will be better sheltered from easts. However, two thirds of the shoreline is covered by mangrove and there are no beaches to land the dinghy. The southernmost part has nice beaches but it is very shallow. The best white sand, crystal clear beaches are on the south shore of the cay but the reef acts as a natural barrier for boats. The only way to get there is by dinghy equipped with a powerful outboard to cover the distance from the anchorage.

We dropped anchor at **21°38.47N, 81°56.51W** in 3m of depth and a good holding sand and turtle grass bottom. But we only spent our first night there as there is not much to do and we wanted to visit the Cayos Cantiles Biological Station on the opposite shore. So next morning we moved to Cayo Cantiles and anchored just in front of the *Estación Biológica* at **21°37.41N, 81°57.81W** in 3-4m of water in a good holding sand and turtle grass bottom.

Some meters to the north of the Station there is a little beach where you can land the dinghy.



Estación Biológica. Cayo Cantiles

The resident staff at the station takes care of the monkeys relocated to the cay for biological research. The monkeys come from somewhere in Africa and are quite shy so they are not easy to see, except at lunch time. Every day at 12 noon, one of the guys stationed there rings the remains of an old oxygen tank to call the cay monkeys to lunch and they come by dozens.



Monkey canteen

If you like walking, put on stout shoes – the ground is what they call *diente de perro* -- spiky volcanic material -- and take one of the marked tracks or *trocha* inland. There are a couple of lagoons on the north where crocodiles dwell, as well as the usual iguanas, *jutias* and birds...



Track inland, Cayo Cantiles



Bucolic landscape at Cayo Cantiles

We would have loved to stay there longer but our visas had already expired and we had to reach Cayo Largo as soon as possible in order to renew them. So, with great sorrow, we left Cayo Cantiles in the afternoon in order to pass *Pasa Rosario* during daylight while benefitting from the evening calms during the journey to Cayo Largo. But not before unloading our last stock of fresh, canned and bottled provisions onshore – the staff stationed at different cays spends 15 to 30 days out with only a limited stock of fresh fruits and vegetables. Cigarettes, rum and fishing gear are always welcome, too. In return, you will get as much fish and lobster as you like and the chance to spend delightful moments in their company.



Station headquarters and temporary home of the staff

Pasa del Rosario: Along the north shore of the string of cays that stretches from Cayo Rosario to Cayo Largo the waters are very shallow, and especially so in the case of Cayo Largo. So the only choice when approaching it is from the SW side of the cay – there is a possible anchoring area on the SE near *Punta Del Este* but it is completely open to trades. To make it there, you will have to go through *Pasa del Rosario*, a well marked cut in the reef.

An approach WP at **21°36.21N, 81°56.37W** will place you on the northern side of the channel from where you will see the different buoys and beacons along the pass until you get to the approach WP on the south end of the channel at **21°35.47N, 81°56.07W**.



Figure 66. Pasa Rosario

Note: Cuban *GeoCuba* charts are quite accurate but they date from 1997; certain channels are not shown, while others appear which are no longer in use. Such is the case with *Pasa Estopa* and *Quebrado Rosario*. The first was dragged and marked a few years ago and is located just east of the eastern tip of Cayo Rosario at about 21°39.28N, 81°48.14W. It is mainly used by fishing boats and multihull ferries to and from Cayo Largo and mainland Cuba. We did not try but I would not risk this pass if drafting more than 1.5m.



Figure 67. Pasa Estopa

On the other hand, *Quebrado del Rosario*, some distance SW of *Pasa Rosario*, is displayed on the charts as the main pass through the reef, whereas it is only used by fishermen with good knowledge of the area as it is quite shallow.

A new edition of the same chart kit has been just published but I do not know whether they include updated information or it is simply a re-release of the same charts.

However, the best charts to sail Cuba are, no doubt, the pilot charts used by the chartering companies. They are not for sale but you can always consult the skippers at the marinas; they are a great source of information and usually speak some English.



One more of those glorious sunsets

Cayo Largo

Port of Entry.

24Nm from Cayo Cantiles & Cayo Rosario.

Approach WP: **21°34.76N, 81°36.75W**

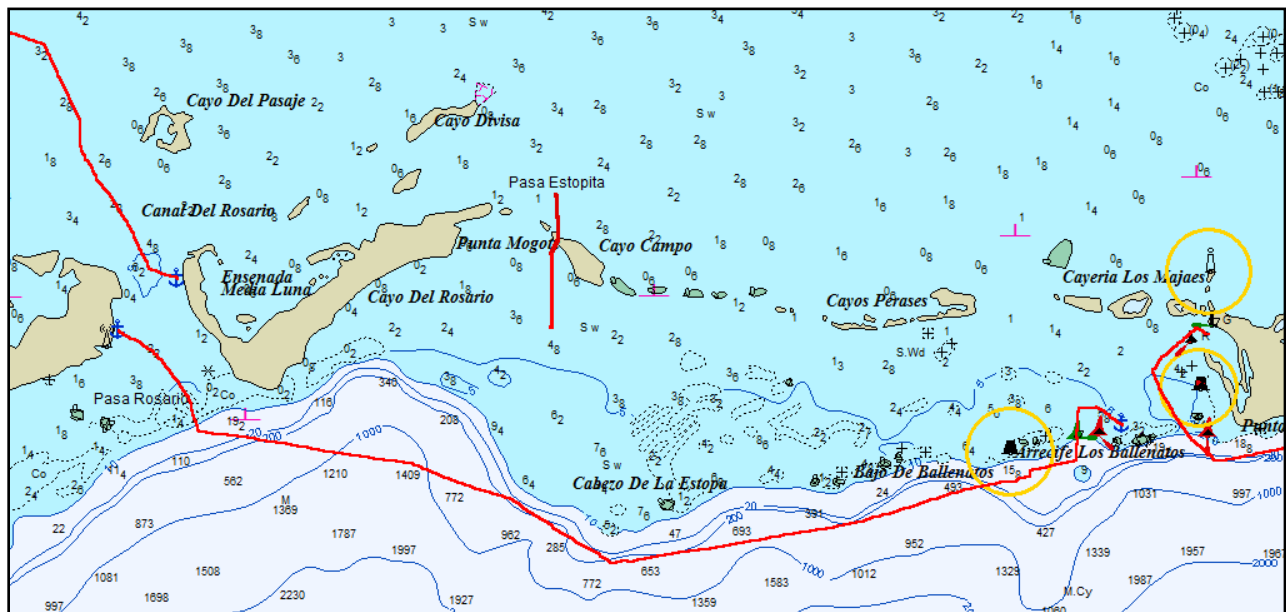


Figure 68. Cayo Cantiles to Cayo Largo

The track between these cays is short and easy; once by the light tower of Los Ballenatos islets, the lighted beacons that mark the entrance into the reef will be visible in the distance. Go to an approach WP at **21°34.76N, 81°36.75W** and bear **15°** to get through the wide and well marked cut in the reef.

If you leave in the afternoon, you will benefit from the calms but night may fall before you reach the marina at Cayo Largo.

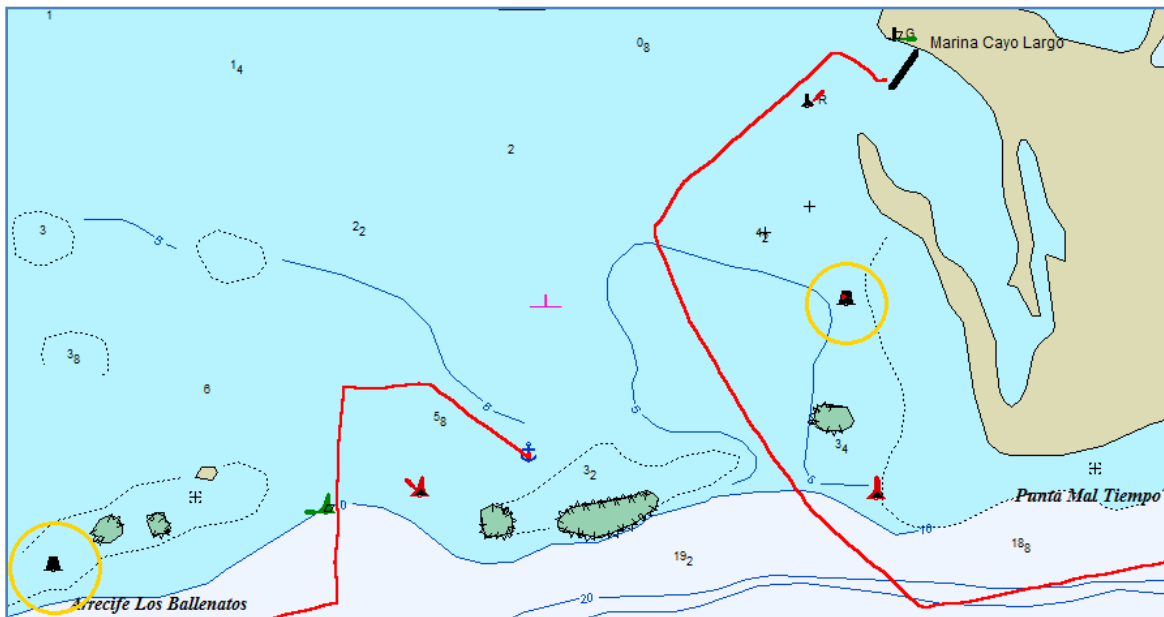


Figure 69. Through the wide, well marked cut in the reef to Marina Cayo Largo

Which happened to us. So we decided to spend the night at anchor at $21^{\circ}35.51\text{N} - 81^{\circ}35.74\text{W}$, off *Hijos de los Ballenatos*, two little islets east of the pass and a nice and popular spot for diving, snorkeling and fishing.

A 60° course will lead you to the marked and lighted east channel into Marina Cayo Largo. The whole area around the channel is full of sand shoals so do not stray from it. More or less at WP $21^{\circ}36.63\text{N} - 81^{\circ}.35.06\text{W}$, the channel forks in two and the marking becomes confusing. To make things worse, there is a very shallow unmarked area between both channels into the marina, just at the beginning of the south channel. Only catamarans and low keeled boats use it. If drafting more than 1.5m, take the northern channel along the following way points:

- **WP₁ $21^{\circ}36.87\text{N}, 81^{\circ}34.89\text{W}$**
- **WP₂ $21^{\circ}37.49\text{N}, 81^{\circ}34.11\text{W}$** – at sight of the marina to STB.
- **WP₃ $21^{\circ}37.35\text{N}, 81^{\circ}33.79\text{W}$** – Marina Cayo Largo.



Figure 70. Marino Cayo Largo

There is a very nice anchoring area around the south channel but you have to dock at the marina and check with the authorities in the first place.

Marina Cayo Largo. VHF 16,19. Berths: 90. Depth: 3,50m.

Address: Pueblo Turístico

Tel.: 53 (45) 48213 & 48133

comercial@margca.cls.tur.cu

Fax: 53 (45) 48212 & 48133

cydivers@margca.cls.tur.cu



North channel into the marina and anchoring area



Another view of the channel



One more shot – it's all in the Caribbean light

After many miles of solitary cays you are back to civilization again. The marina is part of a huge tourist resort that stretches all along the south coast of Cayo Largo up to *Punta del Este*. It has its own airport for domestic and international flights (Vitalio Acuña Airport, 1 km east of the marina. **Tel:** (53 45) 48 364) and all sorts of facilities and commodities for tourists. All the authorities are based at the marina and there is a bank where you can exchange money, a snack bar, and a grocery with the usual basics. Fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, ham, bread and eggs can be ordered at the grocery. It usually takes a day and they are pricey but there is no more choice.



Marina Cayo Largo



Central Bank branch at Marina Cayo Largo



Immigration and Customs office



**“El Torreón” restaurant
and pirate cove**

Marina bar



Preparing the stage for the evening concert

There are no permanent or even long term residents here except for the resort staff that comes to work from the mainland. Everything is focused on the tourists and their well being and comfort on Cayo Largo and it is a very busy island.



Getting on board for a day out at sea



Vitalio Acuña Airport

The airport is second only to La Havana Airport in number of daily flights. Its submarine beauties attract diving aficionados from all over the world. Its endless solitary beaches are an added bonus and a universal favorite, including of the gay community, as we were told by the immigration authorities.



The docks at the marina are new and well equipped with **non-potable water** and 110V and 220V electricity.

Note: fresh water at the marina is desalinated and I'm afraid it smells funny. Do not use it to fill your deposits because it will take some time and effort to get rid of the smell afterwards. Use it only to clean the boat, wash and shower.

Marina fees:

- Docking alongside fingers: 0.45CUC/ft/day.
- Water: 2.20CUC/day.
- Electricity: 1.5CUC/day.
- Diesel: 1.10CUC/l.
- Gasoline: 1.15CUC/l.

There are international phone booths but no internet at the marina. However, you can take the resort bus to the hotel area past the airport (2CUC/ride), where there are public computers that work with the usual card you get at the reception -10CUC/hour.



The commercial port is a short distance past the marina down the north channel. There is a boatyard there where boats can be hauled out and repair works can be undertaken.



Cayo Largo boat yard and commercial port



A cay with a view

When leaving, just follow the main channel along the east pass and, once passed the approach red beacon (at $21^{\circ} 35.00\text{N}$, $81^{\circ} 33.90\text{W}$, to be left to port), you can head east towards Cayos de Dios.

Cayos de Dios

Cayos de Dios comprises Sal, La Trinchera, and Guano Del Este. The information below details two stops from which day trips can include La Trinchera (about 1 hour sail from Sal). Since Sal and La Trinchera are very similar, the decision about where to stop is really a toss of a coin.

Cayo Sal

25Nm from Cayo Largo.

Approach WP: **21°38.88N, 81°11.86W**

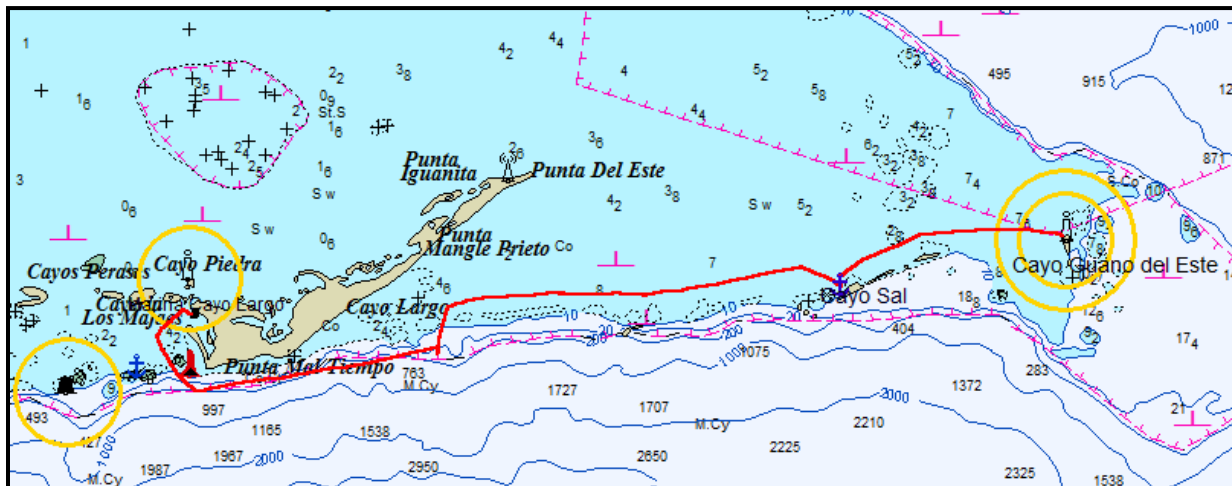


Figure 71. Cayo Largo to Cayo Sal

Cayo Sal is +/- 2.5 Nm from Cayo Largo. From the approach WP at **21°34.70N, 81°34.25W** past the Cayo Largo approach beacon (**21°35.00N, 81°33.90W**) bear **80°** for the next 8.5 Nm to a WP at **21°36.00N, 81°25.00W**. Sal is sheltered from the E -- NE winds, but not so much from N winds. The terrain is sharp coral, so do not go barefoot or in flip-flops; wear shoes with substantial soles. Vegetation is sparse.

From a WP at **21°34.80N, 81° 33.68W** pass the Cayo Largo approach beacon (**21°35.00N, 81°33.90W**), bear **80°** for the next 8 Nm to a WP at **21°36.00N,**

81°25.00W. There you will be in front of the cut through the reef. A **10°** course for the next 1.5Nm will place you in safe waters (5–6m) on the north side. From there, you can bear **84°** for the next 12Nm to the approach WP at **21°38.88N, 81°11.86W** and then **115°** to the anchoring area. We dropped anchor at **21°38.26N, 81°10.42W** in 3m in good holding sand. A dinghy can land at the beach on the north of the cay.

Cayos de Dios are sheltered from E winds but completely open to northers.



Figure 72. Cayo Sal



Snorkeling in transparent water



North shore beach. The boat mast pops up from the other side of the land strip

You are back to wilderness again. This little cay is uninhabited and scarce in vegetation but rich in fish and lobster. The terrain is sharp coral, *diente de perro*, so wear stout shoes on land.



“Diente de perro”



A walk in the afternoon



Blow hole -- vertical water spray

When ready to leave, give a wide berth to the NE coast of the cay on your way to Cayo Guano del Este, by setting a **340°** course from the anchorage for around 0.3Nm. Then head to a WP at **21°39.13N, 81°09.67W**, 1 mile away, so that you will avoid the coral heads that sprout along the coast.



Coral head off the shore of Cayo Sal

There, turn to a **67°** course for the next 2Nm so you pass through the gap between two coral reefs. You should be past danger once at WP **21°39.97N, 81°07.56W**. Now you can set an E course straight to Cayo Guano del Este, 5Nm away.

Cayo Guano Del Este

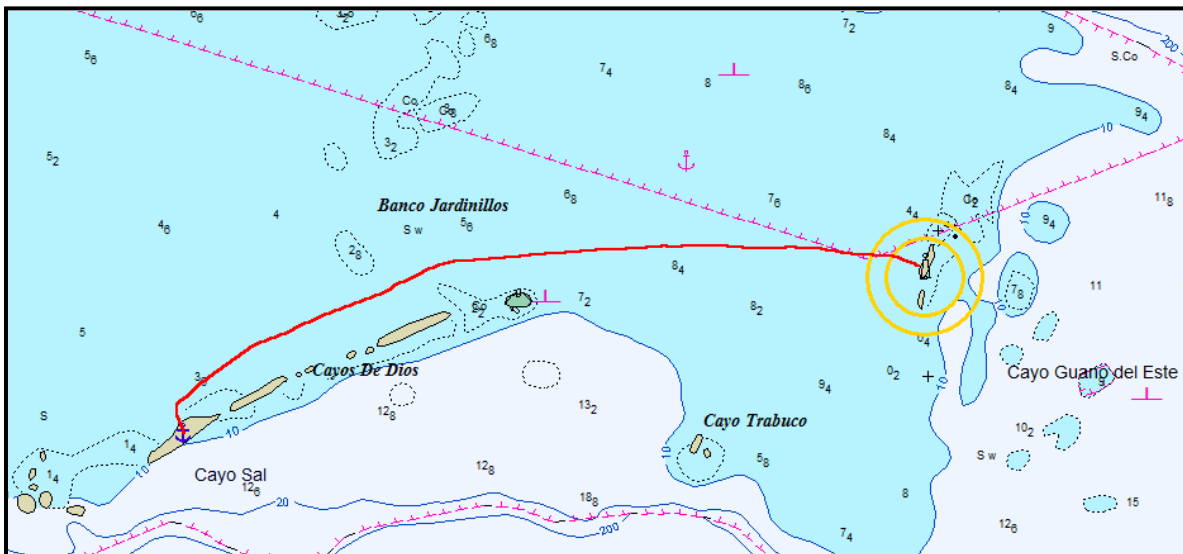


Figure 73. Cayo Sal to Cayo Guano Del Este

On many charts, this cay is somewhat mislocated. This would be relatively unimportant were the bottom sand. However, there is a shallow coral patch at **21°39.83N, 81°02.47W** and another at **21°39.77N, 81°02.48W**. These shallow patches are a potential problem since if you bump them, you may damage not only the coral, but more immediately important to you, your boat.

We anchored in front of the lighthouse at **21°39.93N, 81°02.46W** in 4.5m of sand and turtle grass. This anchorage can be quite roly.



Figure 74. Cayo Guano del Este



View of the anchorage from the north tip of Cayo Guano del Este

It is difficult to land a dinghy on the west shore of the cay as the terrain is sheer coral, but there is a strip of sand a bit north of the lighthouse at **21°39.84N, 81°02.42W**. Another good place to land is at the beach on the north tip on the cay.



Anchored at Guano del Este

There is a big sandy beach on the northeast shore of Guano del Este sheltered from the open seas by an irregular reef.



Sand strip and dinghy dock



Northeast shore of Guano del Este

The following information is based on in person, on site GPS measurements. The Cayo Guano Del Este lighthouse stands at **21°39.76N, 81°02.43W** and **NOT** at **21°39.82N, 81°02.39W** as shown in many electronic charts.

It is difficult to land a dinghy on a coral shore, but there is a strip of sand a bit north of the lighthouse at **21°39.84N, 81°02.42W**.

NOTE: Lighthouses in Cuba are military installations. You can walk around them, but you cannot enter them. The Cayo Guano del Este lighthouse was built in the 1970s by the Russians in the form of a rocket, and rumor has it that this and other Cuban lighthouses are as beautiful inside as out.

Cayo Guano del Este lighthouse is the only large lighthouse in the area and therefore a landmark. It is 54m high, has a 15 second period, emits a white light over a range of 7Nm and is located near the fishing bank *Banco de Jagua* where the bottom shoals dramatically from 1000' to 20' at around **21°36N, 80°37W** in a 5Nm² area east of Cayo Guano del Este, creating turbulent and dangerous seas. It also marks a corner of a restricted military zone around *Bahía de Cochinos* west of an imaginary line beginning at **21°39.97N, 81°02.91W** and ending at **21°50N, 80°35W**.



The rocket – Cayo Guano del Este Lighthouse

Unfortunately, a straight course to Cienfuegos will place you inside the restricted area for the whole journey to the port of arrival. The good news is Cuban authorities seem to be conscious of it because neither we nor anybody that we know of has ever had any problem or gotten a warning about entering the restricted zone – as long as you do not stray northwest, I guess.

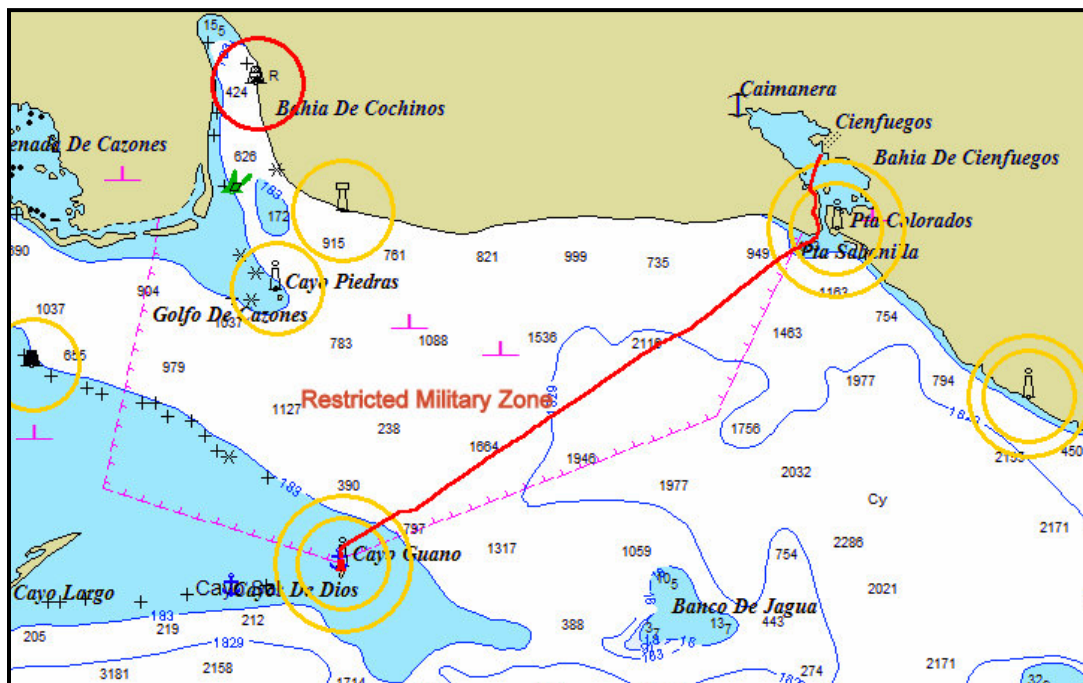


Figure 75. Cayos de Dios to Cienfuegos direct. Note course through restricted zone.

When ready to leave, set a 355° course for 1Nm to avoid the submerged reef stretching to the northeast from the north tip of the cay. Now you are ready to bear 60° on a rhumb line to Cienfuegos Bay.



West shore of the cay



Landing dock used by the lighthouse staff



Remains of the old lighthouse

SOUTHEAST COAST

Cienfuegos

Ample channel, well marked and lighted at night.
45Nm from Guano del Este. **Port of Entry.**

Approach WP: $22^{\circ}02.15'N$, $80^{\circ}27.32'W$.

$22^{\circ}02.030'N$, $80^{\circ}26.590'W$ Entrance to Bay of Cienfuegos.

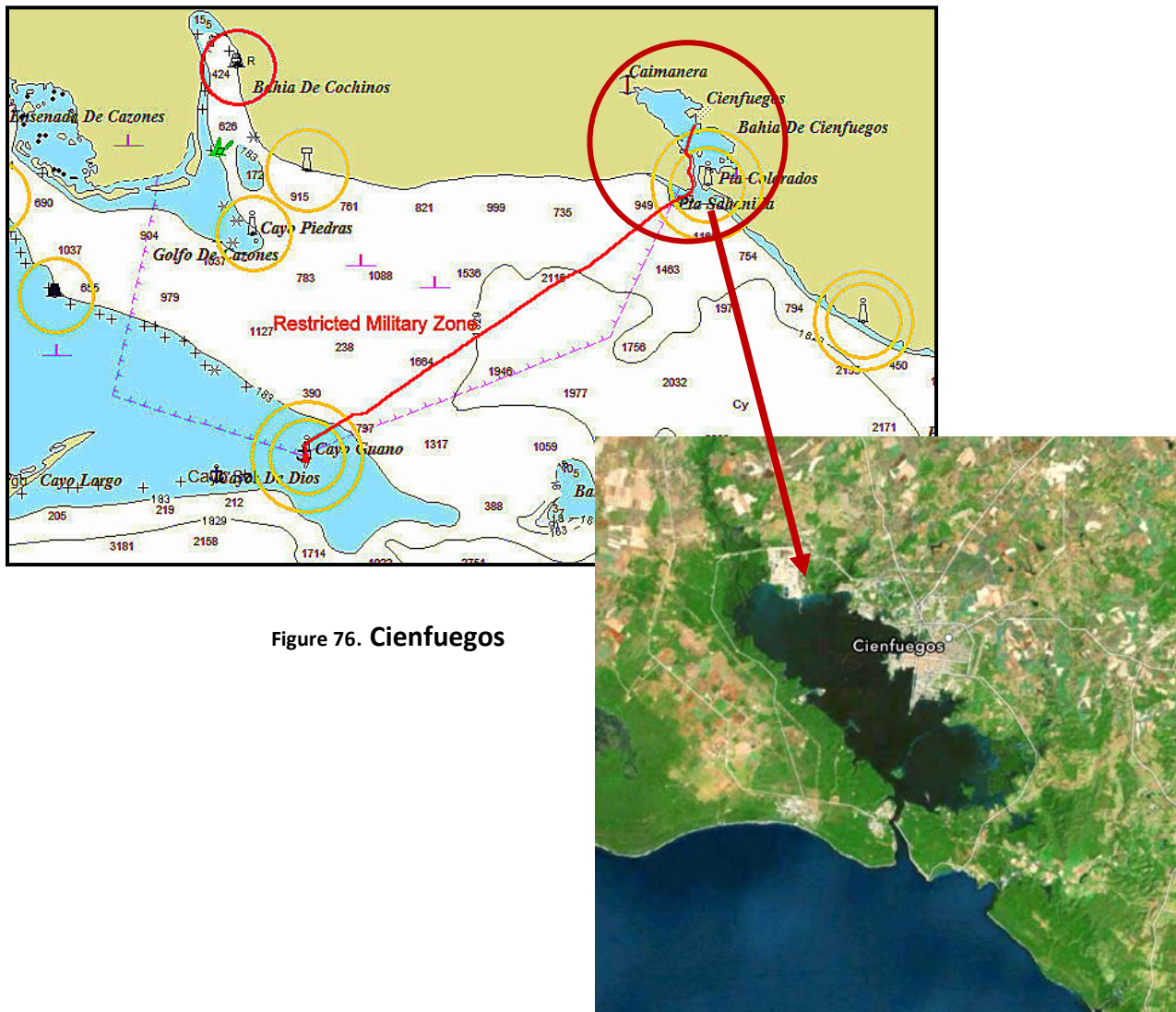


Figure 76. Cienfuegos

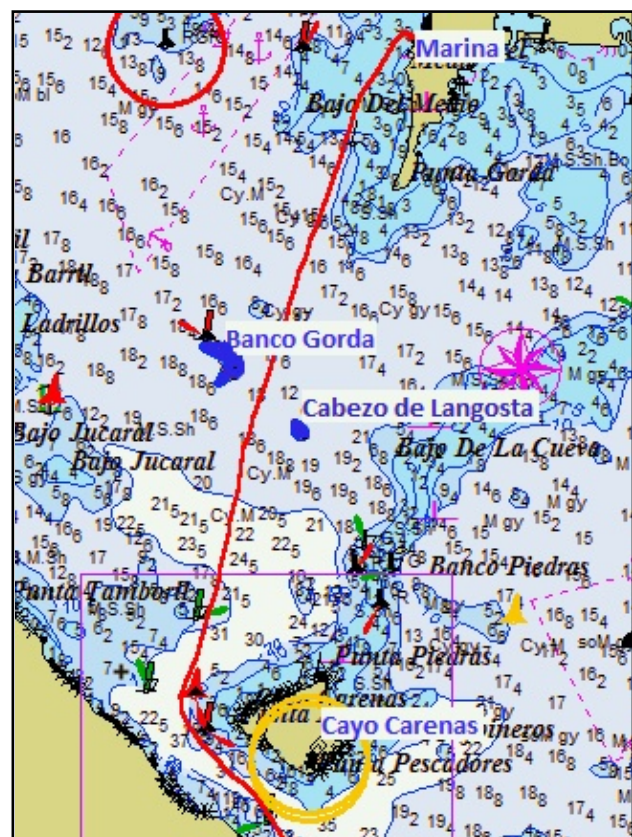


Figure 77. Details of Cienfuegos Bay

Once at the Approach WP, bear 335° to enter the ample, well marked lighted channel and then just follow the marks along the next 6 Nm into the marina.

At about $22^\circ04.80N$, $80^\circ27.53W$ you will see Cayo Carenas at the front; leave the cay to starboard and follow the west channel to a WP at $22^\circ05.36N$, $80^\circ27.98W$. Then, set a 17° course straight into the marina area between two banks – Banco Gorda, marked, and Cabezo Langosta, unmarked -- half way into the marina.

Figure 78. Course to Mariina Cienfuegos





Keep an eye open all along the channel as there are dozens of small boats fishing at dawn and sunset

There is a minimum 3 m depth around the marina but do not get too close to shore as the bottom shoals rapidly. Contact Marina Cienfuegos on VHF channel 16 or 19A to announce your arrival. Whether you need to check into the country or not, you will be visited by all the different departments and will have to start the paperwork all over again. Nevertheless, the reward is worth the inconvenience; Cienfuegos is one of the most delightful stops in Cuba.

The marina is excellent and the staff and authorities are very friendly. It is a good place for provisioning (by Cuban standards). The city center is a delightful half hour walk from the marina along the seaside promenade but there are frequent public buses (20cents MN) and taxis (5CUC to the city center). The city itself is lovely. For hauling out in the bay, talk to the marina's dock master.



Marlin Marina Cienfuegos

22°07.504N, 80°27.148W
operative@nautica.cfg.tur.cu
director@nautica.cfg.tur.cu



Marina office



Charter cats at Marina Cienfuegos



Club Cienfuegos

Should you be in need of a mechanic or a spare part in any sort of technical emergency, you should resort to the chartering operations. They are run by European companies in association with the local government and employ highly skilled staff. Besides, chartering companies are part of the select group that can import marine equipment and parts with few restrictions.

There are 3 chartering companies in Cienfuegos: 2 based at the marina and a third located at Club Cienfuegos, or Cienfuegos Yacht Club next door.

For hauling out in the bay, talk to the marina's dock master.

Supplies

At the marina there is a bar, a small grocery with the usual canned food, rice, pasta, rum etc, and a “chandlery” that offers barely a few pieces of fishing gear.

For fresh foods go to the local market (locally known as *agro*) at Calle 31. Be there early to get the produce at its best since there is no refrigeration at all. You will find all seasonal fruits and vegetables and some meat, mainly pork. There is a bakery just opposite the market.



Mercado Municipal



Veggie stall at the market

There are various medium size groceries, both in CUCs and MN, in the city center, especially around the pedestrian boulevard area at Calle 54.



Servicipet at Calle 39 – gas and groceries!

Groceries and frozen meat – mainly chicken and pork -- can be purchased at *Servicipet*, the nearest gas station from the marina, located at Calle 39, parallel to Calle 37 or Paseo del Prado -- marked in blue on the plan and main artery of the city.

Money can be changed at the nearby *Hotel Jagua* and at money exchanges (CADECAs) around Cienfuegos. There are also national and international phone booths and internet access at the hotel with the usual prepaid cards -6CUC/30min. But there are more spots where you can both change money and get internet access.

Communications

Internet

[Cybercafé Hotel E La Unión](#)

Street 31 between 54 and 56. • Telephone(5343)551020

[Cybercafé Jagua Hotel](#)

Street 37 between 0 and 2.Punta Gorda •

Telephone(5343) 551003

[Internet Service](#)

Street 31 between 54 and 56. • Telephone(5343) 519266
515253

Phone Cards

ETECSA Calle 31 e/ 54 y 56

Tel. 043-515253/519266

Opening time: 8:00am-8:0pm.

Post Office & DHL

Esq Av 56 y Calle 35



Post Office at the boulevard

Transportation

You can walk, take a taxi or get on an omnibus to go to the city center. The walk takes 30 minutes, the taxi ride costs 5CUC and the bus fare is 40centsMN -- local pesos. The nearest bus stop is at Calle 37 (or Paseo del Prado), across the Parque Escultórico just in front of the marina. You should take the omnibus *Ruta 1, Punta Gorda-O Bourke*. Horse carts are supposed to be only for Cubans but the coachman will risk the ride for 2-3CUCs.



Take a ride with natural AC



Bus stop at Calle 37

Cubataxi

Street 43 on the corner of 40 • Telephone(5343) 519145



Figure 79. Cienfuegos city map

Eating out

All hotels have reasonable quality restaurants where they offer national and international cuisine from 10CUC to 30CUC on average.

There are also state owned restaurants which can be quite disappointing. There is always the exception but, in general, the food is less than delicious and the service usually leaves much to be desired. A typically recommended restaurant is *Covadonga* in Punta Gorda. The place became famous when Fidel Castro stopped there on his way to Havana during the Cuban Revolution. Being of Spanish origin, the hostess Sra. Covadonga specialized in delicious *paella* which Castro loved. I have no doubt Sra. Covadonga must have been an excellent cook and a warm friendly hostess but I'm afraid her catering virtues parted with her.

I would try the family run *paladares* instead; they have a homey atmosphere, the food is usually delicious, the hosts charming and the bill minimal as they commonly charge in Cuban pesos. Among them, there are two I would specially recommend:

El Pescador, on the west bank of the bay close to *Castillo de Jagua*. Owned by Ernesto and his family, this cozy *paladar* offers delicious fresh fish and lobster caught and cooked by themselves. The experience begins at the dock in *Reparto Reina* where you take the boat to Castillo de Jagua and the happy ending takes place at the table with charming Ernesto and his lovely family.

The other one is *Hostal La Taberna* in the city center (Calle 39 #5406 e/ 54 y 56). Alexis and Chicha – both professional caterers -- offer simple but tasty different food in their charming premises which serve also as tiny art gallery and bar.

A note on today's paladares:

Paladares are the independent, state sanctioned, family run restaurants of Cuba. Since the Cuban government began to open up their country to democratic economic reforms, paladares were one of the first enterprises to arise, for many reasons. Rules are strict. They must seat no more than 12 (though they many times do); be family run and cook rustic Cuban food (i.e., no lobster or chicken breast as

these are reserved for the tourist hotels). Paladares are one of the few taxed businesses in a Communist country, but they have flourished and are sought out by visitors over state and hotel run restaurants. The food is authentic, wholesome and inexpensive, and the family ambience delightful.

It seems the biggest problem for tourists has been finding a decent place to eat other than expensive state run hotel restaurants and cafeterias or snack stands along the streets. The latter were effectively off limits to tourists as they accepted only Cuban pesos. Once Cuba embarked on the path of international tourism in 1993, and allowed the privatization of paladares in 1995, things began to change. Today, paladares abound, but can be difficult to find. Because legal paladares are highly taxed there is little money to advertise. Many hire a “tout”, or guide, to help bring in customers. You may be approached on the street to be personally led; and this is how you are likely to find one.

Here is a traditional “home cookin” recipe:

ROPA VIEJA

Yield: 8 servings

- **3 1/2 pounds beef chuck or pot roast**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **1/3 cup olive oil**
- **1 cup water**
- **1 large yellow onion, peeled and sliced**
- **2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed**
- **1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded and chopped**
- **1 cup tomato sauce**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 bay leaf**
- **1/2 cup dry white wine**
- **Rub salt and pepper into the meat.**

Heat a large covered frying pan or stove-top casserole, add a bit of the oil and brown meat well on both sides then add about 1 cup of the water.

Cover and simmer 2 hours (until very tender) - if the pan dries out add more water. Allow meat to cool, covered, in the pan juices. Remove meat from pan; debone and shred meat.

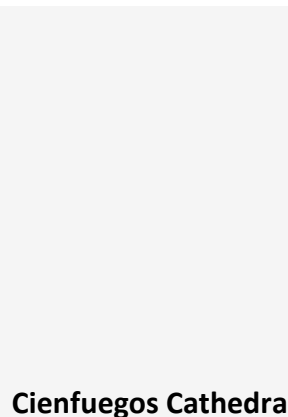
Reheat pan and add remaining oil. Sauté onion and garlic until clear. Add green pepper and sauté for a few minutes more. Add remaining ingredients, along with shredded meat and juices. Cover and simmer on low heat for 15 to 20 minutes more.

Serve with rice.



Figure 80. Cienfuegos city center

Following are some of Cienfuegos' famous buildings and sites:



Cienfuegos Cathedral



Biblioteca Provincial



Red rhino in Parque Escultórico



**Tomás Terry Theatre built 1886-89,
famous for interior frescoes**



Tomás Terry himself



Paseo del Prado



Taberna Palatino



Casa de Gobierno. Pergola at Parque Martí



Waiting for customers



Parque Escultórico



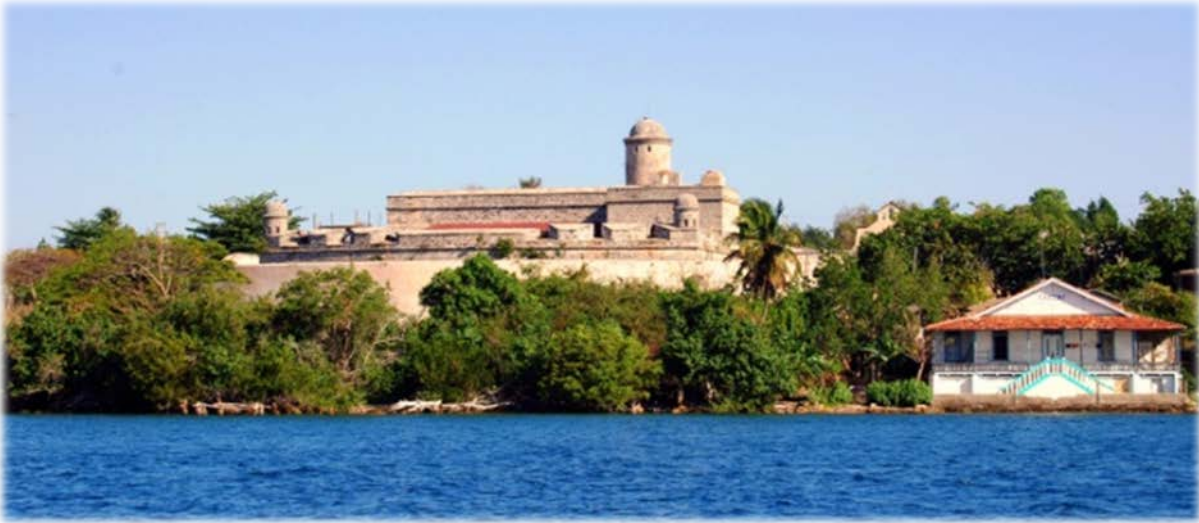
Paseo del Prado



Pedestrian Boulevard Avenida 54



Recycled art



Fortaleza Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles de Jagua



Treat yourself to a famous Coppelia's ice cream...



...and a promenade by the "seaside"



1st of May celebration, Cienfuegos





Sailing at dawn off Cienfuegos



Pasacaballos Hotel from the channel

Cayo Blanco de Casilda

40 Nm from Cienfuegos.

Well sheltered from E and SE.

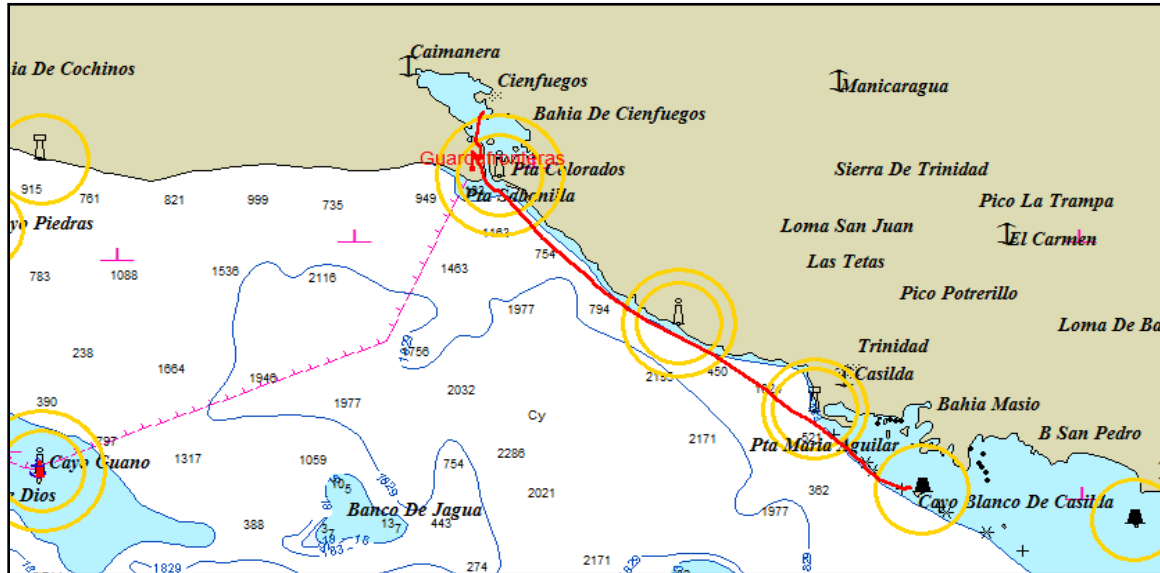


Figure 81. Cienfuegos to Cayo Blanco de Casilda

You can sail quite close to the shoreline up to the approach WP at **21°38.31N, 79°54.26W**, where you should bear **60°** to WP **21°38.60N, 79°53.30W**. Then, take a **130°** course (or aim at the house on the cay) and feel your way into the anchorage. Bear in mind the area N of Cayo Blanco is very shallow with a submerged wreck at **21°38.37N, 79°53.39W**. We dropped anchor at **21°38.42N, 79°53.44W** in 2.5m of good holding sand and turtle grass patches.

A mooring buoy located approximately at **21° 38.46N, 79° 53.44W** is used by fishermen and chartering boats with bases in Casilda and Cienfuegos but it can be used freely. There is a dinghy dock at **21° 38.34N, 79° 53.30W** just in front of the beach bar and restaurant.

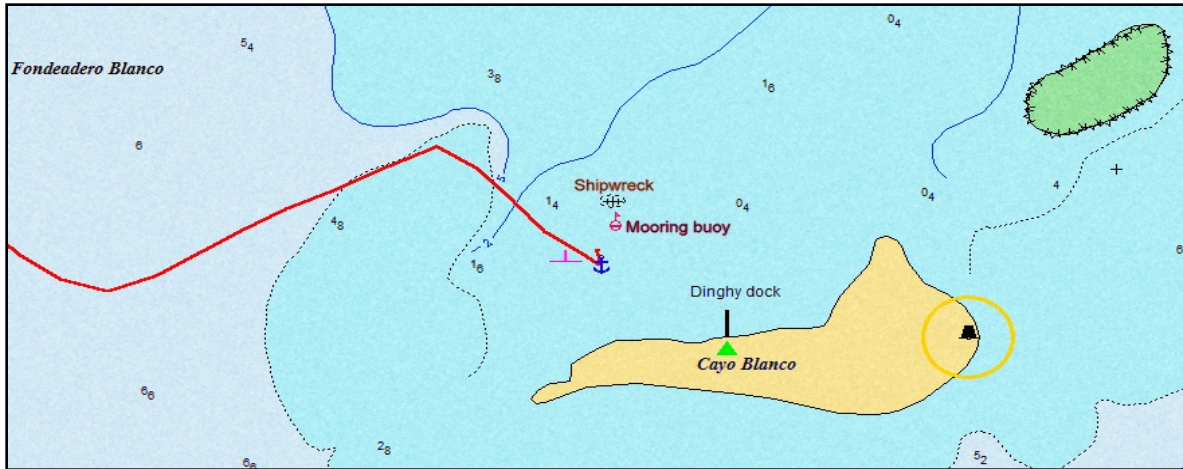


Figure 82. Cayo Blanco de Casilda



The rib tips of the wrecked ship stick out of the water



Cayo Blanco de Casilda



Anchorage at Cayo Blanco de Casilda

The resident staff welcome cruisers to the beach bar and restaurant which are open 24/7. Cayo Blanco attracts day-trippers based at hotels in nearby Trinidad and Casilda for its crystal clear warm waters and the interesting diving and snorkeling on the E side of the reef.

NOTE: Both Casilda and Trinidad are only some 9Nm west of Cayo Blanco, and certainly worth paying a visit. There is a marina not far from the town of Casilda – the fishing port is off limits for foreign leisure boats -- but it is mainly used by chartering companies and the premises are not in very good condition (so we were told by the skippers themselves). Besides, the channel into the marina can be tricky for boats drafting over 1.5m. In fact, the whole of Casilda Bay is quite shallow and full of sand shoals. An alternative for cruisers on long-keeled boats can be taking a day tour while in Cienfuegos. Cubanacan (Calle 37#1208 e/12 y 14, Cienfuegos, director@viajes.cfg.cyt.cu) offers day trips to Trinidad for 17.00CUC/person.



Figure 83. Bahía de Casilda

Cayo Machos de Fuera

47 Nm from Cienfuegos.

7 Nm from Cayo Blanco de Casilda.

Approach WP: 21°36.28N – 79°50.40W

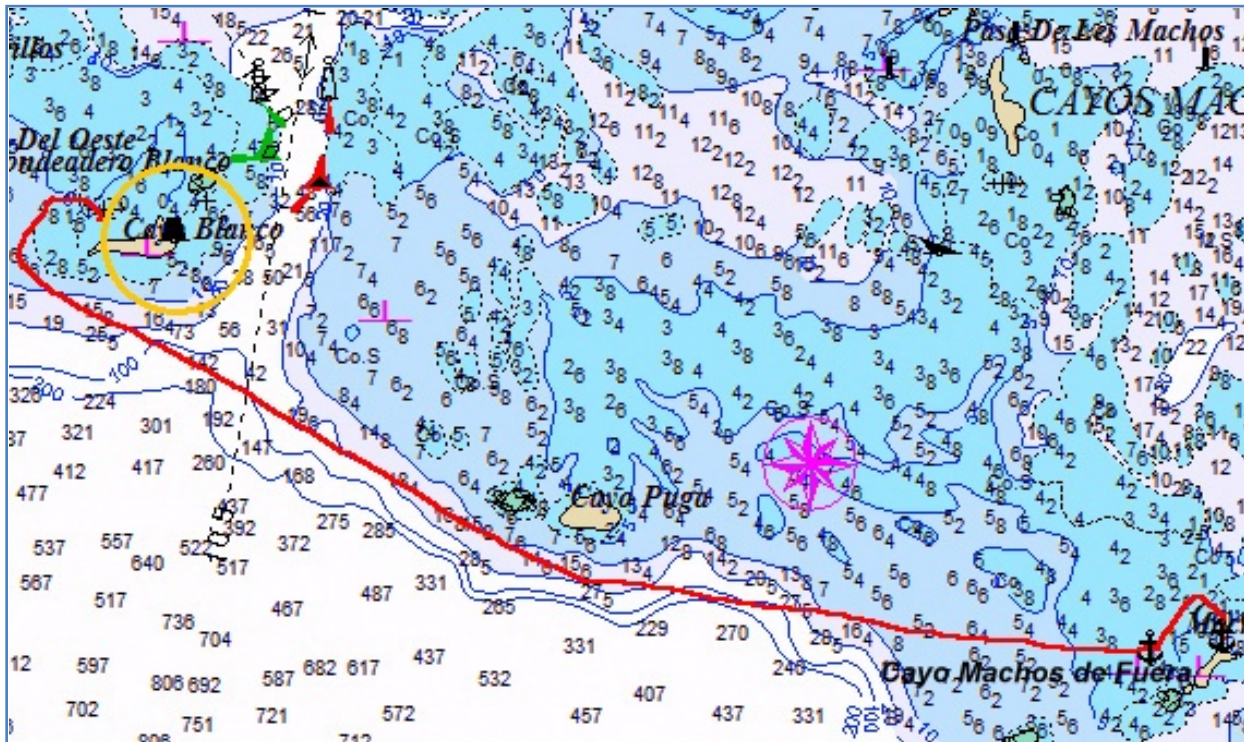


Figure 84. Cayo Blanco to Cayo Machos de Fuera

Cayo Machos de Fuera can be an alternative anchorage to Cayo Blanco de Casilda, only 7Nm further east. To get there, bear **97°** from the approach WP at **21°36.28N, 79°50.40W**, just off Cayo Puga, straight into the west anchorage.

There is a ruined fishing station at **21°35.78N, 79°46.76W** and the bottom shelves rapidly as you get closer to shore so, unless your draft is less than 2m, you will have to anchor a bit far from it. It is a good anchoring spot but the cay gets crowded with the nearby resort day-trippers. We dropped anchor at **21° 35.90N, 79° 46.83W** in 2.7m of good holding sand and turtle grass.



View of the cay from the W anchorage; the ruins of a fishing station at center, near shore



Cayo Machos de Fuera -- W anchorage

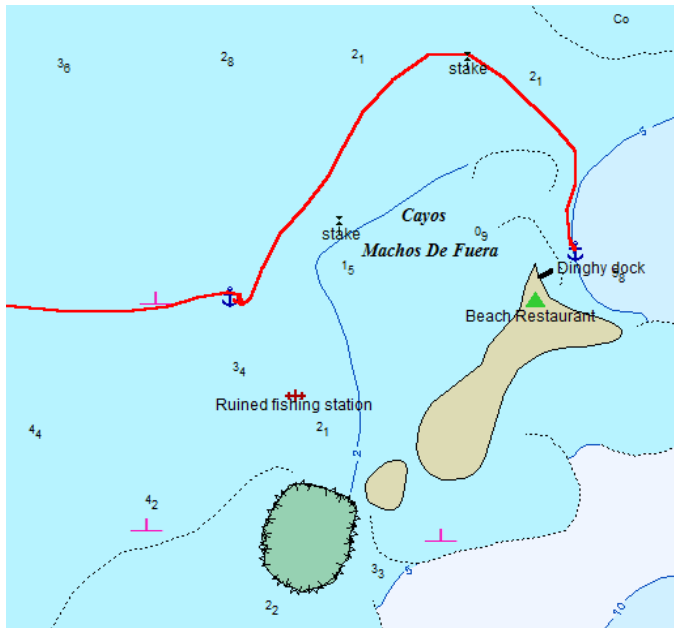


Figure 85. Approaching NE anchorage, Cayo Machos

The NE anchorage offers better shelter and is much closer to the dinghy dock by the beach restaurant. However, it is located in a channel between the cay and the reef so you will have to check your holding, considering that from March to June E winds shift to N-NE during the evenings, around 9 - 10 pm, and wind gusts can easily reach 15-20 Kn. It usually calms down around midnight. As all the area around the cay is quite shallow,

you will have to give it a wide berth to approach the north anchorage. Two stakes which have to be left to starboard, mark the northern border of the sand shoal at **21° 35.99N, 79°46.70W** and **21° 36.21N, 79°46.50W**. Once past the second stake, go to WP **21°36.08N, 79°46.40W**, then feel your way southwards toward the dock. We anchored at **21° 35.96N, 79°46.39W** in 5m of sand, grass, and mud.



View from the N anchorage



Dock at Cayo Machos de Fuera

There is a beach restaurant by the dock which serves fish and sea food; no drinks. They will gladly cook for you anything you bring in. The populations of jutias and iguanas are rampant here. Usually shy creatures, they and the hermit crabs have been encouraged by being fed at the beach restaurant to shed their shyness.



**Beach restaurant at Cayo Machos
(Note solar installation)**



Lunch time for iguanas and hermit crabs



Jutias only leave their inland shelters at night



Wild iguanas are used to human company here



Charter boat at Cayo Machos de Fuera

Diving and snorkeling east of the cay are really nice and easy, attracting many tourists lodged in nearby Casilda and Trinidad hotels, so it can get a bit crowded at times. Fortunately, the visit only lasts a few hours and it is usually peaceful and quiet by the evening.



Back from a day out fishing. And yes, it is a shark



Cooking dinner after a hard day's work

To leave, either go back to the approach WP and then set SE from there, or go along the east pass among reefs, which is what we did. This was our track along the pass with the north anchorage as a starting point:

WP₁: 21°35.95N, 79°46.28W

WP₂: 21°35.93N, 79°46.25W

WP₃: 21°35.81N, 79°46.27W

WP₄: 21°35.79N, 79°46.26W

WP₅: 21°35.76N, 79°46.21W

WP₆: 21°35.73N, 79°46.18W

WP₇: 21°35.64N, 79°46.14W

WP₈: 21°35.12N, 79°46.30W

At this point, we were out of the reef but still in shallow waters; 6 to 10m all the way down to the next stop at Cayo Zaza, past Canal de Tunas.



Fish eagle at Cayo Machos



Gently rocking

Cayo Zaza Fuera

17 Nm from Cayo Machos de Fuera.

Only interesting as a rest stop.

Approach **WP: 21°28.68N, 79°37.32W**

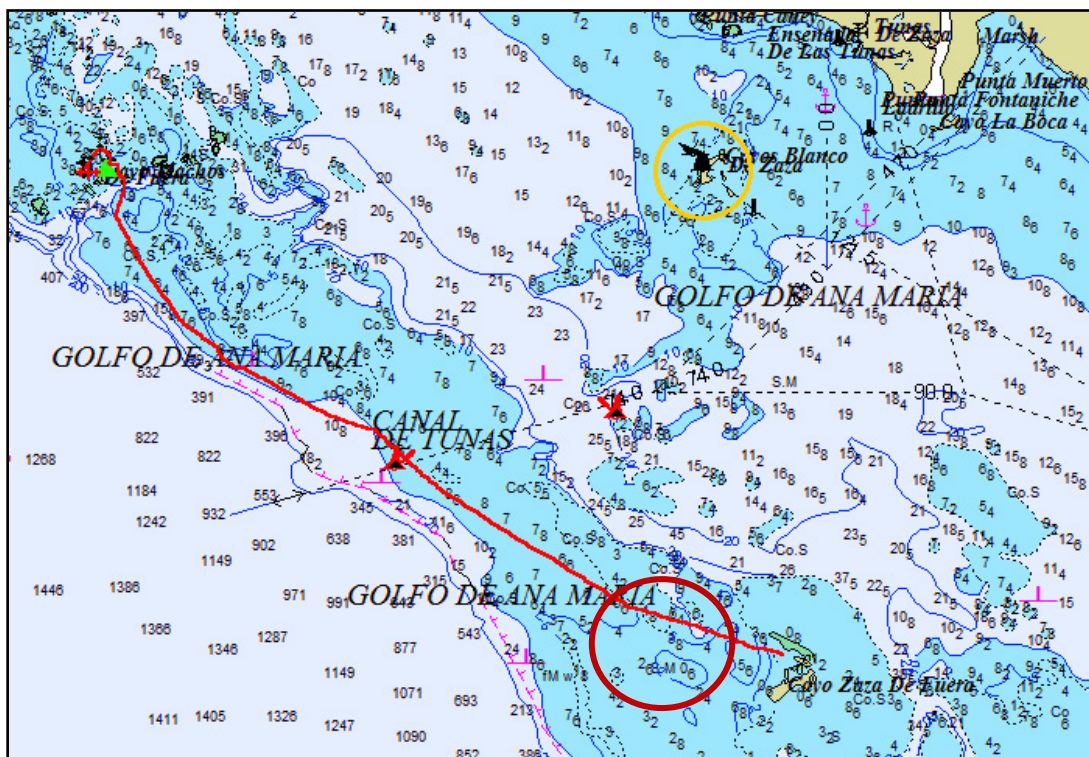


Figure 86. Cayo Machos de Fuera to Cayo Zaza Fuera

Once out of the reef off Cayo Machos de Fuera, at approximately **21°31.16N, 79°46.32W**, you can bear **150°** to the next WP at **21°32.88N, 79°44.85W** to give a swift berth to the reef. Then, bear **121°** for the next 8 Nm to the approach WP at **21°28.68N, 79°37.32W**. From there, make a straight line to the anchoring area on the north side of the cove at Cayo Zaza. We dropped anchor at **21°27.90N, 79°34.55W** on 2.5m of sand, mud and turtle grass.

In this bay you are well protected from all winds except W, especially if you enter the northernmost lagoon-like body of water to the east. You will be in water over

2.5m deep almost to the far east of the lagoon. You can drop anchor in the bay, but if you want more protection from the wind, though certainly not the mosquitoes, you can go as far as position **21°27.91N, 79°34.24W** into the lagoon and you will still be over 2.3m of water. ALWAYS keep to the center of the channel.

There is a ruined fishing station at position **21°27.54N, 79°34.58W** and a wide sand shoal on the south side of the cay. The north side is sheer mangrove with nowhere to land. There is a tiny beach surrounded by shrubs and low trees on the south side



next to the sand shoal where you can land your dinghy. This might not be appealing to humans as the mosquitoes are maddening, but your canine crew will appreciate it.

Figure 87. Cayo Zaza Fuera



Ruins of an old fishing station at Cayo Zaza

To leave the cay from the S toward Cayo Bretón, head to a WP at **21°27.82N, 79°34.79W** and bear **215°** to a WP at **21°27.25N, 79°35.20W** to avoid the wide sand shoal to the SW of Cayo Zaza.



Tiny beach on the south end of Cayo Zaza

Cayo Bretón

23Nm from Cayo Zaza Fuera.

Approach WP: **21°13.44N, 79°27.42W**

Good shelter but sheer mangrove. Rest stop.

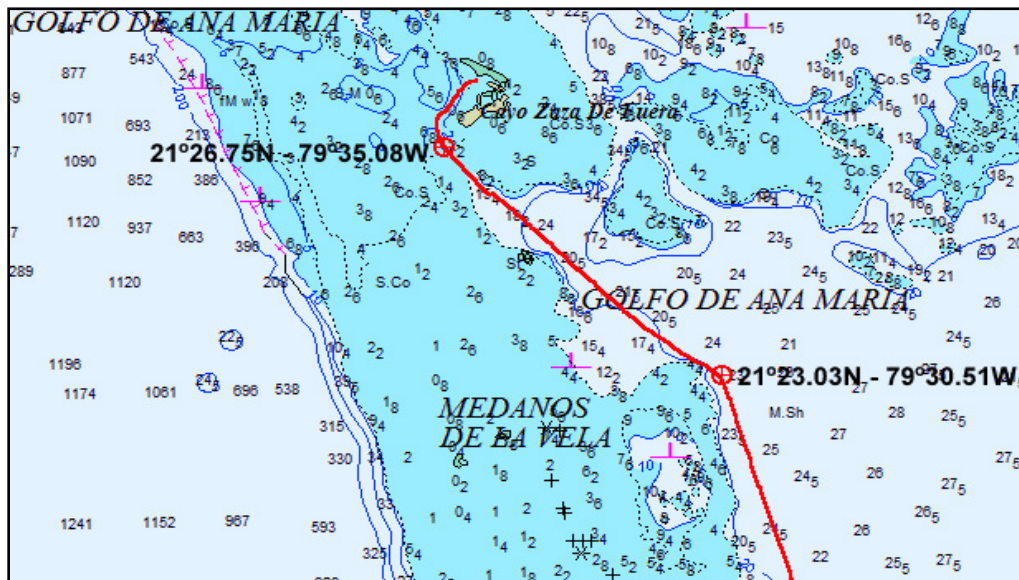


Figure 88. Cayo Zaza to Cayo Bretón

The next WP at **21°26.75N, 79°35.08W** will lead you safely between 2 sand shoals. At that point you can set a course of **133°** for the next 5.5 miles to WP **21°23.03N, 79°30.51W**. From that WP bear **163°** for the next 10 miles to a WP at **21°13.44N, 79°27.42W** between *Bajo Lobo* and *Canal De Bretón*, both marked and lit at night.

Here you have a decision point. Option #1: You can sail a straight course over a minimum of 3m in depth to the entrance of a very well protected channel on the northwest side of Cayo Bretón. HOWEVER, *across* the mouth of the channel and *only* there, the water shallows to 2m and then immediately deepens again in the channel.

Note: If you decide on the straight course and change your mind at the channel entrance, you must backtrack a long way in order to get around a long, very shallow sand spit.

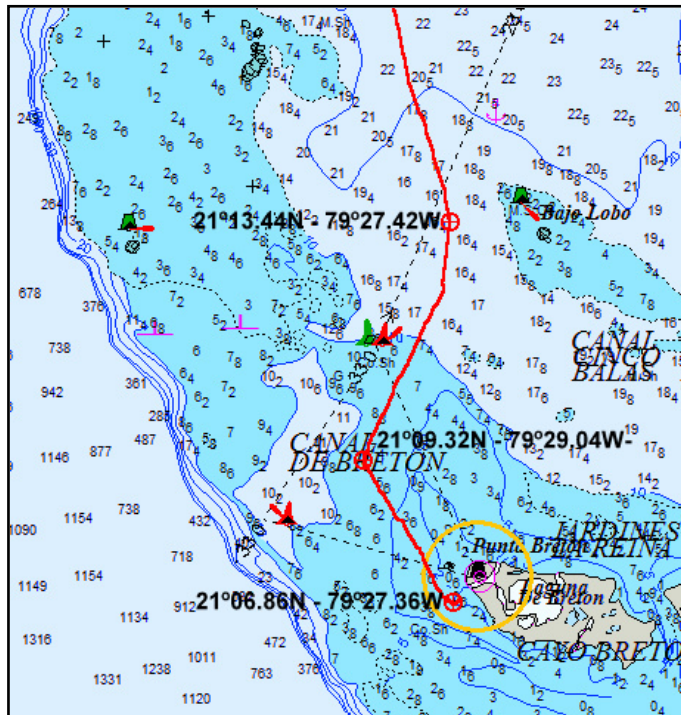


Figure 89. Approaching Cayo Bretón's northwest channel

Option #2: Your other option is to bear 195° from the last WP to another at $21^\circ08.92'N$, $79^\circ28.77'W$, then bear 150° to the next WP at $21^\circ06.79'N$, $79^\circ27.46'W$. This will put you at the south entrance to the same channel. Do not stray to the E as there is that very shallow sand spit all the way along the shore.



Cayo Bretón's landmark light tower

The bottom shoals rapidly as you approach the shore and it is very shallow all around the cay. However, you can make it into the channel as the bottom is 2.5m deep at the very center of the S entrance. Once past the shallowest point, the channel deepens as much as 15-20m in some areas. About half way into the channel, it forks into two branches. The east branch leads into *Bretón Lagoon*, the best shelter in the whole area from Casilda to Cabezo del Este, the easternmost cay in *Jardines de la Reina*.

We dropped anchor near the south entrance at **21°06.94 N, 79°27.29W** in 2.5m of sand and turtle grass, a bit far from shore.

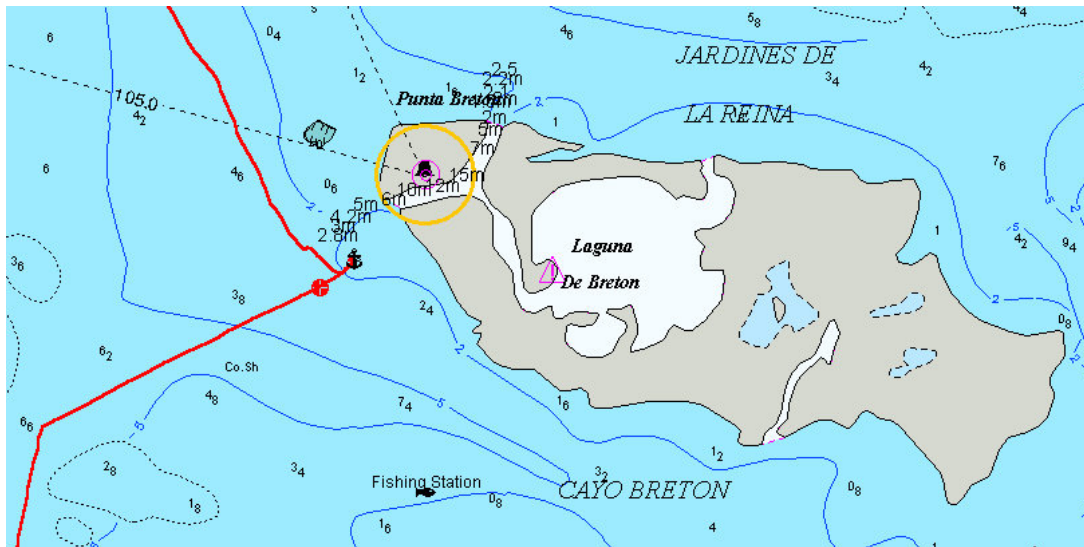


Figure 90. Departing Cayo Bretón



Cayo Bretón fishing station

On leaving, set a **240°** course from the anchoring WP at **21°06.86N, 79°27.36W** for the next 2.5Nm to get through the pass south of the reef. Once out, you can set a straight course to the next anchorage at Cayo Alcatracito, 14Nm SE.



Long sand spit on the west tip of Cayo Bretón



When that barracuda is nearly as big as you...

Cayo Bretón is the NW boundary of Jardines de la Reina, an uninhibited archipelago that comprises a series of elongated cays stretching to the SE down to Cabezo del Este. It is an off the beaten track paradise for fishing, snorkeling, diving or playing Robinson Crusoe on a solitary beach.



Jardines de La Reina



Figure 91. Jardines de La Reina end to end

Jardines de La Reina – the Queen’s Gardens – were so named by Columbus in honor of his patroness, Queen Isabela. The entire mangrove-and-coral island chain of more than 600 cays is 150 miles long, lying 50 miles S of the Cuban mainland and 80 miles N of the Caymans, and in size is second only to the *Jardines del Rey* on the north coast. Its 90+ mile core is a national marine park. Uninhabited and closed to commercial fishing, the Gardens are a diver’s paradise.

Cayo Alcatracito (Cinco Balas)

14Nm from Cayo Bretón.

Approach WP: **21°02.20N, 79°20.01W**

From WP**21°02.20N, 79°20.01W**, bear **70°** to go through a cut in the reef -- the reef is submerged as is the cut in it -- into the anchorage and find a suitable spot to drop anchor. We anchored at **21°02.48N, 79°19.25W** in 3.3m of water and good holding sand. Once on the inner side of the reef, you’ll be in shallow water. Be aware that depths drop rapidly as you approach the cay.

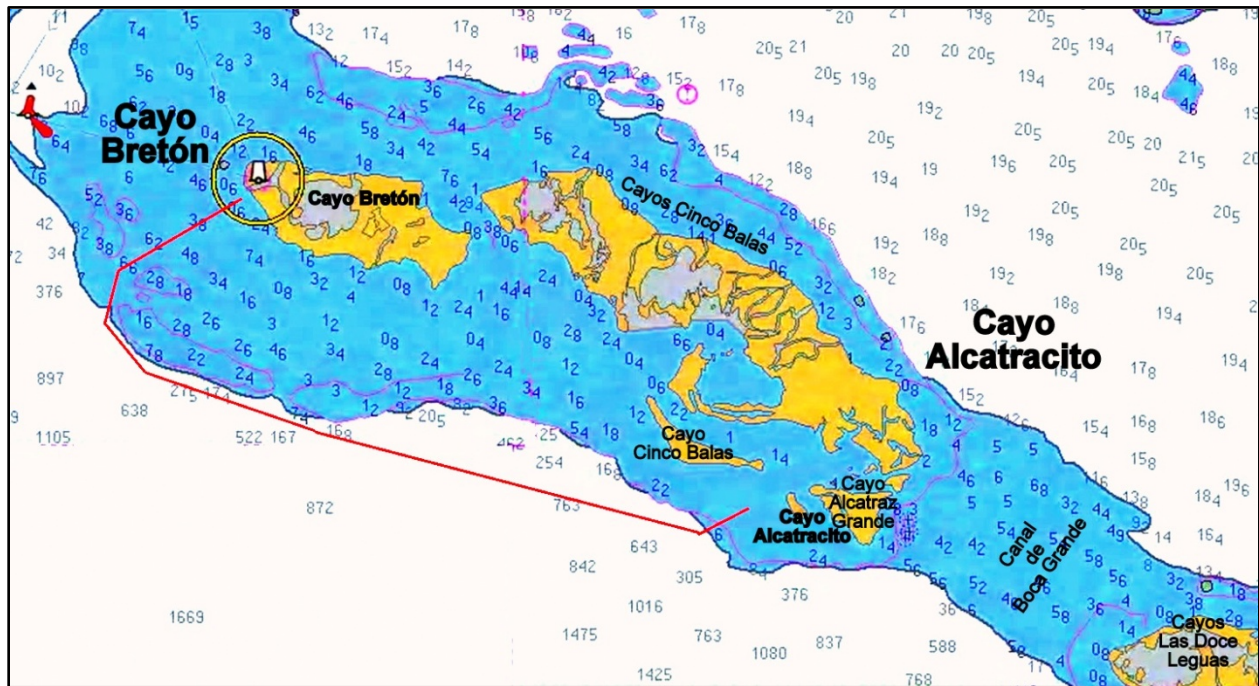


Figure 92. Cayo Breton to Cayo Alcatracito





The glorious beaches of Cayo Alcatracito

Most of the time you will have to yourself the series of long, white sand, glorious beaches of Cayo Alcatracito. But you may see a strange sight that might lead you to think your *mojito* was a bit too strong; a bunch of guys dressed in immaculate



white from head to toe speeding by in the heat of the sun. Do not be alarmed – they are not Star Wars storm troopers! They are tourists who come to this natural paradise to dive and fish in *Jardines de la Reina*, and who lodge in the nearby floating hotel *Palapa Tortuga*, a place not to be missed.

Star Wars storm troopers

When leaving, track back to the approach WP at **21°02.20N, 79°20.01W** and set a **123°** course towards Cayo Caballones for the next 18Nm.

Cayo Caballones (Punta Escondida).

18Nm from Cayo Alcatracito.

Approach WP: **20°52.46N, 79°04.00W**

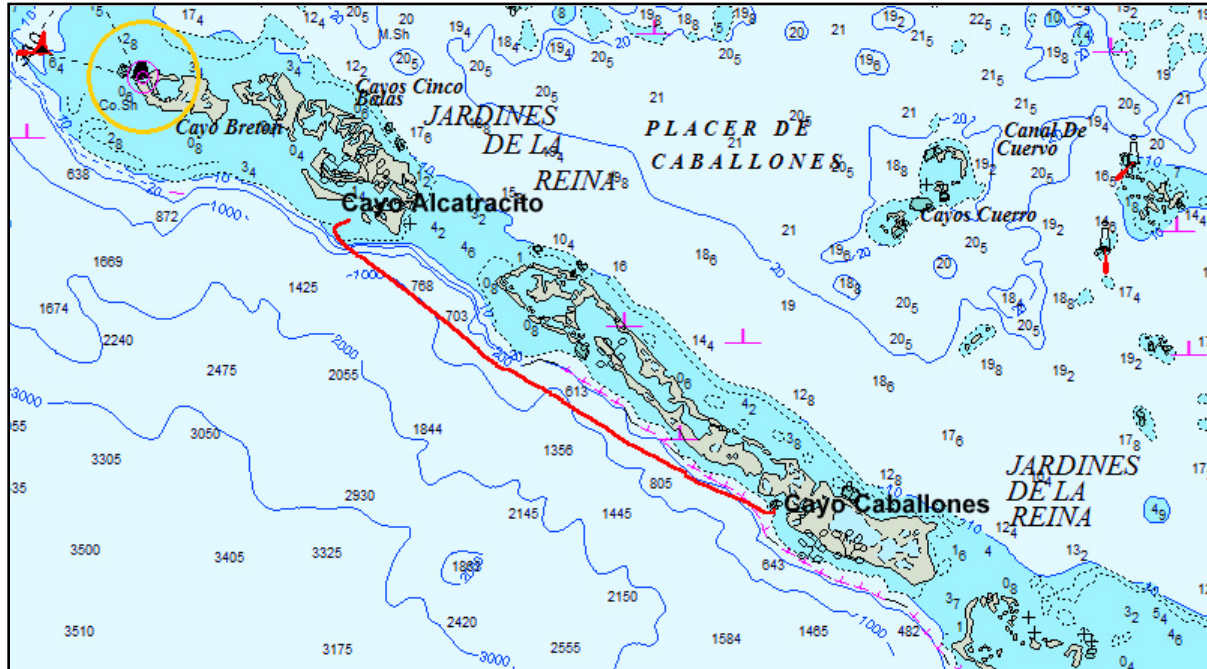


Figure 93. Cayo Alcatracito to Cayo Caballones

From the approach WP at **20°52.46N, 79°04.00W**, bear **70°** through the cut in the reef and into the anchorage at Cayo Caballones. Then turn north toward the beach and find a suitable anchoring spot. The bottom is coral sand so the holding is not



A view of the bay -- Punta Escondida

very good; check the anchor. You can find 2.5-3m depths quite near the beach, where the holding is much better as bottom sand is mixed with mud there. There are scattered coral heads all over the bay, so stay alert. We dropped anchor at **20°52.61N, 79°03.74W** in 2.5m of crystal clear water but not-so-good holding.

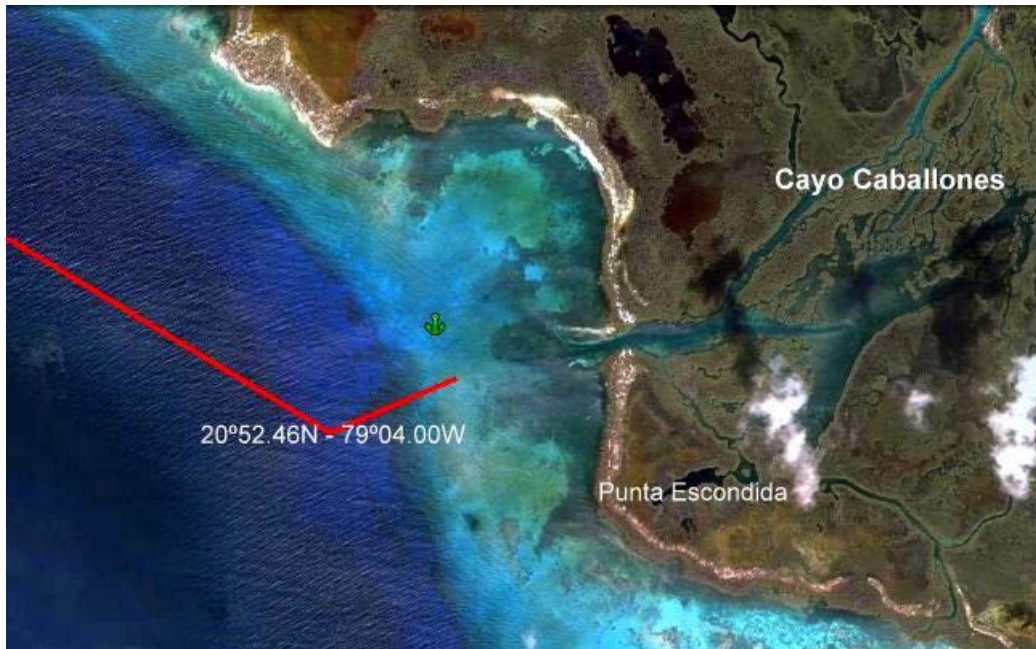


Figure 94. Entering Cayo Caballones

Swimming and snorkeling are delightful in the tranquil waters and around the coral heads. There is a deceptively inviting, sparkly white beach where you can land your dinghy...only to discover that what appeared to be soft sand is but stinking



white mud that traps you up to the knee. After much pulling and groaning you will land on a big deserted bay of strange beauty covered by mangrove, shrubs and small trees. And ferocious mosquitoes of all sizes and biting abilities trying to suck the fresh blood of the scarce visitors who dare to land here.

Evidence of the struggle off board the dinghy

Outbound, from the anchoring point head to a WP at **20°52.40N, 79°03.95W**, just beyond the reef. Then bear **165°** for the next mile to give a wide berth to *Punta Escondida*. Head SE on a **111°** course for the next 5 Nm to the southern entrance of *Canal de Caballones*, a 1.5Nm wide, 4-5m deep channel through the reef into *Golfo de Ana María*.

Cayo Anclitas (Palapa Tortuga)

8Nm from Punta Escondida.

Approach WP: **20°49.52N, 78°58.69W** (on the south end of *Canal de Caballones*).



Figure 95. Punta Escondida to Cayo Anclitas

Once in the channel area, there are two possible anchorages; the big bay behind *Punta Prácticos* in the south, or *Anclitas Lagoon*, site of the floating hotel *Palapa Tortuga* in the north. However, if drafting 2m or over, you will be unable to enter the lagoon.

The big bay on the SE bank of the channel is sheltered from the E winds by Cayo Anclitas and surrounded by white solitary sand beaches. To get there, bear **124°** from the approach WP at **20°49.52N, 78°58.69W** to a WP at **20°48.63N, 78°57.60W** and feel your way into the anchorage. The bottom shoals rapidly quite far from the shore, as soon as you are below 3m. Fortunately, it is fine good holding sand.

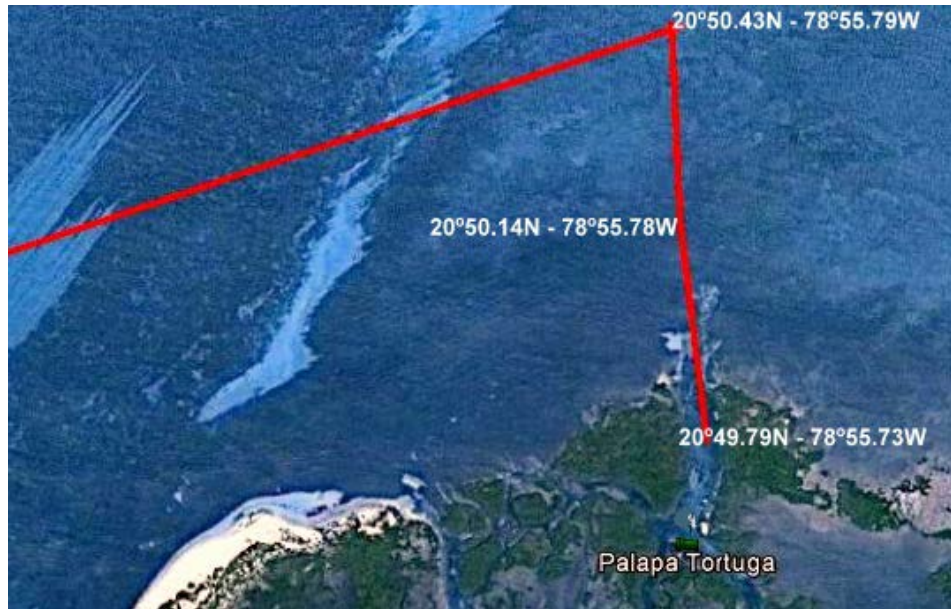


Figure 96. Detail of entrance to Cayo Anclitas (Palapa Tortuga)

The north anchorage is reserved for boats below 2m draft. We drafted 2m but were told we could make it easily along the channel. And we did on the way in...well, not that easily, as we bumped twice or thrice on a soft bed of sand. However, on the way out we got badly stuck in a sand shoal at the very entrance of the channel and were extricated only with help from the powerful resort powerboats. I recommend getting in and out of the lagoon at high tide. To enter, from the approach WP, go to a WP at **20°50.43N, 78°55.79W**, crossing *Canal de Caballones* to the NW. Then, head S to a WP at **20°50.14N, 78°55.78W**, in sight of the entrance markers, two spherical white buoys (circled red in photo below), and enter the lagoon down the middle. Do not stray from the recommended track, as the area around the lagoon entrance is very shallow.



Guardians of the Cayo Anclitas lagoon entrance



The channel deepens just beyond the markers to 3-5m in the center of the anchorage. If you can make it through the channel entrance, you will find excellent shelter in the lagoon, close to the floating hotel and its friendly staff. Anchor away from the center of the channel as the powerboat traffic is intense in the early morning and at sunset.

View of the anchorage. Laguna Las Anclitas

The *Palapa Tortuga* floating hotel is part of the fleet of live-aboard and power boats at this diving & fishing exclusive resort. You will find the staff very friendly and ready to help in any way they can. We experienced this for ourselves. Do not miss the chance to ask Yoel, the bartender, to prepare one of his wonderful *mojitos* for you. The resort works on VHF channel 9 and there is always someone around who speaks English.

If you love fly-fishing or diving, you will find one of the fishing or diving day trips an unforgettable experience well worth investing the 100CUC +/-fee.

At sunset you can experience two different wildlife encounters; the frantic *jején* (local no-see'em) and mosquito attack at around 18.00-19.00 and Sam's dinner time. Sam is the hotel pet, a 3-4m long crocodile adopted by the hotel staff.

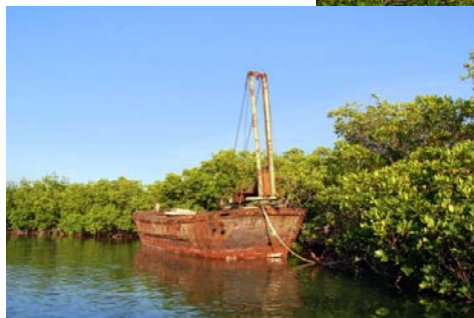
Gunkholing in the lagoon is an interesting experience. Together with *Bretón Lagoon*, this is one of the most sheltered anchorages in *Jardines de la Reina*. As such, it has been used for years as a hurricane hole. Today, the remains of many abandoned boats of all kinds rise out of the lagoon waters as strange sculptures. Mind you, the lagoon is immense and a real labyrinth of narrow channels among mangroves where you can easily get lost. Not in vain is this area of the reef called *Laberinto de las Doce Leguas* or Twelve League Labyrinth. The local fleet of powerboats likes to speed along the usually deserted one-way channels inside the lagoon, so be alert if you hear the roaring of an outboard.



Jaime, the resort manager, organizing the day schedule



Gunkholing in Laguna Las Anclitas



Cayo Chocolate

16Nm from Cayo Anclitas.

Approach WP: 20°49.26N, 78°40.18W

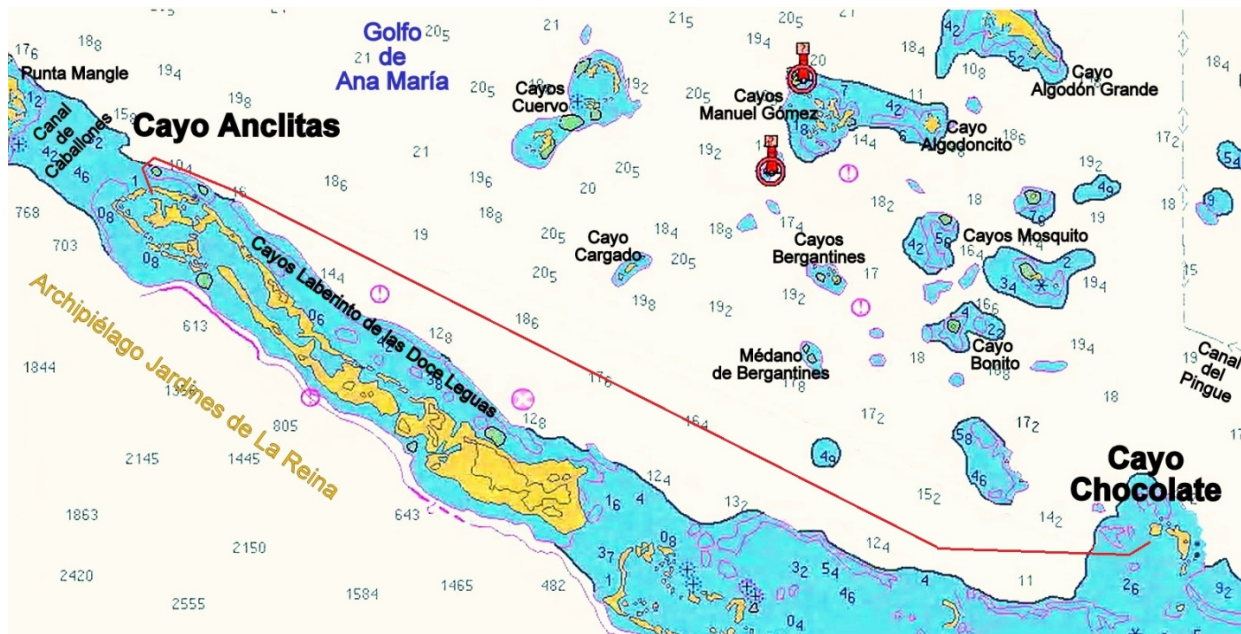


Figure 97. Cayo Anclitas to Cayo Chocolate



Figure 98. Cays north of Caballones Channel

Once on the north side of *Caballones Channel*, there are various nice anchorages some 12Nm north: Cayos Cuervo, Cayos Manuel Gómez and Cayos Algodones.

Unfortunately, our tight sailing schedule and visa expiration date did not allow us to visit any of them and so we were forced to keep heading east, towards Cayo Chocolate.

To get there, go to the approach WP at **20°49.26N, 78°40.18W** and approach the cay in a **70°** course for the next mile. Then, feel your way into the anchorage but stay away from the shore as it shelves rapidly as soon as depths are below 3m and there are scattered coral heads here and there. We dropped anchor at **20°49.72N, 78°38.87W** in 3m of good holding sand, mud and grass. When leaving, track back from the anchoring point to a WP at **20°49.61N, 78°39.11W** and head NW to a WP at **20°50.92N, 78°48.20W**. Then, set a **30°** course for the next 1.5Nm to avoid the shoals and submerged reefs stretching to the NW of Cayo Chocolate. Now you are ready to bear **100°** for the next 15Nm straight into *Canal del Pingüe*.

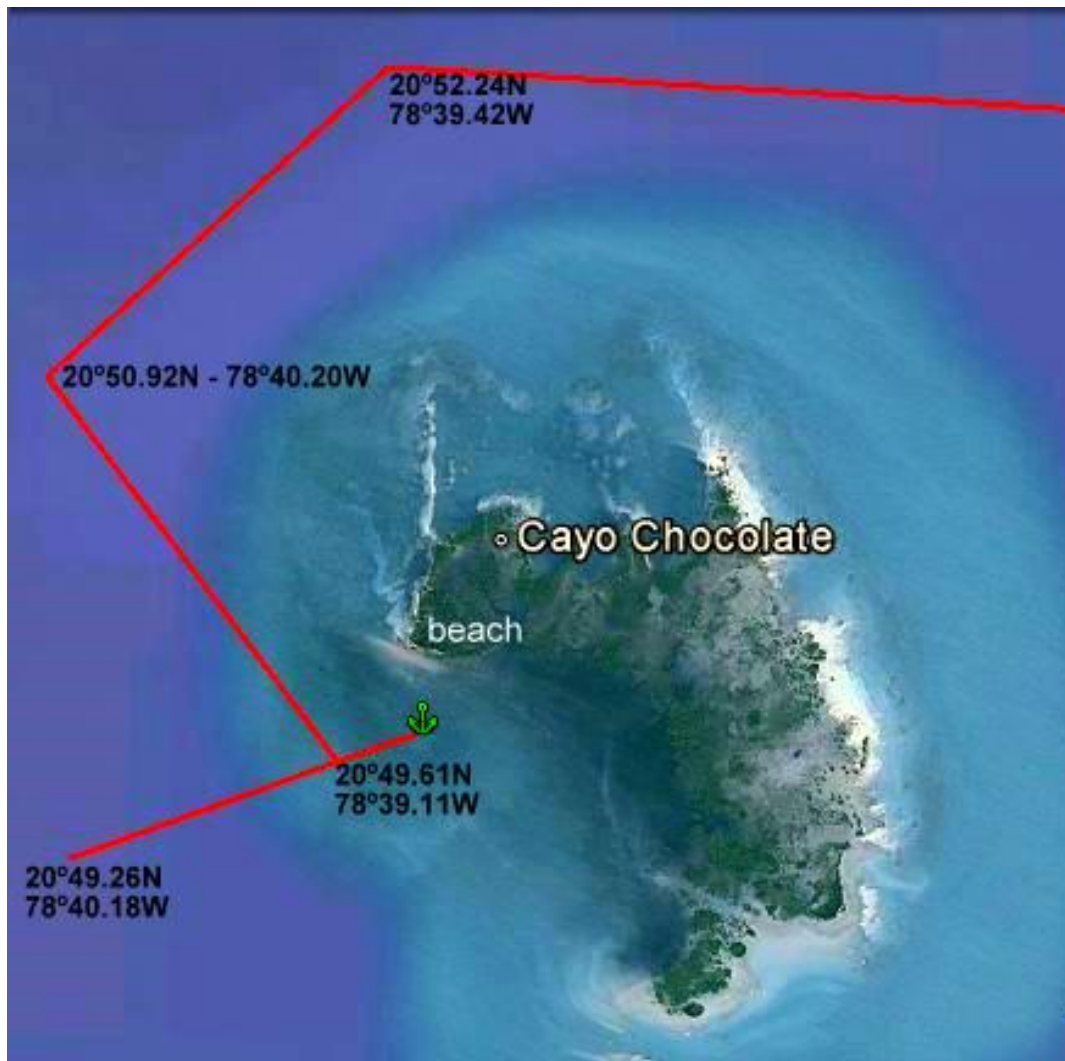


Figure 99. Getting to and from the beach anchorage at Cayo Chocolate

There isn't anything really interesting to see or do at Cayo Chocolate but it can be a welcome rest anchorage before the next longish lap eastwards along a series of channels forming a long pass across reefs and into the next anchorage at Cayo Granada.

There is a little sand beach surrounded by mangroves, shrubs and small trees just in front of the anchorage. It is home to the usual jutias, iguanas, birds...



The chocolate brown color of the sea grass deposits on the shoreline gives name to the cay

Golfo de Guacanayabo

Cayo Granada

35 Nm from Cayo Chocolate.

Approach WP:

20°37.40N, 78°15.40W

Once in *Canal del Pingüe*, you will be in the midst of reefs and shoals between *Cayos Laberintos de las Doce Leguas* and mainland Cuba. A series of well marked channels leads in different directions through the reef along the long pass E. Most are lit at night.

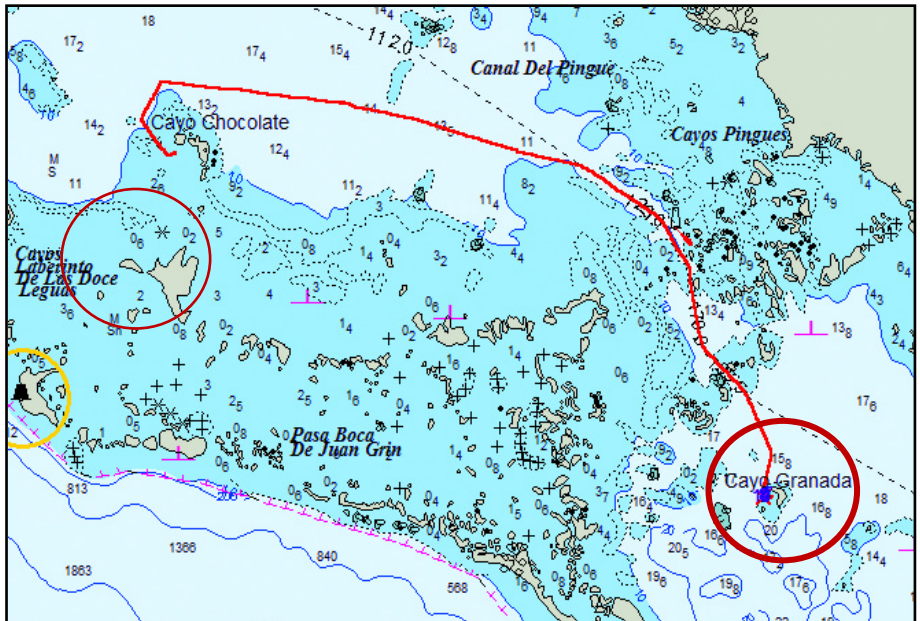


Figure 100. From Cayo Chocolate to Cayo Granada

Nevertheless, I would not risk it in the darkness; if something happened, you would have little chance of getting help in this uninhabited area.

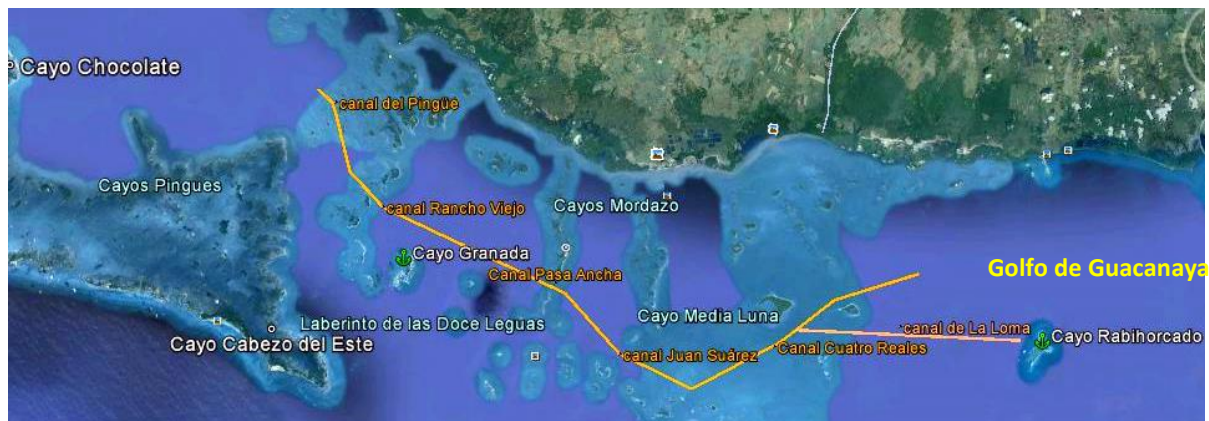
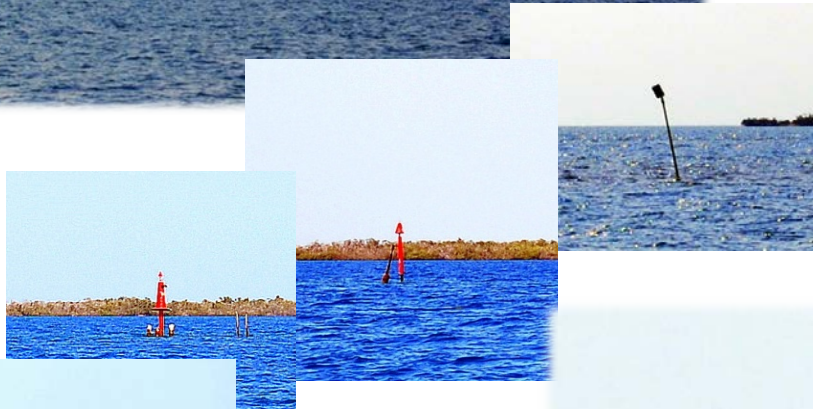


Figure 101. Pingüe Channel leads to Canal Rancho Viejo and into Guacanayabo Gulf along Pasa Ancha, Juan Suarez, and Cuatro Reales channels.



Canal del Pingüe



Different markers along the channel.
Red markers *must* be left to port heading east



Do not stray from the channel. This boat did, trying to overtake our boat, and got stuck in a sand shoal immediately after this shot was taken.

Cayo Granada lies 3.5Nm south of *Canal Rancho Viejo*. It a very sheltered anchorage but interesting only as a rest stop, as there is nowhere to land in the big bay.



In fact, it seems more lagoon than bay; a submerged shoal, part coral and part sand and mud, stretches in a SW direction from the north tip and so does another from the south tip of the cay as you can see as you can see in this satellite shot.

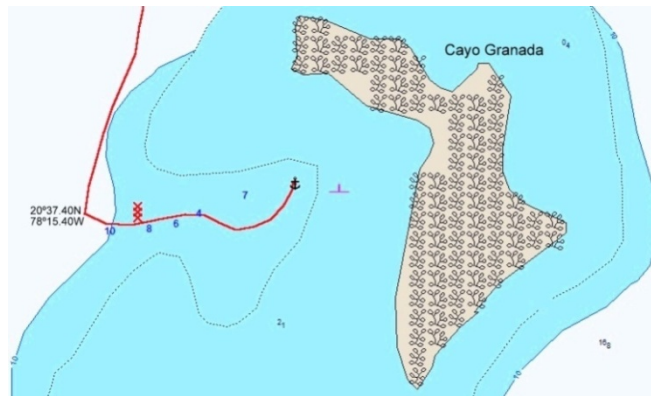


Figure 102. Cayo Granada

Once out of *Rancho Viejo* channel at about **20°41.13N, 78°16.05W**, you can set a straight course towards Cayo Granada. Mind the shoal at approximately **20°38.94N, 78°15.68W**, half way between the channel and the cay. Go to the approach WP at **20°37.40N, 78°15.40W**, where you will be over 10m of water, and enter the cay through the cut in the submerged reef, heading to a WP at **20°37.40N, 78°15.26W** in 6m of water (watch for the coral head at about **20°37.41N, 78°15.28W**). Then feel your way around to find a suitable place to anchor. Do not go near the shore as the bottom shoals rapidly below 5m. We dropped anchor at **20°37.47N, 78°14.95W** in 6m in good holding sand, mud and grass. This is a quiet, sheltered anchorage, good in bad weather or for an overnight stop. However, there is no comfortable landing place on this mangrove covered cay and nothing interesting under the keel.

To leave, backtrack to a WP at **20°38.10N, 78°115.20W** -- in order to give a wide berth to the sand shoal stretching north of the cay -- and set an east course into *Canal de Pasa Ancha*, 4.5Nm away.



The reef at Cayo Granada runs parallel to the shoreline and is visible in good light

Cayo Rabihorcado

Approach WP: **20°31.20N, 77°38.50W.**

35Nm from Cayo Granada.

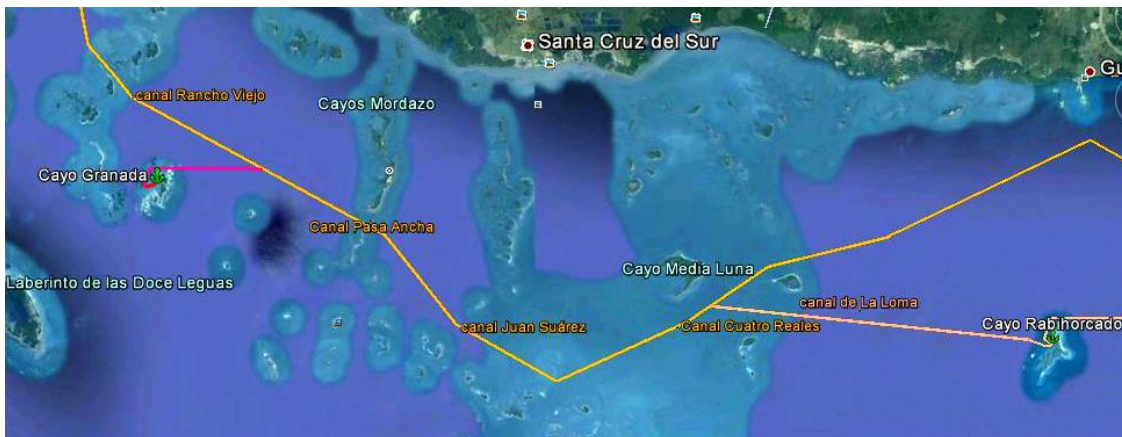


Figure 103. From Cayo Granada to Cayo Rabihorcado

Once in *Canal de Pasa Ancha*, just follow the markers along the long pass east through the well marked *Canal Juan Suárez* and *Canal Cuatro Reales*, up to a WP at **20°32.05N, 78°15.20W**, off Cayo Media Luna. From there, set an east course for the next 12Nm along *Canal de la Loma* to the approach WP at **20°31.20N, 77°38.50W** off Cayo Rabihorcado and continue east to the next WP at **20°31.19N, 77°38.22W**.

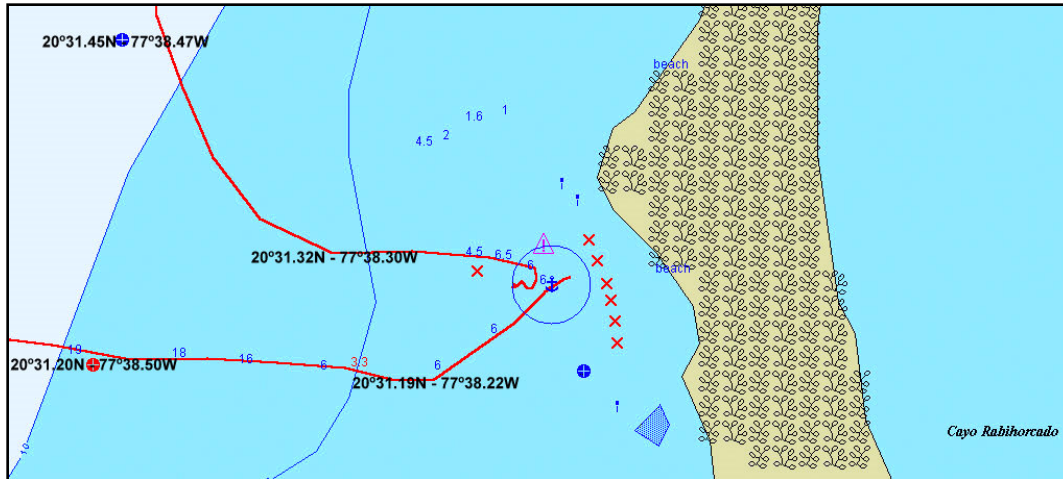


Figure 104. Cayo Rabihorcado

Approach the anchoring area on a NE course but make sure you do not go near the beach. Depths go from 19m at the approach WP to about 6m some 100m farther in toward the shore. Mind the coral head at about **20°31.27'N, 77°38.18'W**. Drop anchor when you reach 6m depth, as closer to the beach there is a coral reef located at **77°38.00'W** which extends some distance along the shoreline from N to S. The brown line of this reef is visible in good light but keep watch when approaching the beach to anchor. We dropped anchor at **20°31.27'N, 77°38.11'W** in good holding mud and grass, avoiding both coral head and reef. This anchorage can be a little rolly at times, especially in the evenings when the east winds blow harder.

NOTE: Cayo Media Luna is an alternate anchorage nearby as the bay offers very good shelter and is easy to enter. However, the entire cay is mangrove and landing a dinghy is well nigh impossible.



Figure 105. Cayo Media Luna, 12Nm WNW of Cayo Rabihorcado

To the north of two stakes on the north end of the beach is a sand and coral shoal extending a long way W up to **78°38.20W** and a long sand shoal that goes over ½ mile northward along the shore past the N tip of the cay. It is about 200m wide. Bear in mind that when leaving or approaching the cay from the E you must give a wide berth to the N tip of Cayo Rabihorcado. When leaving toward the E, go from the anchorage to a WP at **20°31.32N, 77°38.30W**. Do not stray to the S at this point as there is a coral head somewhere around. Then head to WP **20°31.45N, 77°38.47W**. Go N parallel to the cay shoreline to a WP at **20°32.38N, 77°38.20W**; then bear an east course for the next 13.5Nm straight into *Canal de Chinchorro*.

In calm weather, you can anchor 1/4Nm up N of the bay, off the sand shoal in front of the long beach along the NW tip of the cay. But the really glorious beach is the long one on the NE side. Pity you cannot get there easily.



Figure 106. Detail of Cayo Rabihorcado

There is a channel into the lagoon used by fishermen in bad weather. The entrance runs parallel to the beach between the shore and the N end of the reef mentioned above, passing to the E of the small cay in the middle of the channel; that is, keeping the small cay to starboard as you enter the channel.

Here there is good fishing, very interesting and varied snorkeling, and gunkholing in the lagoon.

**Marker doubles as seabird
roost north of Cayo
Rabihorcado**





Fishing boat in the channel between the reef and the beach



Fishermen seeking the lagoon shelter to spend the night

Cayos Manzanillo

35 Nm from Cayo Rabihorcado.

Approach WP to *Canal de Balandras*: **20°22.66N, 77°10.57W**

Approach WP to Cayo Jorobado: **20°21.17N, 77°12.52W**

Between Cayo Rabihorcado and Cayos Manzanillo lies the *Canal de Chinchorro*, a 33Nm long, well marked, wide channel between two important commercial ports on the mainland; Guayabal in the north of *Guacanayabo Gulf*, and Manzanillo to the east. Navigating the canal is challenging and requires focus and care. The following information is given for the voyage from Cayo Rabihorcado to Cayos Manzanillo.

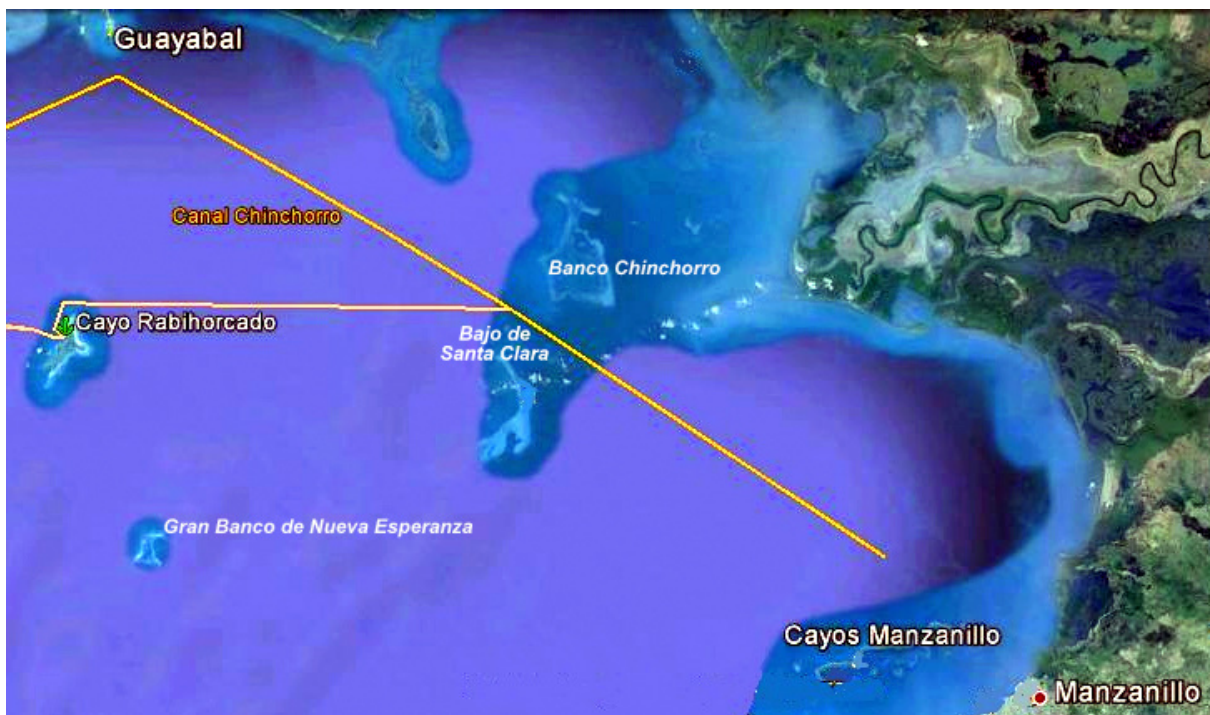


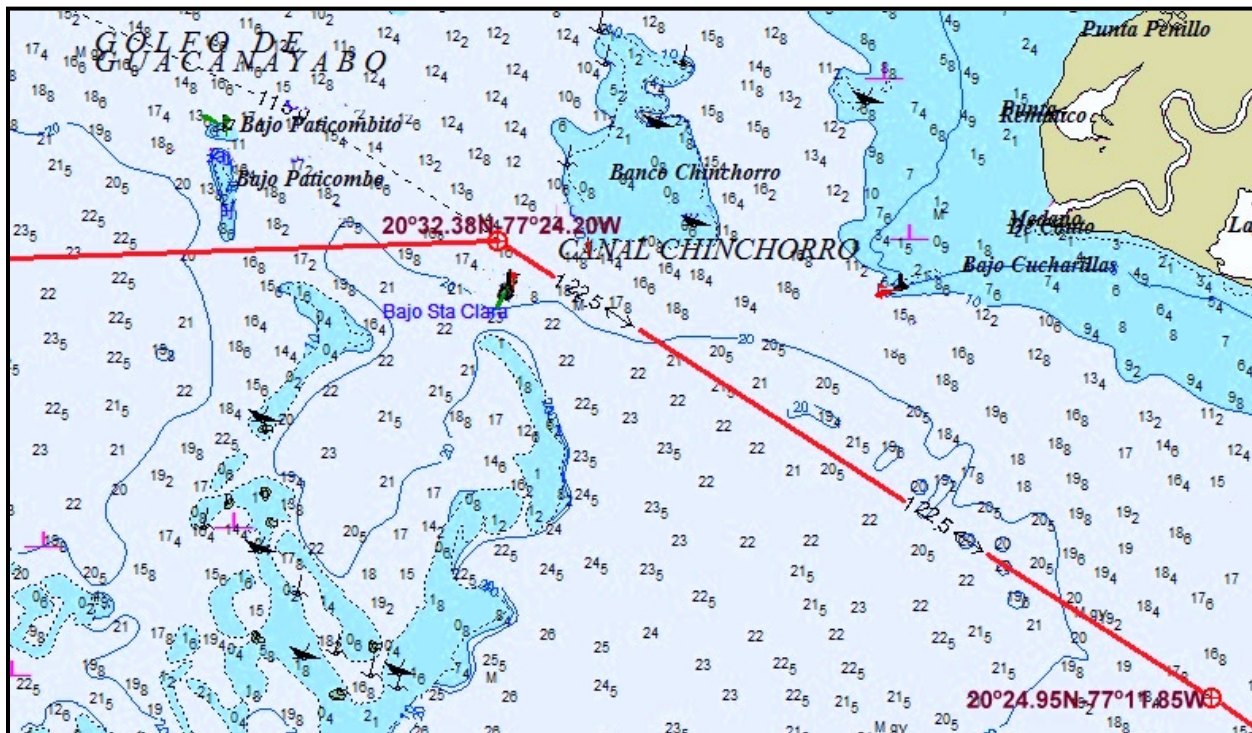
Figure 107. Cayo Rabihorcado to Cayos Manzanillo along the channel between Guayabal and Manzanillo

From a WP at **20°32.25N, 77°37.20W** at the north tip of Cayo Rabihorcado set an E course (**90°**) toward *Canal de Chinchorro* which leads to the town of Manzanillo.

This rhumb line will set you safely between *Bajo Paticombe* shoal at **20°32.65N, 77°28.88W** and *Bajo Santa Clara* to the S at approximately **20°31.70N, 77°27.89W** and extending southward.

The next WP at **20°32.38N, 77°24.20W** will place you in the middle of the wide channel between the red and green lighted beacons.

The red beacon located at **20°32.25N, 72°22.62W** flashes every 4 seconds and covers 3 miles. The green beacon at **20°31.66N, 77°24.00W** flashes every 3 seconds and covers 4 miles.



Threading the needle between Bajo Paticombe and Bajo Santa Clara

Note: At this point you may pick up another red beacon marking *Cucharillas shoal* much farther W. Do *not* mistake this Cucharillas beacon for the red Chinchorro Channel beacon.

From the channel midpoint, just bear **123°** for the next 13 miles to Cayos Manzanillo. For the first time, after many miles of motor sailing you will have the chance to really *sail* all the way there with the prevailing winds on a reach.

Once at WP **20°24.95N, 77°11.85W**, you can continue on a course of **123°** to the easternmost cay of the Cayos Manzanillo, Cayo Grande. OR you can set a **152°** course toward *Pasa Honda*, a deep, comfortably wide channel between Cayo Grande and Cayo Largo leading to a WP at **20°22.66N, 77°10.57W** at the north side of the channel. Another WP at **20°21.68N, 77°10.00W** will place you on the south side of the pass.

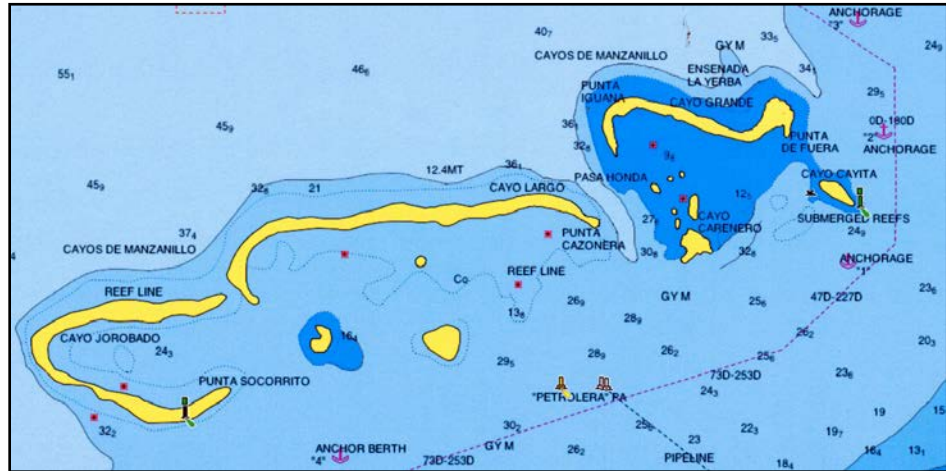


Figure 108. Destination: Cayos Manzanillo

Once there, you can head E for Manzanillo keeping Cayo Carenero to your port side and drop anchor on the E side of Cayo Cayito, the only inhabited cay in the entire string of cays. If you opt for the east cays, watch for a submerged reef extending in a SW direction from a position at approximately **20°22N, 77°09.24W** to **20°21N, 77°08.98W**. Leave it well to port and approach Cayo Cayito from the S.

Or you can turn to the SW to a WP at **20°21.17N, 77°11.32W** and then bear W on a rhumb line to the SE tip of Cayo Jorobado at WP **20°21.17N, 77°12.52W**. Enter the ample, deep bay to find a place to drop your anchor. The bay is 7m deep all around, but shoals sharply near the shores some 200m away from the mangroves.

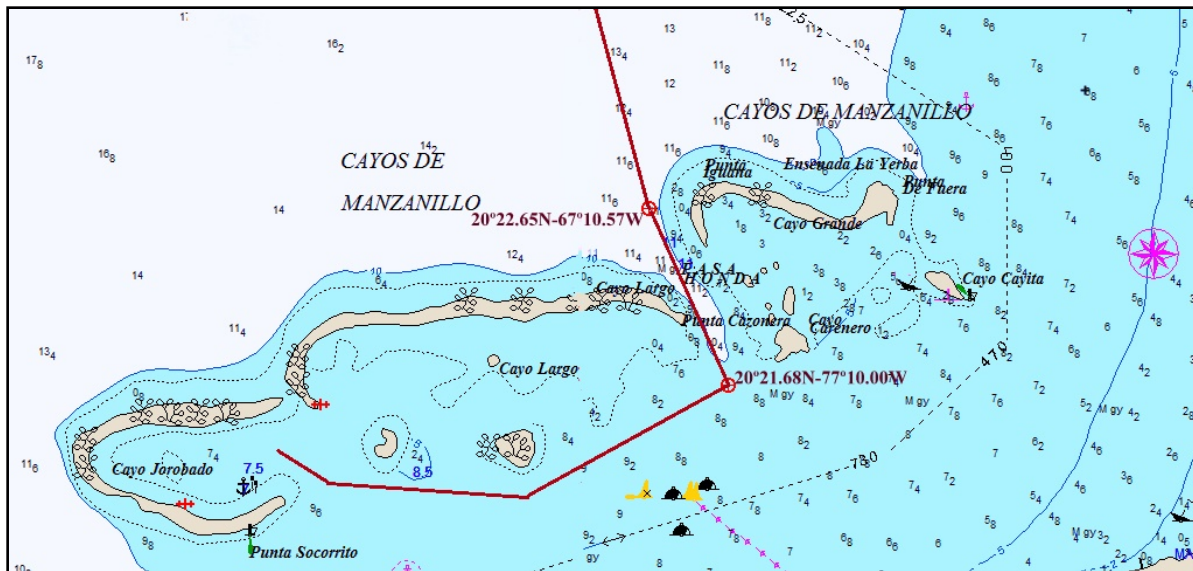


Figure 109. Navigating to Cayo Jorobado

Cayo Jorobado is well sheltered, but buggy too near the mangroves. You will be better off in the center of the anchorage. We dropped anchor at **20°21.13N, 77°12.96W** in 7.5m of dark water on gray, excellent holding, sticky mud.

This cay is sheer mangrove, with no beach and no way to land your dinghy anywhere. But there is a circus of birdlife, and gunkholing among the mangroves provides for pleasant exploring. It is extremely peaceful and quiet, yet only 5 Nm from Manzanillo, an important commercial port. Good as a rest anchorage.

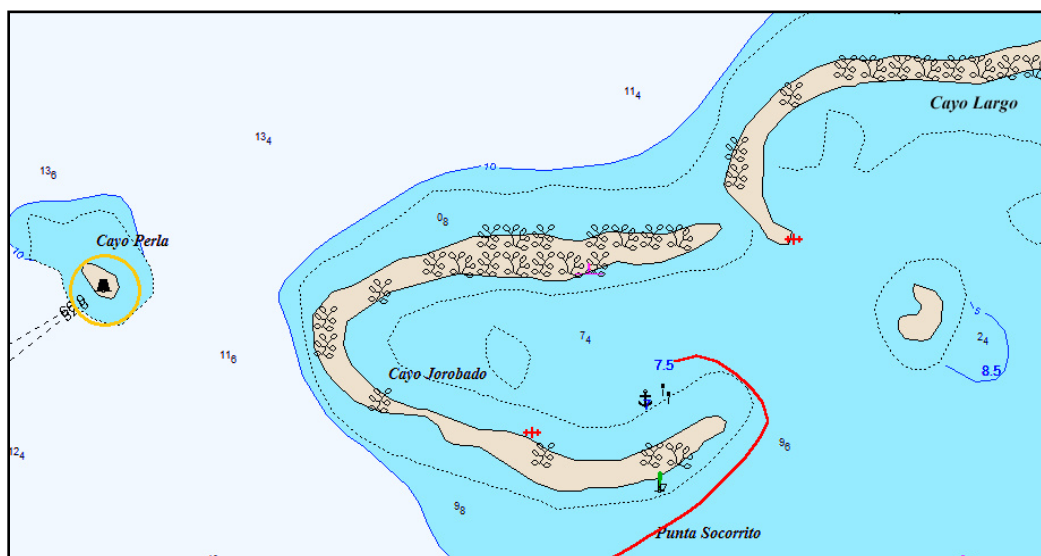


Figure 110. The ins and outs of Cayo Jorobado in the Cayos Manzanilla

When ready to depart, go to a WP at **20°21.05N, 77°12.50W** off the SE tip of Cayo Jorobado and bear **235°** for the next 26 Nm in a course free of all hazards to a WP at **20°06.10N, 77°35.52W** on the north side of *Canal de Balandras*.



Entering Cayo Jorobado lagoon



Heading to Canal de Balandras



North side of Balandras Channel in Cayos Manzanillos.

Niquero

30Nm from Cayos Manzanillo

Approach WP: **20°03.92N, 77°36.08W**

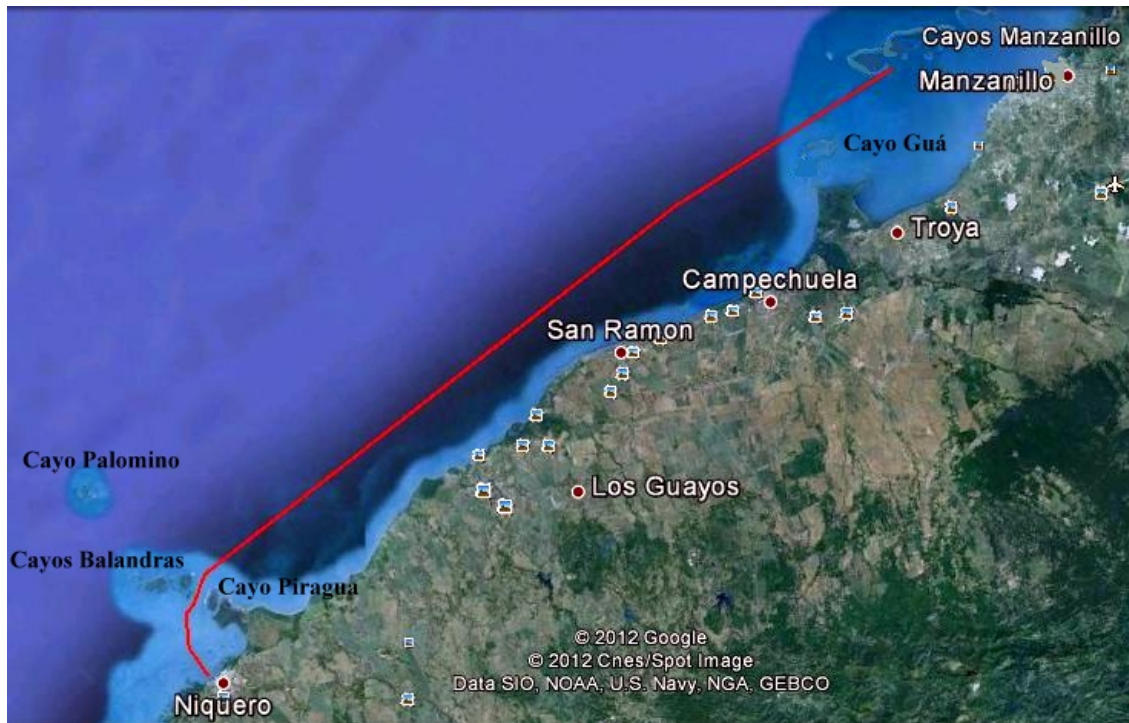
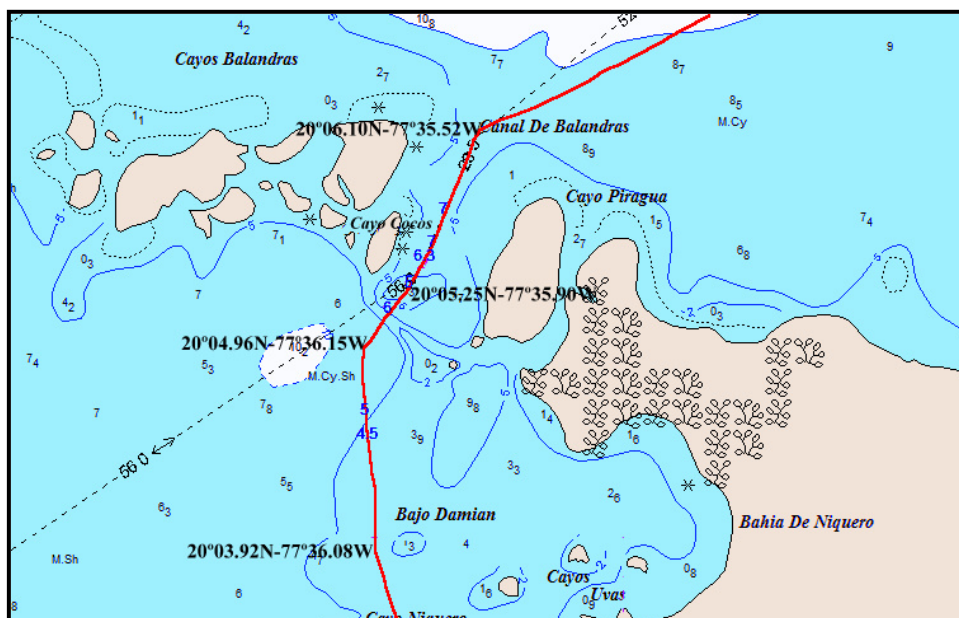


Figure 111. Cayos Manzanilla to Niquero

From a WP at **20°21.05N, 77°12.50W** off Cayo Jorobado, bear **235°** for the next 26Nm in a course free of hazards to a WP at **20°06.10N, 77°35.52W** on the N side of *Canal de Balandras*, the inner channel between Manzanillo and Niquero.

From that point, set a **203°** course to pass between Cayo Piragua on the E and Cayo Coco on the W, to a WP at **20°05.25N, 77°35.90W**. Then, turn some **15° W** to a **220°** course in order to avoid a visible sand shoal to the SW of Cayo Piraguas. That will be the shallowest area of the channel, about 5m. When at about **20°04.96N, 77°36.15W**, turn S on a **177°** course to a WP at **20°03.92N, 77°36.08W**, W of *Bajo Damián*, another sand shoal. Now you can bear **155°** for the next mile into the



anchorage. We dropped anchor at **20°02.30N, 77°35.64W** in 3m of opaque water and grey, sticky, excellent holding mud. Be prepared to wash the anchor when you lift it back up.

Figure 112. Maneuvering into Niquero

Generally speaking, this is one of the places where you can anchor, but should not be able to go ashore. However, our last stocking point had been Cienfuegos and we had consumed, exchanged or given away most of our food stock along the way. So, by the time we reached Niquero, our galley was in a miserable state. That drove us to try to disembark so as to get some fresh food and milk for our son.

As we approached the fishing dock, where the Guardiafronteras base is located, we saw a group of men dressed in green uniforms standing at the pontoon waving a big *NO* at us. To which gesture we responded by waving back a big *HELLO* -- all smiles -- and tied the dinghy just in front of them. Then, some discussion followed.

We were told, softly but firmly, that cruisers were not allowed on shore. We insisted we needed some food, especially as we were traveling with a nine year old kid.

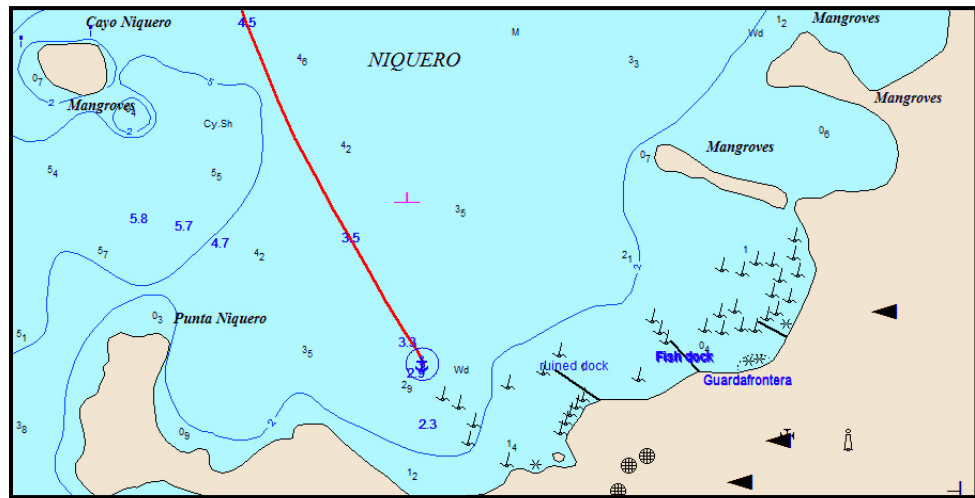


Figure 113. Niquero anchorage

That was the key phrase; finally, the officer in charge made some phone calls and we were granted permission to land, but only for the time necessary to get some stock. Unfortunately –or not -- it was Sunday. Most stores were closed so it took us a good 4-5 hours to get some bread, pork steaks, and delicious fresh eggs but no milk. Meanwhile, we made a city tour, rode a bici-taxi, tried *ostiones* (local oysters served with lemon juice and a hot tomato sauce...yummy!), chatted with the locals and had a humble but delicious dinner, consisting of roast pork on a slice of bread at a street restaurant.



Outskirts of Niquero: humble but neat

Not only that, but on our way back to the dinghy, the Guardafronteras were waiting for us with a bag full of mangos and potatoes...



**Storm passing
over Niquero**





Park by the main street



Niquero main street



**Try Fernando's
delicious ostones**



Hotel Islazu on main street

Headquarters of the PCC, Cuban Communist Party



Banco de Crédito y Comercio



“We will roast your pork here”



Grocery store on main street



Chess academy, main street.



Public library, main street



More
main
street





Niquero main street



"Always on the alert"



House on main street



**Street
grocery
stall**



**Horse power -- main
means of transport
in rural Cuba**



Baseball --the national sport of Cuba



The bakery is located next to the baseball pitch

Home grown goat
meat for sale





Anchored in the calm waters of Niquero Bay



View from the anchorage at Niquero

When leaving Niquero, go from the anchorage to a WP at **20°03.23N, 77°36.26W** in front of *Punta Niquero*, where you will be over 5m of water, and head to WP **20°03.20N, 77°36.26W** in order to give the point a wide berth. Then, bear **225°** for the next 2 Nm towards Cayos Azuaga.

Cabo Cruz

18Nm from Niquero.

Approach WP: **19°51.24N, 77°45.38W**



Figure 114. Niquero to Cabo Cruz

Once off *Punta Niquero*, head to WP **20°03.20N, 77°36.26W** in order to round the point. Then, bear **225°** for the next 2 Nm towards Cayos de Azuaga to a WP at **20°0191N, 77°37.63W** on the south side of Cayos de Azuaga, between the cays and the sand shoal further south.

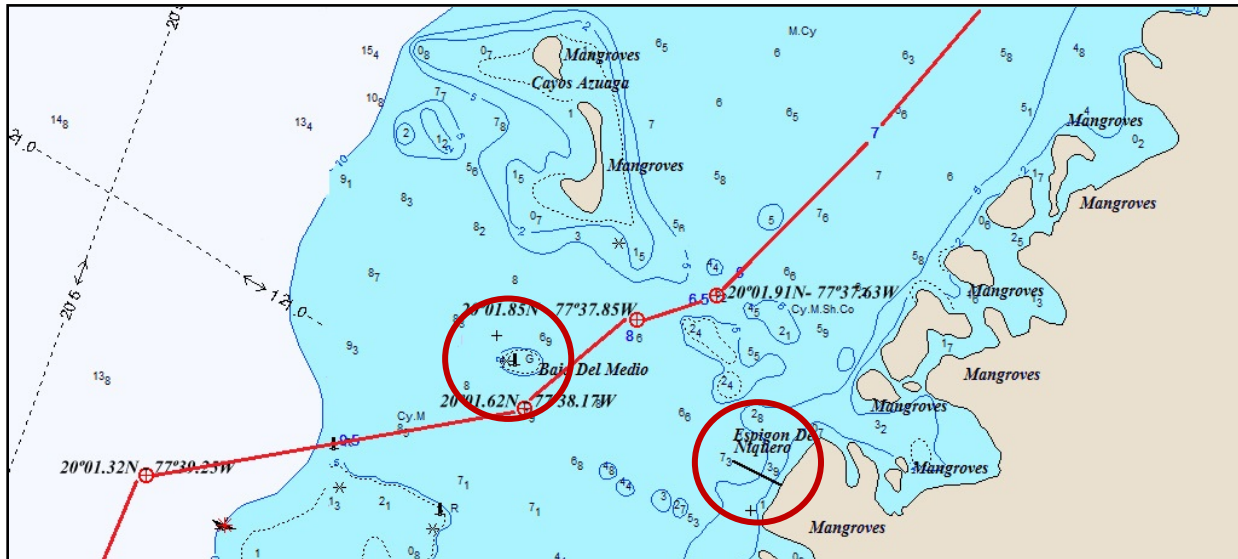


Figure 115. Critical course adjustments between Niquero and Cabo Cruz

Set a **225°** course to the next WP at **20°01.85N, 77°37.85W** and then bear **233°** to a WP at **20°01.62N, 77°38.17W**, leaving *Bajo del Medio* shoal to the north and mainland *Espigón de Niquero* (a large commercial pier) to the SE. (Both circled in red above.) *Bajo del Medio* is marked by a green stake at **20°01.73N, 77°38.20W**.



Espigón de Niquero

Then, head towards the red stake at **20°01.51N, 77°38.72W** and pass north of it. Take care not to sail too close to the stakes, as they are often surrounded by semi

submerged or broken pilings. You will be sailing over minimum depths of 6m all the way down to this point. The next WP at **20°01.36N, 77°39.25W** will place the boat in deeper waters – 10-11m.

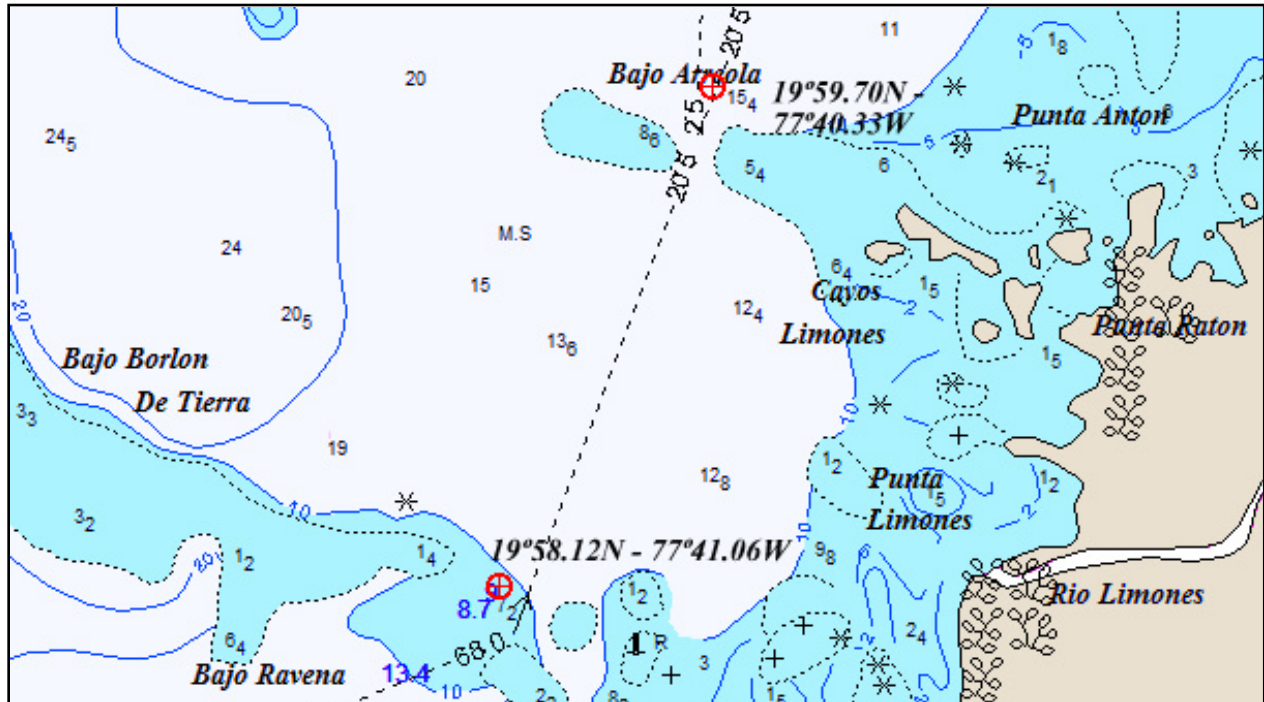


Figure 116. Passing Cayos Limones

Bear **212°** for the next 2Nm to a WP at **19°59.70N, 77°40.33W** at the northern end of the pass between the unmarked *Bajo Arreola* shoal on the west and Cayos Limones on the east. Do not stray to either side since neither *Bajo Arreola* or the shoal stretching to the W of Cayos Limones is marked. A **203°** course for the next 1.5Nm will bring you over deeper waters (12-15m) to the next WP at **19°58.12N, 77°41.06W**, between *Punta Borlón* on mainland and *Bajo Borlón de Tierra* shoal to the west.

At this point, depths will decrease to a minimum of 8m but only for some yards. Again, do not stray to the sides as the shoals are unmarked and very shallow. The next WP at **19°57.67N, 77°41.55W** will place you safely on the south side of the pass and west of *Bajo Lavanderas*, an unmarked shoal; it used to be marked by a stake which at present is missing. Proceed on a **229°** course for the next 2Nm to a WP at **19°56.21N, 77°43.31W** between *Cabezos Colorados de Fuera* on the NW and *Cabezos Colorados de Tierra* on the SE (just in front of Las Colorados village

where Che, Castro, and a band of revolutionaries landed on the boat *Gramma* to start the revolution). Next WP at **19°55.84N, 77°44.07W** off *Punta Colorados* will lead you north of a couple of sand shoals over minimum depths of 7 m.

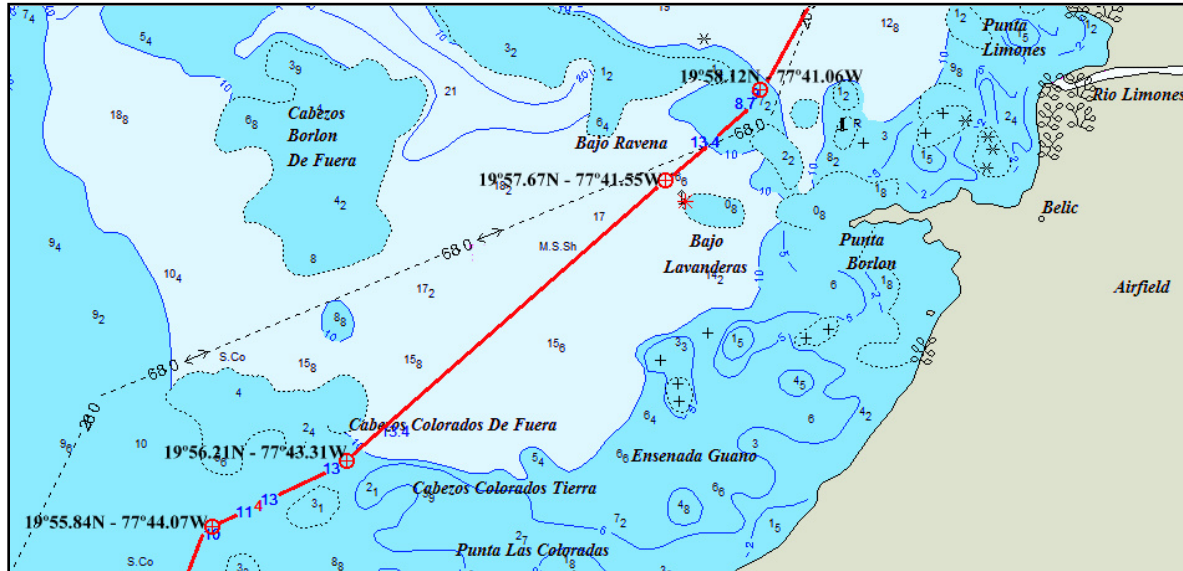


Figure 117. Navigating to Cabo Cruz

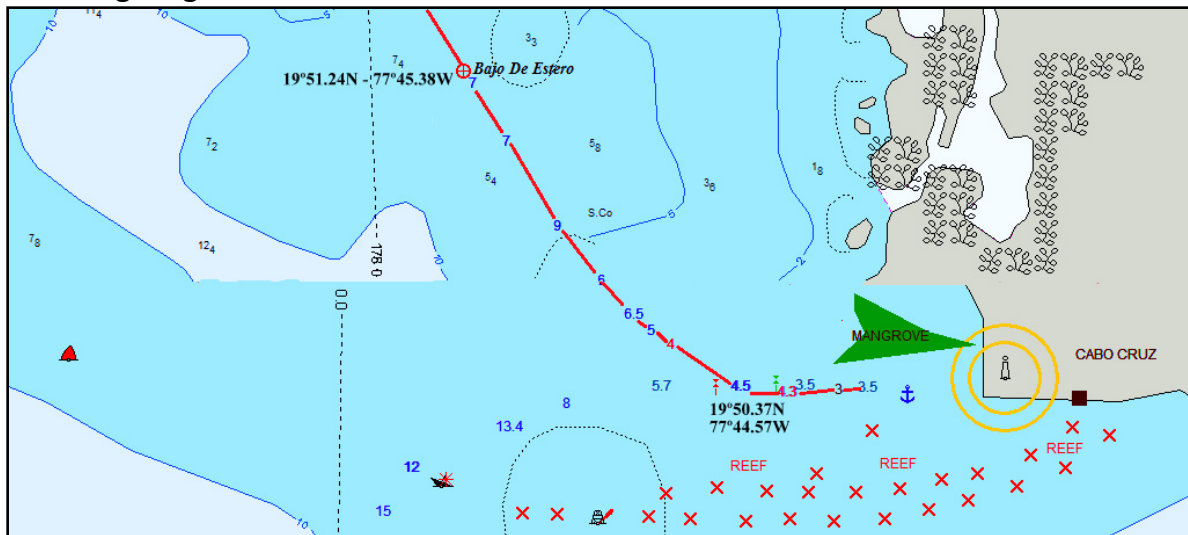


Figure 118. Entering to Cabo Cruz fishing village

Head to a WP at **19°53.47N, 77°45.15W** in front of *Punta Casimbas* and then, aim at WP **19°51.80N, 77°45.54W** at the NE of *Bajo Valentín* shoal, marked by a green buoy at **19°51.50N, 77°45.72W**. The next WP at **19°51.24N, 77°45.38W** is located between that buoy and *Bajo de Estero* shoal immediately to the east. At that point, you will be in sight of the red and green buoys that mark the entrance to the

channel leading into Cabo Cruz fishing village and depths will gradually decrease from 7 to 3m in the anchorage area.

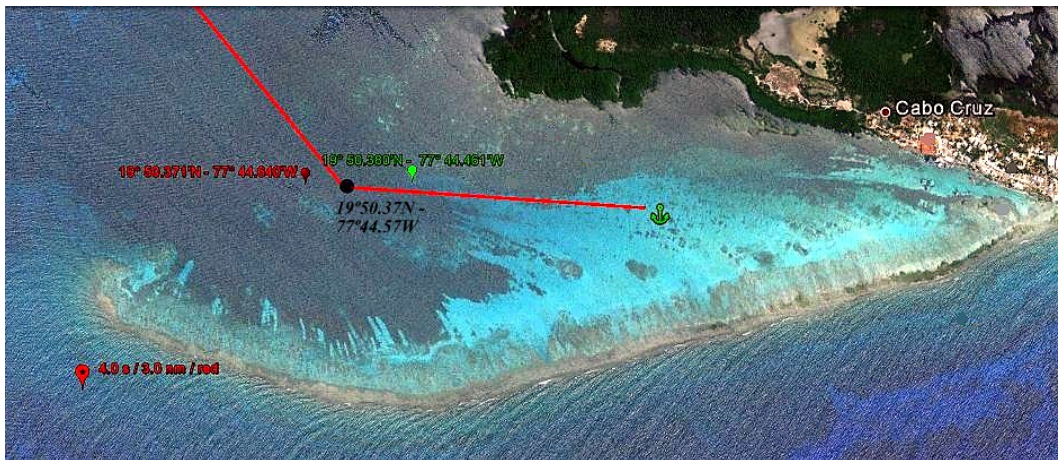


Figure 119. Shoals and buoys at Cabo Cruz

The green marker (3 second period) is located at **19°50.38N, 77°44.46W** and the red one (6 second period) is at **19°50.37N, 77°44.64W**. Both are lighted at night.

A WP at **19°50.37N, 77°44.64W** will set you between the two markers over 4m of water. Once past the green buoy, bear on a rhumb line east between the mangroves and the reef and into the anchorage. We dropped anchor at **19°50.35N, 77°44.07W** in 3.5m of water and good holding sand. Do not stray too much to the S as there are scattered coral heads as you approach the reef.

Meteorological Station and Guardafronteras





Approaching Cabo Cruz, sighting on the lighthouse





A fishing boat leaving the village port



Fishermen's homes





Main ---and only – street, Cabo Cruz



Hot sunny afternoon at Cabo Cruz



Village beach



Cabo Cruz waterfront



Fishing boat anchored at the back of the family house

**The full moon was so bright that
night you could see the bottom
under the keel**





Stately Cabo Cruz lighthouse



View of Cabo Cruz from the east on a glorious windless morning

This is a beautiful, protected anchorage of crystal clear waters, excellent as a rest stop before the next lap east to Marea del Portillo, back against the wind away from the shelter of Cabo Cruz. There is good fishing, excellent endless snorkeling around the reef, lovely bathing in transparent waters... Who needs to go ashore, after all?

When leaving, backtrack to the entrance markers and go on west alongside the reef to a WP at **19°50.19N, 77°45.59W**. Then, bear a S-SE course until you are over 20m. Now you can set a straight course toward Marea del Portillo.

EAST COAST

Marea del Portillo

30Nm from Cabo Cruz.

Approach WP: **19°54.10N, 77°11.40W**



Figure 120. Cabo Cruz to Marea del Portillo

Coastal waters between Cabo Cruz and Marea del Portillo are deep and free of hazards. There are just three areas where the shoal extends off shore; *Punta del Inglés*, *Punta Monje*, and all the area east of *El Pilón Bay* entrance channel (approach WP to El Pilón: **19°51.48N, 77°17.05W**).

El Pilón, west of Marea del Portillo, is a medium size town by Cuban standards with a fishing and commercial port and a marked entrance channel. The Guardiafronteras base is located here and there are some grocery shops, stores, and a street market. However, other cruisers who had visited El Pilón thought it was a rather gloomy anchorage.

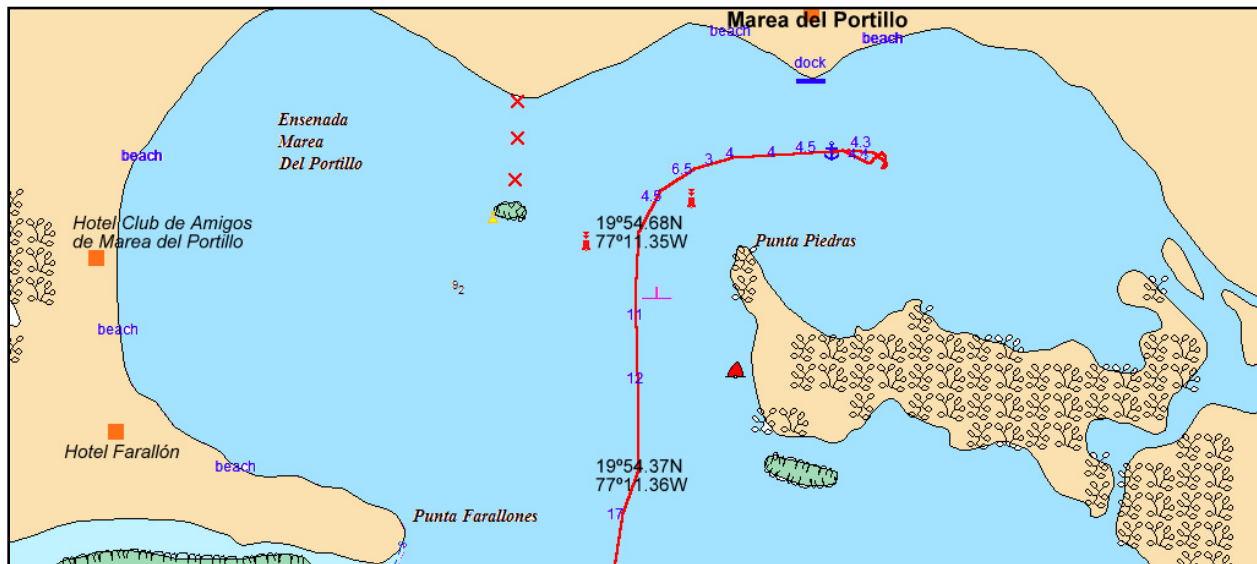


Figure 121. Marea del Portillo in detail

To enter Marea del Portillo, go to a WP at **19°54.10N, 77°11.40W** and head north, leaving the red entrance marker – a conic buoy - to starboard.

A red cone, almost white with guano, marks the tip of the reef on the east shore. The green marker on the west side of the mouth of the bay is missing.



Pass between two red beacons, and once past the east marker, turn east into the center of the bay and drop anchor where it suits you well. We anchored at **19°58.15N, 76°24.09W**, in 4.5m of depth and good holding sand and mud. Just in front of the village dock, where you can leave your dinghy. This side of the bay is about 4-5 m all over but the bottom shelves as you approach the shores. However, while gunkholing the area, we discovered it is 3m deep well into the east side, offering excellent shelter among mangroves in any weather. Not long after

anchoring, you will get the customary visit of a Guardafronteras officer from El Pilón to check the boat papers.



West beacon



East beacon



Anchored in front of the village of Marea del Portillo

Village port. Marea del Portilla

Marea del Portillo is a neat, unassuming, rural village with just a school, a *cafeteria*, a bakery and a grocery stall. But it has the natural charm of the native unspoiled Caribbean. Most villagers work in agriculture and livestock production and those who don't are employed



in the nearby hotels. They usually gather on the beach after work and school for a bathe and a chat or walk to the *cafeteria* for a “fruit of the day” juice and a piece of cake. Both are perfect spots to interact with the friendly locals and know where to get the little fresh stock you’ll be able to find here; seasonal fruit and vegetables, homegrown beans, rice, maybe some goat meat, and bread –if you are early at the bakery. We could only get delicious mangoes and onions but, in such quantity that we spent the following weeks feeding basically on them, cooked in all known and inventive ways...

The west side of the bay in the resort area, a mile away, is also deep enough to approach and it has a good holding sandy bottom. However, since it is open to the



east, unless the sea is extremely calm, a little swell always comes in and it can be quite roly at times.

This striped red and black marker signals a coral head

To approach the west anchorage, follow the same entrance track, but when you are near the west beacon, leave it to starboard and head west toward the center of the resort beach. Not far from there, at **19°54.708N, 77°11.564W**, a yellow cylinder marks the south tip of a long shoal stretching from the north shore. Leave it to



starboard and bear a rhumb line west toward the hotel beach. Drop the anchor when in 4m of depth as the bottom shoals rapidly toward the shore.

Yellow cylinder midway between east and west sides of Marea del Portillo Bay and not far from west beacon (above) serves as marker and seabird rest stop. You can leave it to either side on your way in or out of the west side of the bay

This tourist resort comprises three different nearby hotels: *Punta de Piedra*, *Hotel Farallón*, and *Club Amigo Marea del Portillo*. Only the latter runs all year round; the first two open just for the high season from November to April when northern hemisphere dwellers migrate south in search of warmer climates. Whether by land from the village – it's a nice mile walk -- or boat or dinghy, do not miss the chance to visit *Marea del Portillo Hotel*; it makes a delightful stop after so many miles on a basic diet. For 10CUC (5CUC infant menu), you can eat and drink (wine and beer included) as much as you wish from the buffet menu, make international calls, connect with the rest of the world via internet (12CUC/hour), relax on the beach or the swimming pool, rent a car (60CUC/day + 48CUC for fuel+50CUC deposit) or hire one of the many tours on offer. Among others:

- Turquino National Park day tour by jeep every Sunday; 45CUC/person, lunch included.
- River tour on Mondays; 25CUC/person.
- *Tres villas* bus tour to El Pilón, Sevilla and Marea del Portillo every Friday. 7CUC/person



Hotel Farallón on the west side of the bay

Club Amigo Marea del Portillo resort beach anchorage





Taking a rest after a long teaching day.
Literacy rate in Cuba among the highest
in the Caribbean.



Rural Cuba. Marea del Portillo.



Slogan on the back wall of the bakery



Village cafeteria.
There's no coffee, but they have fruit juice, cake, crusty bread fingers and not much more. **BUT** it is the village center.

To leave, backtrack to the approach WP and head S-SE until you are well over 20m of depth. Then, you can set an E course towards Chivirico, 45 Nm away. Only the two red beacons in the center of the bay are lit at night. Nevertheless, we left around 10pm in complete darkness, by tracking our way back out of the bay, in order to approach the dangerous entrance to Chivirico in good daylight.



Into the west. Marea del Portillo

Chivirico

45Nm from Marea del Portillo

Approach WP: **19°57.14N, 76°23.31W**



Figure 122. Marea del Portillo to Chivirico

You can sail quite near to shore, as long as you maintain over 20m depth. In calm weather, night sailing is easy and free of hazards all the way to Chivirico, although a light shore breeze coming off the *Sierra Maestra* is usually present.



Note: you need to be alert to avoid running into any of the numerous fishing boats from Chivirico – usually bearing some sort of signaling light -- fishing in the area at night.

Back home to Chivirico after a night out fishing

Approach Chivirico in good daylight, as the entrance is surrounded by reefs and shoals and the channel becomes very narrow just at the entrance of the lagoon. Once inside, this is an extremely calm anchorage protected in all weathers. Nevertheless, I doubt I would try to enter Chivirico with rough seas; the approach can be quite tricky in such conditions.

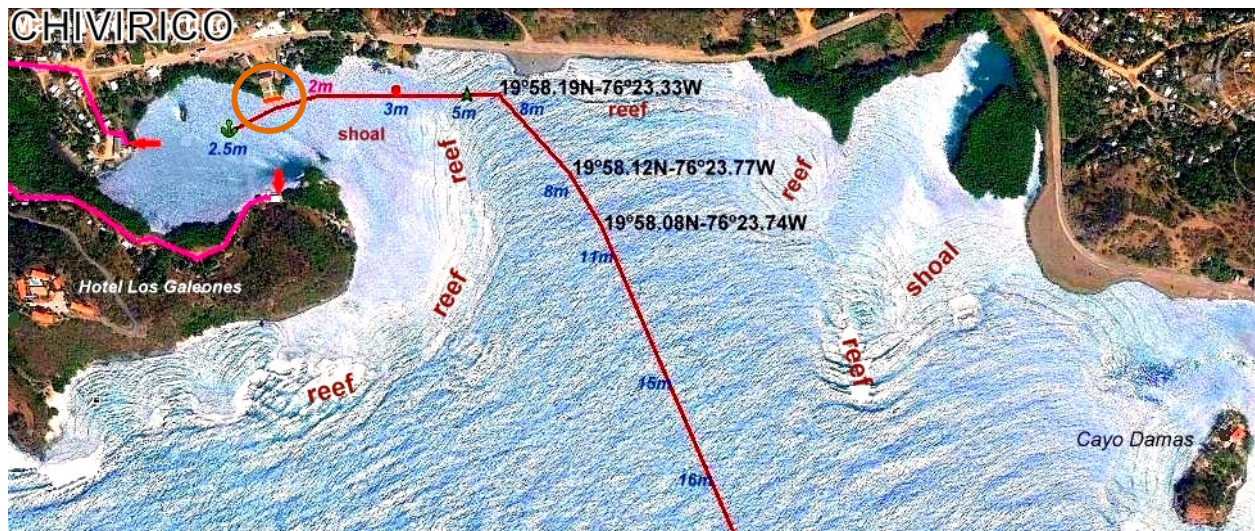


Figure 123. Skirting the reef into Chivirico

To approach the anchorage, go to a WP at **19°57.14N, 76°23.31W** and proceed in a N-NW course to a position at **19°58.08N, 76°23.74W**, at which point you'll be over 11m of water. Then, depths will gradually decrease to a critical point of 2m in the concrete jetty area (circled in orange in chart above). Next WP at **19°58.19N, 76°23.33W** will place you over 8m at the entrance of the narrow channel into the



Heading to the channel entrance

lagoon. Bear west and leave the green cone (5m depth) to port while going ahead toward the faded red spherical buoy (3m depth) off the fishing dock, which should be left to starboard on the way in.

Continue west, aiming at the concrete jetty by a thatched roof hut and enter the lagoon as close to it as possible. This is the shallowest area with just over 2m of depth (fortunately, the bottom is soft sand).



Spherical red buoy. Chivirico.



Entrance of the channel into the lagoon



Concrete jetty by the hatched roof palafito

Once past the concrete jetty, head to the center of the flat calm lagoon and anchor in 2.5m. We dropped anchor at **19°58.15N, 76°24.09W** in good holding mud and sand, away from the shallow shores. Somewhat west of the anchoring point, the remains of an iron platform, used in former times to haul boats in and out, pops up out of the water.



Anchored at Chivirico lagoon



Ruins of a hauling platform

There are two possible landing spots; one is on the SE side of the lagoon, at the dock in front of a white store house. A trail leaves from there into the beach by the town center. The other is on the west shore dock, off a fresh produce storehouse and closer to the center of town. However, you will have to ask for permission (which will be warmly granted) to cross a private yard and access the town main avenue. Both spots are marked with a red arrow in Figure 109. When ready to leave, track back to the approach WP and set a S-SE course for the next mile to give a wide berth to *Punta Tabacal* and the shallow surrounding waters. Then, you can bear a rhumb line east for the next 22Nm toward Santiago de Cuba.

Chivirico is a charming fishing town and a delightful stop between Cabo Cruz and Santiago de Cuba. Due to its location between Niquero and Santiago, it is also a crossroads between both towns and the villages in the area, where dozens of Cubans travel every day. Set in a rural area famous for producing the best coffee on the island, it is a blend of rural and urban Cuba well worth visiting. There is a



Hotel Los Galeones on top of the hill

big hotel – *Los Galeones*- on top of the hill on the south side of the anchorage.

Unfortunately, it was closed during our visit as it opens only during high season.

There are several stores with the usual basic groceries and household items, a bank and an exchange booth (*CADECA*), a couple of restaurants, a bakery, a cinema where we spent a delightful afternoon as the only members of the audience, a lovely beach and a lively boulevard by the sea.



View east from Hotel Los Galeones



View of the lagoon from Hotel Los Galeones

The park houses a bar & restaurant, and a grocery stall



Town cinema



Impeccable vintage sidecars are quite a common sight in urban Cuba...



...as is the ubiquitous bici-taxi

Cubans may differ in their political views but there is a unanimous and admiration for José Martí, one of the national heroes dating back to colonial times, of whom they say: *“Martí lo dijo todo”*.



political views but feeling of respect for Martí, one of the national heroes dating back to colonial times, of whom they say: *“Martí lo dijo todo”*.



Chivirico boulevard



Track adapted for public transportation



The guajiros in rural Cuba travel on horseback



After years of scarcity, Cubans have managed to survive using their amazing inventiveness. These men remaking a rope from the remains of an old one are a good example. In Cuba, everything is recycled out of sheer necessity.





Cuban children spend long hours at school where they get education, breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack

Santiago de Cuba

30 Nm from Chivirico.

Approach WP: **19°57.83N, 75°52.64W**

Marina: **19°58.97N, 75°52.37W**

Tel: (226) 691 446 **Fax:** (226) 68 108

Email: mercado@marlin.scu.tur.cu; admin@marlin.scu.tur.cu,

Address: Calle 1ra A s/n Punta Gorda, Santiago De Cuba

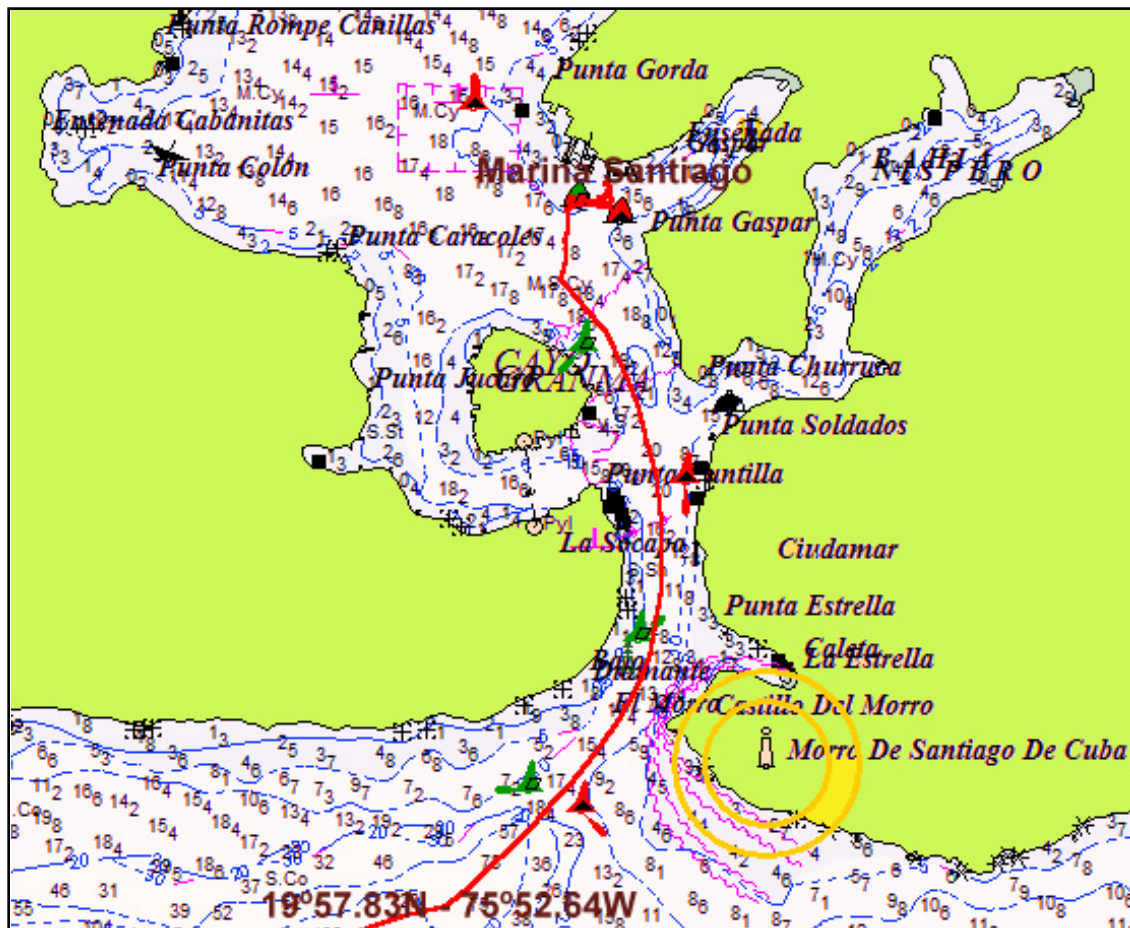


Figure 124. Santiago de Cuba

Approaching Santiago Bay is easy and free of hazards along the well marked channel, lighted at night. From the AWP at **19°57.83N, 75°52.64W**, in 10m depth,

you'll be in sight of the entrance buoys (green, portside, 5 second period; red, starboard-side, 6 second period). Just follow the markers along the wide channel into the marina at **19°57.83N, 75°52.37W**. Cargo boat traffic is not intense but keep an eye out.

Although a Port of Entry, Marina Internacional Santiago De Cuba is a small marina with limited capacity; they boast 20 berths alongside. However, I find those figures rather optimistic. There are 2 main docks with a capacity for 6 vessels each, at most, and only one has 110V and 220V electricity and water connection.



Marina Santiago de Cuba



Marina premises

They charge 0.45CUC/ft/day on dock and 0.25CUC/ft/day at anchor, water and electricity included. Santiago is an extremely protected bay with various inlets which provide shelter during hurricane alerts. *Ensenada Gaspar*, immediately E of the marina is one of them. During long term stays (over 2 months) docking fees are reduced to 0.25CUC/ft/day and the marina has the contractual responsibility to move the vessels to a safe shelter in case of a hurricane alert.

A bit further south, *Ensenada El Níspero* contains a big busy shipyard, Astilleros DAMEX, a Cuban-Dutch firm with Dutch capital and technology, where maintenance and repairs can be done and vessels can stay on the hard for long periods. Although word has it that prices are not economical, we were unable to check. For minor repairs, ask the dock master.

There is diesel (1.10CUC/l) but no gasoline. This has to be purchased at a gas station. For gas refills, ask the dock master; the marina has no refill service but there is always somebody around who will do the job for about 15CUC/bottle.

The premium feature at the marina is dock master César, who struggles hard to promote it with limited resources but loads of enthusiasm and good will. He is a very nice fellow ready to help with anything cruisers might need.

Bathrooms are big and clean, there is a big bar and restaurant with a huge terrace and beautiful views over the bay, a bowling green, a souvenir store, a tiny grocery store (mainly for soft drinks, beer, rum and cheap, horrible, local wine), a chandlery with very few items in stock, and a playground for kids (something really unusual).

The marina offers medical attention (only week days during office hours), fishing and diving excursions and taxi and car hire service. There is public bus service to the city center. The bus stop is right next to the marina, but there is no fixed time table and the ride can take ages.

A taxi is the best choice to reach the city center for stocking, communications or leisure, as *Punta Gorda*, site of the marina facility, is a residential area pretty far from the center. The regular fare is 15CUC for a round trip. There are 2 phone booths for international calls at the marina but there is no internet connection. For internet, you will have to go to ETECSA in Aguilera # 401 esq. a Pío Rosado, just opposite *Teatro Heredia*, or any of the big hotels in the city center:

- **Hotel Meliá Santiago de Cuba**
Avd.de las Américas y Calle M
- **Hotel Casa Grande**
Heredia No. 201 entre San Pedro y San Félix
- **Hotel las Américas**
Av. Las Américas y General Cebreco
- **Hotel Libertad**
Calle Aguilera y Plaza de Marte

Do not miss the chance to visit Cayo Granma, a charming little cay just in front of the marina, courtesy of Marina Santiago. One of their catamarans will take you there and back at an agreed time.



Pretty little Cayo Granma

We spent a delightful Sunday on Cayo Granma; explored its colorful narrow streets, had lunch in a *paladar* and enjoyed music and dancing with the locals at the *plaza*.



Any house at Cayo Granma



Cuban siren. Cayo Granma



Cayo Granma



Cayo Granma

In the afternoon, we took the *patana* to *El Morro* (1CUC/person/tourist fare, 1 peso/person/local fare), landed by the road to the castle and walked the last 1-2



Patana to Cayo Granma. El Morro

miles up the hill to *Castillo del Morro*. There are always taxis on the road by the pier, ready to drive lazy souls up the slope (3CUC/ride to the castle and back).



Bus stop on the road to Castillo del Morro

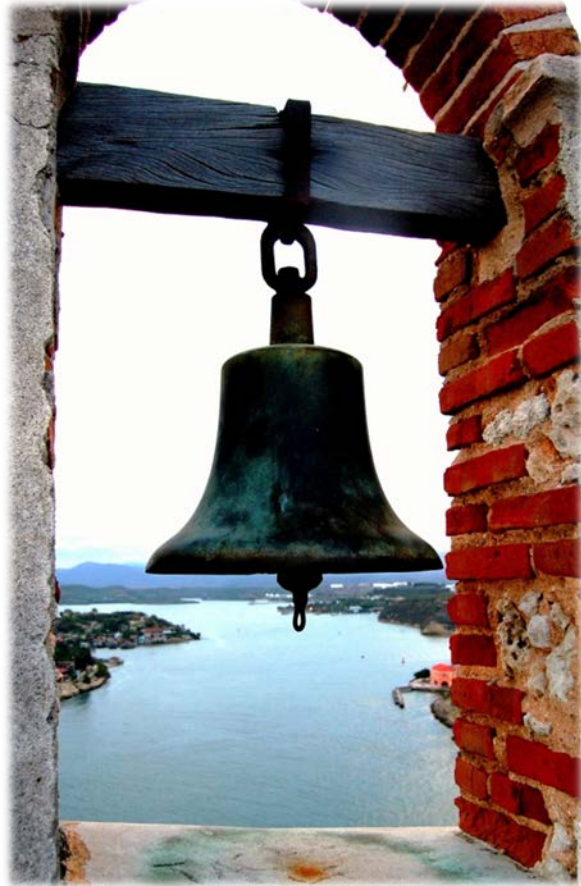
At *Punta El Morro*, we visited the beautiful Santiago lighthouse and arrived in time to watch a group of young soldiers dressed in colonial military costumes fire an old cannon in the castle just before sunset.



Ready to fire the cannon old style. Castillo del Morro



Beautifully carved Spanish cannon



This bell was rung to warn Santiago villagers



Castillo de San Pedro de la Roca, popularly known as Castillo del Morro



Santiago lighthouse

There are 4.5m depths around the dock area where cruisers are requested to anchor while authorities arrive. Then, a thorough inspection of the boat will take place, papers will be checked and forms filled in, no matter whether you are clearing into the country or just making a stop on your way elsewhere. Port Authorities in Santiago are very strict and can be a bit upsetting at times. Your bags may be checked inside and outside the marina from time to time and you will have to request permission 24 hours ahead if you want to invite a friend on board your boat. By no means will you be allowed to leave the bay between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., that is, in the dark.

Clearing fees:

- Vessel cruising permit=10CUC
- Customs=20CUC
- Visa valid for a month=15CUC
- Agriculture Dept.=5CUC
- Veterinary=5CUC

If the regular two month visa is expiring, Port Antonio, Jamaica. is 100Nm away and the perfect choice to clear out and back into the country. For two reasons: On the one hand, you only need to be out of Cuba for 24 hours; on the other, you'll be sailing all the way on a reach or a broad reach under the spell of the trade winds.

Santiago is a big city with different kinds of stores, various fresh produce markets, several city parks, plenty of restaurants and *paladares*, a rich cultural life, many museums and sites of cultural or historical interest and music any time anywhere.

Parque Céspedes is the beating heart of the city. The cathedral crowns this park where people play music, gather to play chess, meet friends and lovers or simply take a rest under the shade of the trees. Around the park there are stores, banks, hotels, museums, restaurants, *paladares*, bars and cafes. *Calle Francisco Aguilera* is one of the main arteries of the city center and it crosses the park towards *Plaza de Marte*. Along the street, you will find a couple of banks, a DHL office, Bacardí Museum, the Town Hall, an ETECSA office for phone calls and internet connection, a post office, a Cubatur travel agency, grocery stores, bakeries, bars, *paladares*... On the opposite end of Aguilera Street near *Padre Pico* there are several stores and a fresh produce market.



Catedral Nuestra Señora de la Asunción



Town Hall, Gobierno Provincial



Casa de La Trova. Calle Heredia



La Isabelica Café



Playing chess at Parque Céspedes



Music in the street



Paladar La Fortaleza



Mercado agropecuario “La Vallita de Santiago”

Avenida Victoriano de Garzón is another artery of Santiago. It stretches from *Plaza de Marte* to *Parque Ferreiro*. Along this street there is a fresh produce market, a couple of bakeries, various stores (an unusually well stocked grocery store in Cuban pesos, among them), a cinema, a post office, a bank, a Western Union office, a Cubanacan travel agency, restaurants, bars and *Coppelia La Arboleda*, where Cubans spend the last hours of the afternoon under the shade of the big old trees while they enjoy an immense ration of ice-cream and a generous piece of cake for less than 1\$US! Do not miss the chance to share the experience. Not far, on *Avenida Moncada*, the barracks of old *Cuartel Moncada*, have been transformed into a secondary boarding school and *Museo de Historia 26 de Julio*, to commemorate the failed attack of Fidel and his men.

The bus station at Parque Ferreiro is a gathering point for all buses going south to *Punta Gorda* (where the marina is located) and El Morro. The modern *Hotel Meliá* building stands out behind *Parque Ferreiro* and there is a gas station just in front of the park.



Unusually well stocked grocery in pesos in Avenida Victoriano de Garzón




Cuartel Moncada still displays the marks of shots exchanged during the failed attack by Fidel and his men on July 26th, 1956



Victoriano de Garzón Avenue



From Friday afternoon to Monday morning, *Avenida Victoriano de Garzón* is closed to all traffic and only pedestrians are allowed in the long avenue. In the afternoon, when the heat of the sun begins to cool down, improvised street restaurants materialize out of the blue alongside the street; tables are set and the odors of the delicious roasted pork invade the streets. It is the beginning of a long weekend of eating, drinking, dancing and having fun.



EVENTOS DE LA CULTURA SANTIAGUERA
... de las tradiciones y la cultura popular

Festival de la Trova Pepe Sánchez / marzo
Festival de Boleros / junio
Festival del Caribe. Fiesta del Fuego / julio
Carnaval Santiaguero / julio
Festival del Son. Matamoroson / octubre

There is always some cultural event going on downtown



Public toilets along Avenida Victoriano de Garz3. They are humble but clean, as are most things in Cuba.



Avenida Victoriano de Garz3n on a Friday afternoon





Cuban funfair





Valle de la Prehistoria in Baconao Park, 20 km from Santiago

Mahomilla Bay

NO ENTRY – MILITARY ZONE!

Puerto Escondido

NO ENTRY – MILITARY PORT!

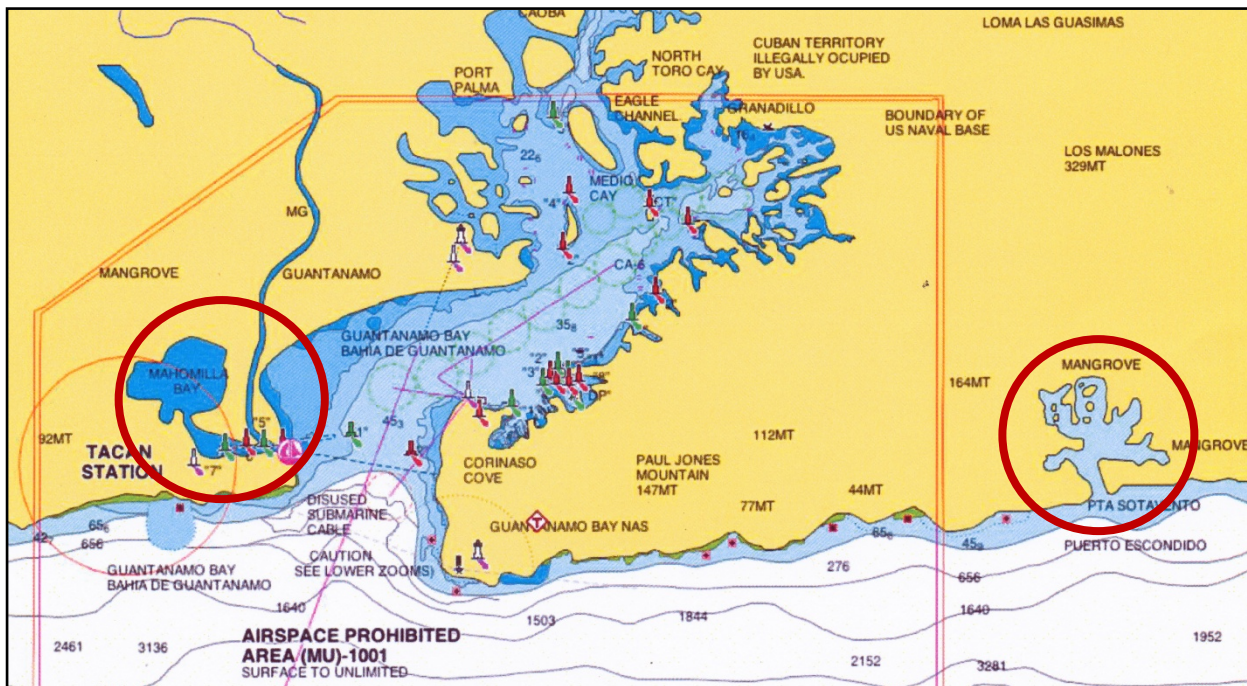


Figure 125. Two prohibited military zones; one Cuban, one American

Both *Mahomilla Bay* and *Puerto Escondido* are enticing pocket bays. However, both are under military restrictions. Mahomilla Bay lies not only within the boundary of Guantánamo Bay, the US Naval Base, but its entrance lies within the mouth of the bay. *Puerto Escondido*, a Cuban military port, is likewise strictly off limits.



Bypassing Puerto Escondido

Baitiquiri

65 Nm from Santiago.

Approach WP: **20°01.00N, 74°50.81W**

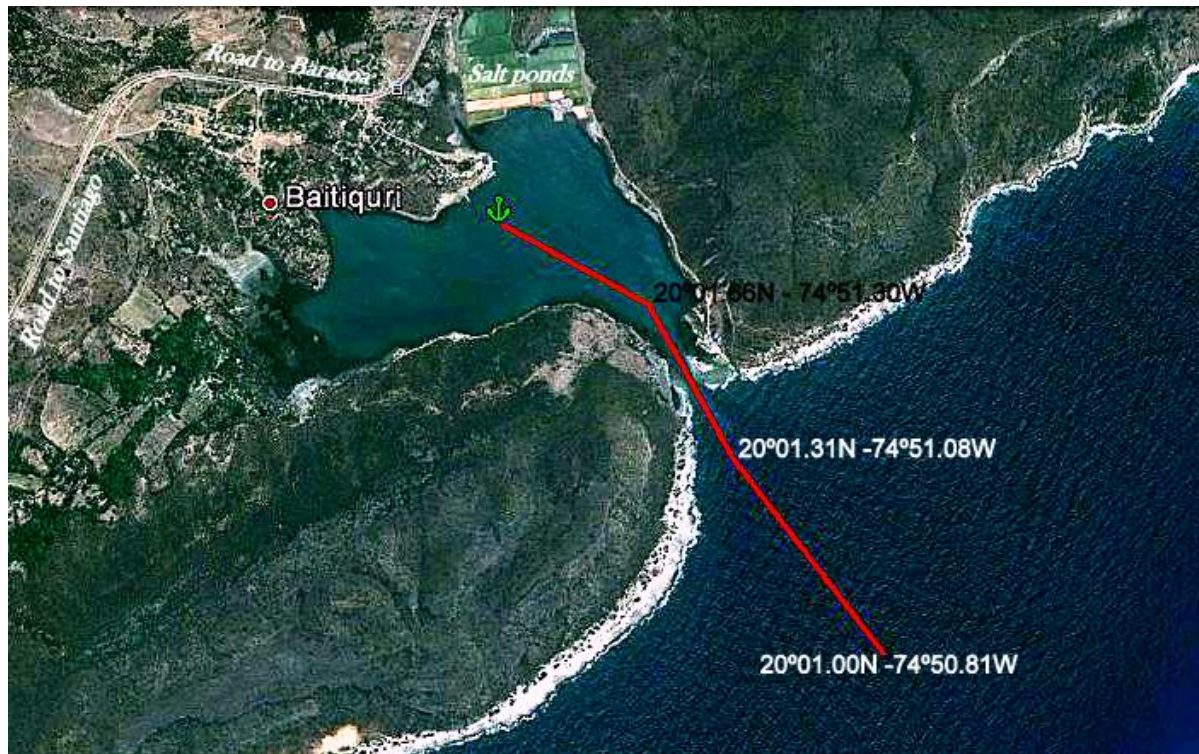


Figure 126. Entering Baitiquiri

Covering the 65 Nm from Santiago to Baitiquiri requires an overnight sailing in order to enter the bay in good daylight. In spite of the fact that the channel is



marked and lighted at night – or so we were told, but couldn't check because the channel is out of sight from the anchorage -- the channel is so narrow and the reef on both sides so dangerously close that approaching it in darkness is simply out of the question.

The entrance markers are disturbingly close.

Whether coming from east or west, the first thing you see when approaching Baitiquiri, is the metal-frame lighthouse on the east shore of the entrance channel. From the approach WP at **20°01.00N, 74°50.81W**, head to the center of the entrance at a WP at **20°01.31N, 74°51.08W** and bear **331°** to get safely to the inner end of the channel. It is very well marked by 2 red beacons on the E side and 3 green beacons on the W side.



Entrance channel to Baitiquiri Bay

The shallowest point is between the last 2 green beacons, with an unsettling 2.7m depth, after which it deepens again to 4-5m throughout the center of the bay. Once past the last green beacon, bear **312°** towards the Guardafronteras dock and anchor wherever you feel comfortable. We anchored at **20°01.83N, 74°51.54W** in 4m of grey, sticky, good holding mud.



Guardafronteras dock at Baitiquiri Bay



West side of the bay just before sunset... glorious!

The bay is beautiful and extremely well sheltered from all winds, calm even in bad weather. The surrounding landscape consists of sloping green hills covered with varied vegetation from cacti to palm trees, framed by the mythical *Sierra Maestra* mountain chain in the background. The dock on the E side of the bay was used for loading the salt produced in the surrounding salt ponds but it appears abandoned at present. Baitiquiri is a tiny fishing village with an unusually large Guardafronteras



base, probably due to the proximity of the Guantánamo Bay U.S. naval base. There is little to tell about the village as we were not allowed to land.

Going fishing with the first light of dawn

Baitiquiri is the last possible stop on the south Cuban coast before heading east toward Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), or north to the Bahamas, or the north coast of Cuba. So make sure there is a good weather forecast before setting off as you will not find any shelter for the next 70Nm and will be sailing a potentially dangerous stretch of water. The *Paso de los Vientos* between Cuba and Haiti becomes quite nasty in bad weather, especially in N and NE winds.

The good news is that the coastline is very steep so you can sail quite close to it all the way to *Punta Maisí*. Such was the local fishermen's advice and so we did. Another piece of advice they gave was to try to be off *Punta Maisí* in the morning; not too early, so as to avoid the last effect of the nocturnal katabatic winds but not much later, either, in order to outrun the stronger E winds that build up with the rising sun.



View of Baitiquiri from the anchorage



Leaving Baitiquiri

The bad news is that you won't be allowed out of Baitiquiri Bay after 6 p.m., so at an average 5Kn speed, you will be off *Punta Maisí*, 50Nm away, around 4 a.m. We risked it and set off just at 6 p.m. Although we had some SE swell and rain off *Punta Caleta*, rounding *Punta Maisí* was easy and pleasant. *Paso de los Vientos* (Windward Passage) is a busy corridor in and out of the Caribbean Sea and big vessel traffic can be intense at times, so keep eyes wide open when transiting the pass.

NORTH COAST

NORTHEAST

Ensenada de Mata

75 Nm from Baitiquiri

Approach WP: 20°18.00N, 74°22.60W

Pocket bay. Sheltered except in NE winds. Shallow far off shore. No landing.

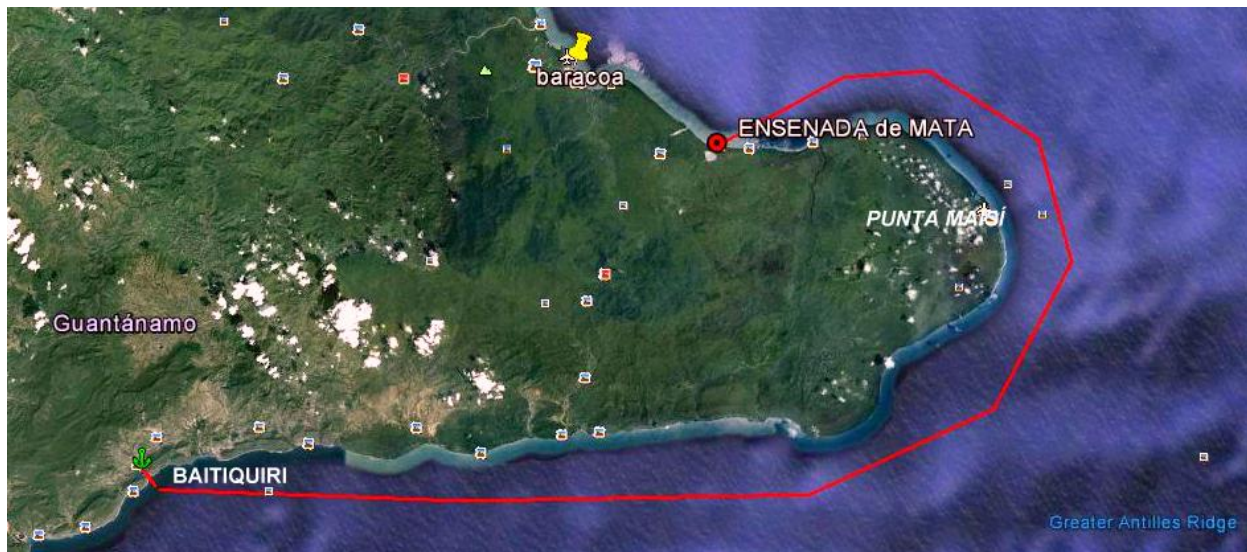


Figure 127. Baitiquiri to Ensenada de Mata

Baitiquiri to Mata is admittedly a long haul. If you are coming from the SE coast of Cuba, you will need to round *Punta Maisí*. Being off *Punta Maisí* with the first light of day adds another benefit to the more favorable atmospheric conditions; the chance to admire the beautiful landscape along this stretch of coast. You can sail quite close to shore in deep safe waters as there are no navigational hazards in the area.

To approach *Ensenada Mata*, go to a WP at **20°18.00N, 74°22.60W** and bear **206°** through the middle of the sufficiently wide channel into the cove. Depths will gradually drop from 20m at the approach WP to 7-8m between the headlands at the sides and a mere 3m just in the middle of the bay. Once inside the bay, do not stray too much from the center as the bottom shoals rapidly towards the shores.

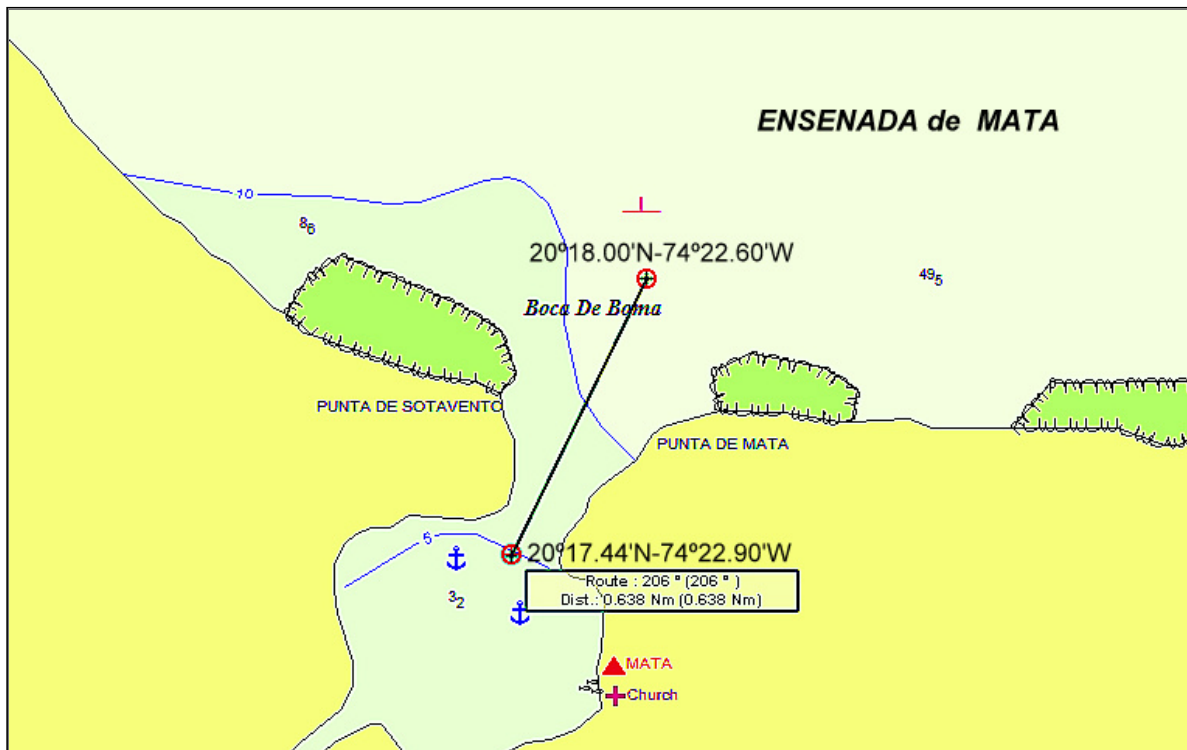


Figure 128. Ensenada de Mata

Both the NE and NW sides of the cove can be suitable anchoring points as long as you drop anchor close to the center. There is good holding in sand and mud. The inner bay or cove offers good shelter in all winds except from the NE, when you will be better protected in Baracoa Bay, only 8Nm further west.

Although it was an important sheltering and commercial port in past times, Mata has become a sleepy little fishing and farming village today. Surrounded by lush green hills covered in tropical vegetation, it boasts of being part of the hydrographic wealth of the island. As a matter of fact, five rivers pour their waters into *Ensenada de Mata*, the largest of them being the *Guandao River* on the SW

side of this pocket bay. That is the reason why this cove is so shallow around the shore, covered as it is with deposits from the river flows. Be alert after rain for logs and other floating debris, both at the mouth and inside the bay.



Mouth of the cove at Mata



Ensenada de Mata



Two of the five rivers that flow into the cove

The pretty village of Mata consists of a cluster of little wooden houses spread around the bay among trees and bushes, foliage and flowers. The center of the village is located on the east shore of the bay and so are the humble fishing port and the neat, restrained Baptist church perched on a steep hill.



Iglesia Bautista, high above Ensenada de Mata



Fishing port



There is a small bar and grocery with the usual basics as well as a Guardiafronteras post. Out at the main road, vintage jeeps ride to and from Baracoa with plenty of stops and no fixed timetable, through beautiful scenery between the sea and the forest.

The bad news is that permission to land is usually refused to foreign cruisers on the grounds that their safety cannot be guaranteed. But there is no harm in trying, and asking the Guardiafronteras on channel 16. You never know...



Coconuts, bananas, cocoa, mangoes and the most diverse tropical fruits grow wild in the midst of the lush green vegetation around Ensenada de Mata



Baracoa

8 Nm from Ensenada Mata.

Very sheltered port but roly in NE swells. Straightforward, easy entrance.

Delightful stop.



Figure 129. Baracoa on the Honey Bay

To enter the bay at Baracoa, go to a WP at **20°21.40N, 74°29.70W** off the center of the bay entrance. You cannot miss it because the 1886 foot high, flat topped mountain *El Yunque* (the anvil), visible from miles away, stands out above the head of the bay. There are no navigational hazards around the entrance, so as long as you do not stray to the sides, the channel is wide and the entrance easy.

Another WP at **20°21.26N, 74°30.17W** will place you on the inner side of the bay. At that point, the wreck on the SE shore will be visible. Give it a wide berth and feel your way toward the commercial dock further south. Depths will drop gradually from 20m at the channel to 7m in the wreck area. Drop the anchor in 3-4m of good holding sand and mud and keep away from the shallow shores. Bear in

mind that the *Macaguanigas River* not only deposits sediments all along the shore, but also unloads its share of debris, branches and logs into the bay following heavy rains.



View of Baracoa Bay and El Yunque from the channel entrance

As soon as you anchor, you will be visited by the Guardafronteras for the customary paper work. Diesel can be obtained at the commercial dock at 1.30CUC/l.

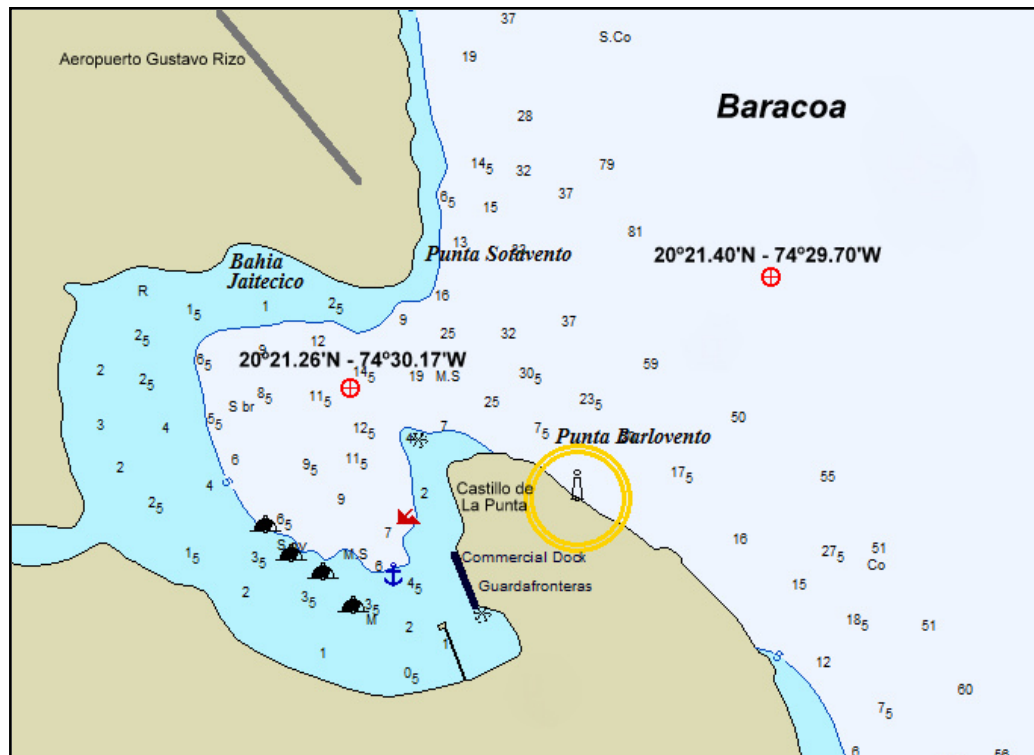


Figure 130. Baracoa Bay in detail



Bahía de Baracoa



Commercial dock and Guardafronteras post; wreck to right and Hotel Castillo on top of hill



Fuerte de La Punta

Fuerte de La Punta – located on the eastern tip of Baracoa Bay and now converted into a state run restaurant, this was one of two forts built during the XVIII century to protect the town and both its bays: *Bahia de Baracoa* and *Bahía de Miel*.



On the west tip of Baracoa Bay, old Antonov-2s, like the one pictured, take off and land at *Gustavo Rizo Airport*. Produced in Russia and other Iron Curtain countries such as Poland in the '50s and into the '60s, the AN-2 was the most widely mass-produced bi-plane ever, in the world. It was used as a utility plane, a real workhorse; and can carry 10-12 passengers.



El Yunque



La Bella Durmiente – the sleeping beauty

Both the silhouettes of *El Yunque* (The Anvil) and *La Bella Durmiente* (The Sleeping Beauty) can be observed from the anchorage. Word has it that the views from top of *El Yunque* are breathtaking. The Sleeping Beauty is not a mountain but

a series of interspersed hills that give the impression of a woman lying on her back when viewed from a certain perspective. A local saying goes that Baracoans are real riddlers because they say they own an anvil that is no anvil and a Sleeping Beauty that is no woman.



Bahia de Miel



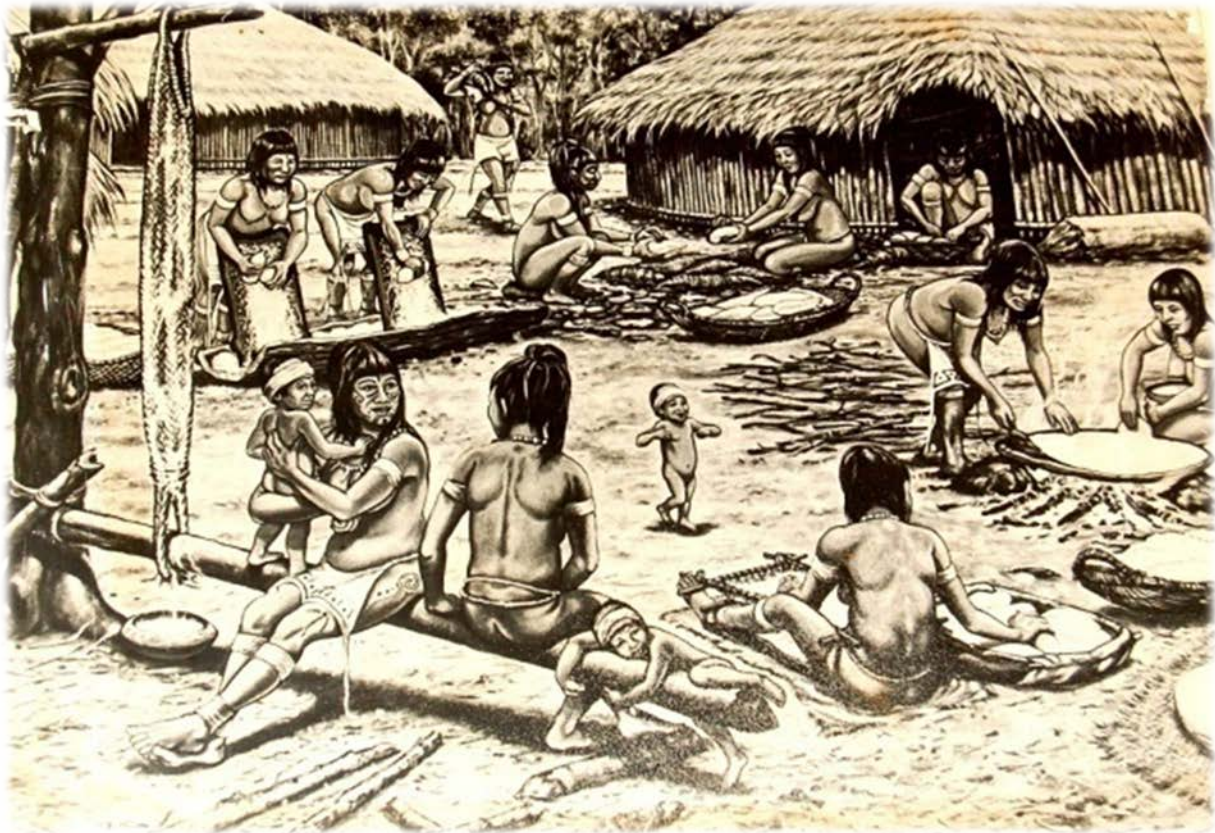
Playa de Miel

Bahía de Miel, an open ample bay on the east side of town, features *Playa de Miel* beach, a favorite spot during weekends for Baracoans and visitors alike. On the day of our visit, a Friday, a big group of adults and teenage students was cleaning the beach and surrounding waters of debris carried by the Miel River into the bay.



Fuerte Matachín

Fuerte Matachín, on the east side of town, was the other fort built in the 1700s to protect *Bahía de Miel* and the east entrance to the town. It served as a shelter for homeless families during the 19th century. Prostitution, gambling, heavy drinking and all sorts of vices and diseases became so widespread in the fort, that it came to be known as *el castillo maldito*, the damned castle. At present it houses the small but excellent *Museo Municipal de Baracoa* with an exhibit of the local history, both colonial and pre-colonial Taino, culture, and biodiversity.



Depiction from Taíno Indian exhibit, Museo Municipal, Baracoa



Marti in Baracoa



Cristopherus Columbus. Malecón



Queuing along the Malecón



El Malecón is a long promenade connecting Baracoa and Miel bays. In the mornings, horse or mule drawn carts wait in a long queue for their turn for clients. These carts and bici-taxis are the only means of public transportation in town. Motorcycles with side cars are not uncommon delivery vehicles.

All sorts of stores – that is, in Cuban terms- both in local currency and CUCs can be found in this middle-size town of 50,000 inhabitants (plus some 35,000 more spread throughout the surrounding hills). Most of the stores are located along the main avenue, Avenida José Martí, where you will also find a bank and a CADECA or currency booth. The street markets are never short of seasonal fruit and vegetables from local producers. In fact, the Baracoa area boasts of producing 80% of the national agricultural output. But they really excel in the production of cocoa, coffee and coconut, ever present in the Baracoan gastronomy. Fish, lobster, shrimps and crab are excellent, cheap and easy to get.



Cucuruchos (cones) are popular sweets made of a blend of coconut, honey, mashed fruits such as pineapple, grapefruit and guanábana; and nuts. Wrapped in a cone-shaped palm leaf they are all natural -- a sweet like no other.

In the tiny mountain settlement of Cagüebaje, 20km from Baracoa on *La Farola*, the “most dangerous” road in Cuba, thanks to the numerous switchbacks and blind curves along the steep two lane highway, there is a lookout point and kiosk. The view alone is worth the stop. Here a group of mountain villagers prepares and sells what some say is the best cucurucho in Cuba.

The group also offers cremas de coco, turrónes (nougats), empanadas, fresh juice, wine, vinegar and bocaditos. During the Fiesta de La Farola (end of July), they sell out.



Homemade beer in the barrel. Neighbors gather around the massive beer keg with their own glasses, plastic bottles and jugs to get a fill for a few pesos. We tried it once and found it not to our taste. Locals say it is made of yucca, or whatever is handy, and add the afterthought that hangovers are horrible.



Baracoa still retains the atmosphere of its colonial past in the abundant one-story buildings with their colorful facades, the horses trotting along pulling passenger carts, the street vendors hawking their wares...





Fresh crabs for sale



Local taxi

The streets of Baracoa are busy from the early hours of the morning and the vibrating artery of town, José Martí Avenue, swarms with people. As the sun rises in the sky and the heat reaches its peak, Baracoans start retreating into the cool shade of their homes and the streets become deserted.



Friday morning in Baracoa



Baracoa streets midday



It is only with the late afternoon breeze that they will leave their homes again to fill the streets with the noisy activity that precedes an evening of music and dancing for the nightowls. Baracoa is internationally noted for its regional music.



La Casa de la Trova



Over the mountains from Baracoa to the south coast and Santiago de Cuba



There are several hotels of different categories and plenty of private rooms for rent, restaurants and *paladares* where you can taste the delicious homemade Baracoan gastronomy for 10-15CUC. Favor fish and sea food; they are fresh and cost the same as a chicken dish.

The construction of *La Farola*, the name given to the road connecting Baracoa with Santiago de Cuba, meant the end of centuries of geographic isolation for this mountainous area when Baracoa was only accessible by sea. On the Baracoa side of the mountain range, the two lane road winds its way up, up, up and over the mountains through impressive wilderness filled with lush green tropical vegetation. The road is shared by small cars and large transport and cargo trucks, and sometimes by walkers and horse carts. Traveling *La Farola* is an adventure not only because of the breathtaking scenery but also because of the frequency of blind curves and extensive series of hair raising switchbacks.

Finished in 1965, the road was made possible thanks to generous donations to the Revolutionary Government from Magdalena Rowenskaïa, *La Rusa*, a Russian Czarist princess who had fled her own country at the advent of the People's Army and taken shelter in Baracoa. She transformed her house into a hotel -- *Hotel La Rusa* -- where many prominent visitors have taken lodgings over the years and which is still run by her now elderly son and his family.

From Baracoa east, the road to *Boca de Yumurí* on the way to *Punta Maisí* and close to *Ensenada Mata*, is a pleasure for the senses; the emerald hilly woods and fantastical limestone cliffs on one side and the blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean on the other, contribute to create a timeless atmosphere which blends sea and jungle sounds, odors and views, unique geology.

The road from Baracoa to Moa, in the opposite direction, is a real nightmare full of bumps and huge potholes; best avoided unless you wish to visit Humboldt Park, some 30 km west from Baracoa, other than by boat.

Ensenada de Taco

Approach WP: **20°31.60N, 74°39.70'W**

15Nm from Baracoa

BEAUTIFUL, well sheltered pocket bay. No landing.

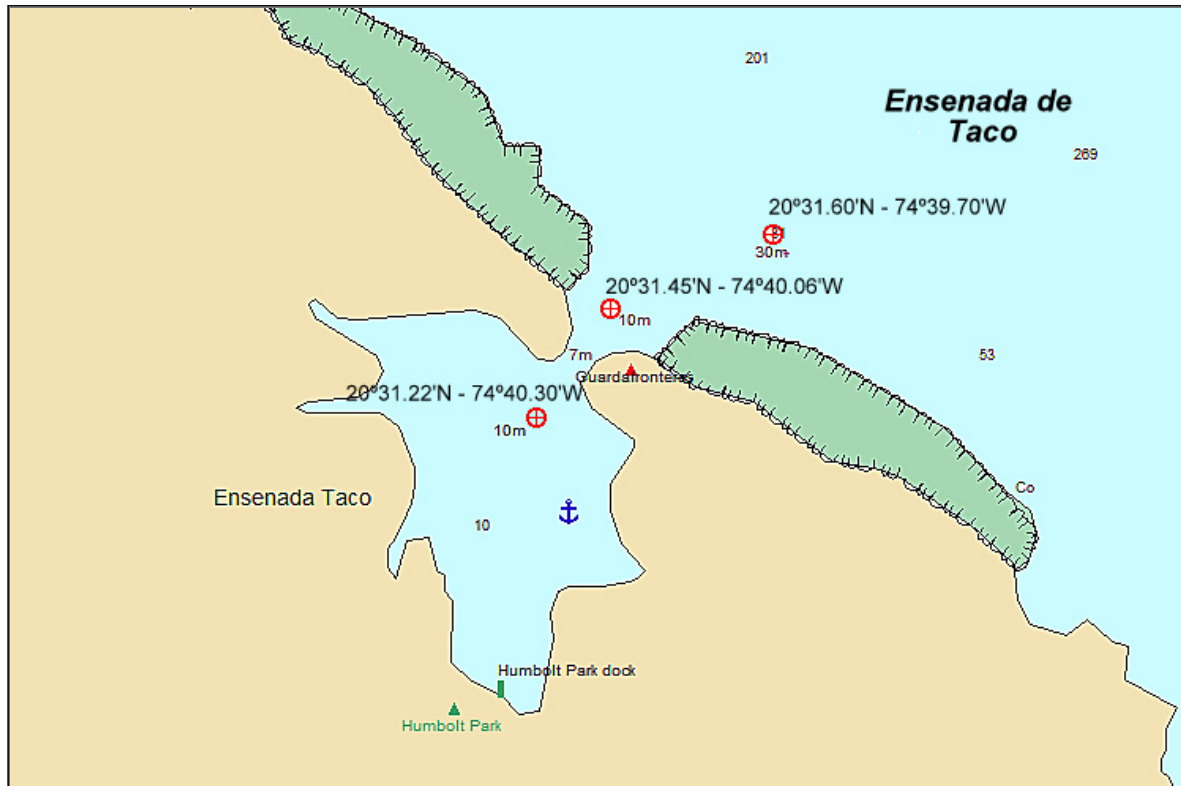


Figure 131. Ensenada de Taco

Taco Cove is a very well sheltered, extremely calm and beautiful pocket bay, a hidden treasure. The channel entrance to the cove is relatively narrow and unmarked but easy, except in rough seas from the N and NE.

To enter the bay, go to an approach WP at **20°31.60N, 74°39.70W** and head towards WP **20°31.45N, 74°40.06W** at the mouth of the channel. Then, bear **215°** to the next WP at **20°31.22N, 74°40.22W**, at the inner end of the channel, and feel your way into the bay to find an anchoring spot that suits you well. Depths decrease from 10m in the outer side of the channel entrance to 7m midway and rise again to 10-12m in the center of the cove. Nice anchoring spots can be found both on the SE and NW sides of the bay but the SE area is more comfortable in

prevailing E winds. However, the bottom shelves rapidly toward the shores and there are many scattered sand shoals all around the bay, so proceed with caution when approaching the shores.

The Guardiafronteras post on the east side of the entrance is conspicuous from far away. On the south shore, there is a wooden dock used by the Humboldt Park boats that tour the park. From that very spot, a trail leads visitors in a 1-hour trek into this jewel of a tropical rainforest park that was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001. As usual with inhabited isolated bay areas, foreign cruisers will not be allowed to land. But, again, considering Cuba's idiosyncrasies, you might give it a go and ask the Guardiafronteras on duty that day for permission to visit the park. You never know...



Ensenada de Taco



Humbolt Park dock





Park guardess



"This bay is my home. Look after it!" Manati dwell in the bay

Ensenada Yamanigüey

Approach WP: 20°35.17N, 74°42.63W
4.5Nm from Ensenada de Taco

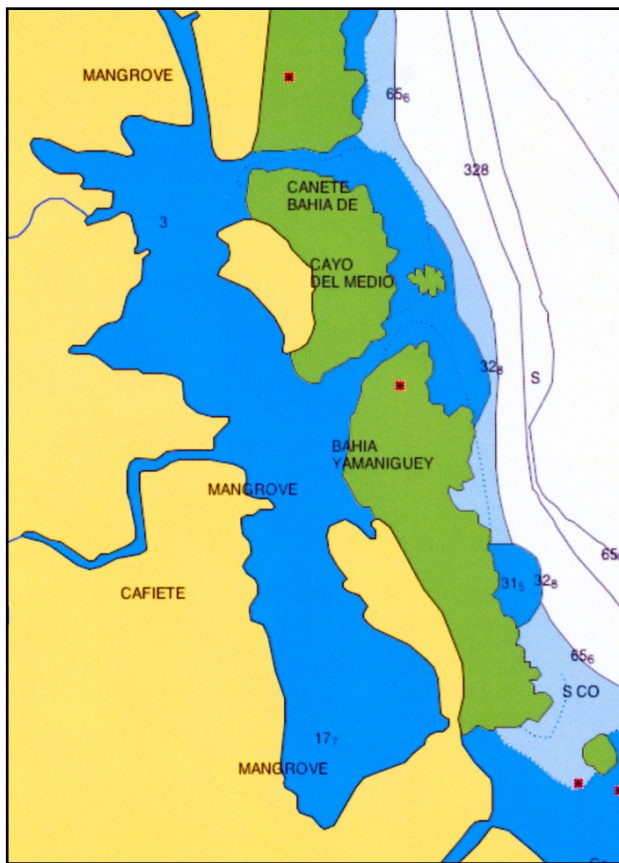


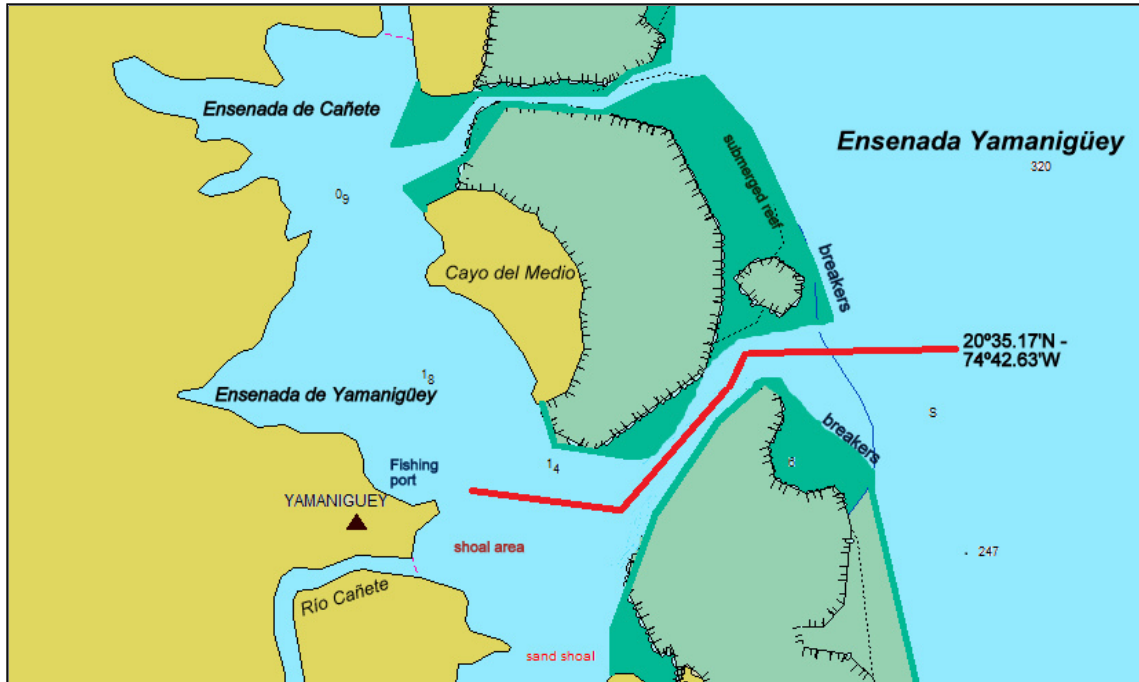
Figure 132. *Ensenada Yamanigüey*

Ensenada Yamanigüey is surprising. It is on the north coast, yet it is oriented N-S. Were it not for Cayo del Medio and the lower peninsula, it would be open to the worst sort of weather; but thanks to its geography, it can offer fine protection in a norther – if one can negotiate the reef to get to the channels.

There are two ways into (and out of) the bay; an unmarked channel north of Cayo del Medio and a marked channel (small red buoy) south of the Cay.

The unmarked north channel, at **20°35.83N, 74°43.25W**, is deep but narrow. It leads into *Ensenada de Cañete*.

The minimally marked but much wider (150m) south channel leads into *Ensenada Yamanigüey* proper. Historically, *Ensenada Yamanigüey* was a satellite port of Baracoa, where, until recent years, small cargo boats entered the bay through the south entrance to load chrome from nearby mines. At present, only a small fleet of local fishing boats remains from its coastal shipping past.



Entry into Ensenada Yamanigüey through the south channel



Southeast side of Ensenada Yamanigüey



North channel from the inner side



South channel from the inner side



East side of the south channel



Yamanigüey River



Tucked away among the palms in Yamanigüey



Pile dwelling at Ensenada Yamanigüey



A loo with a view. Yamanigüey



Entering Yamanigüey

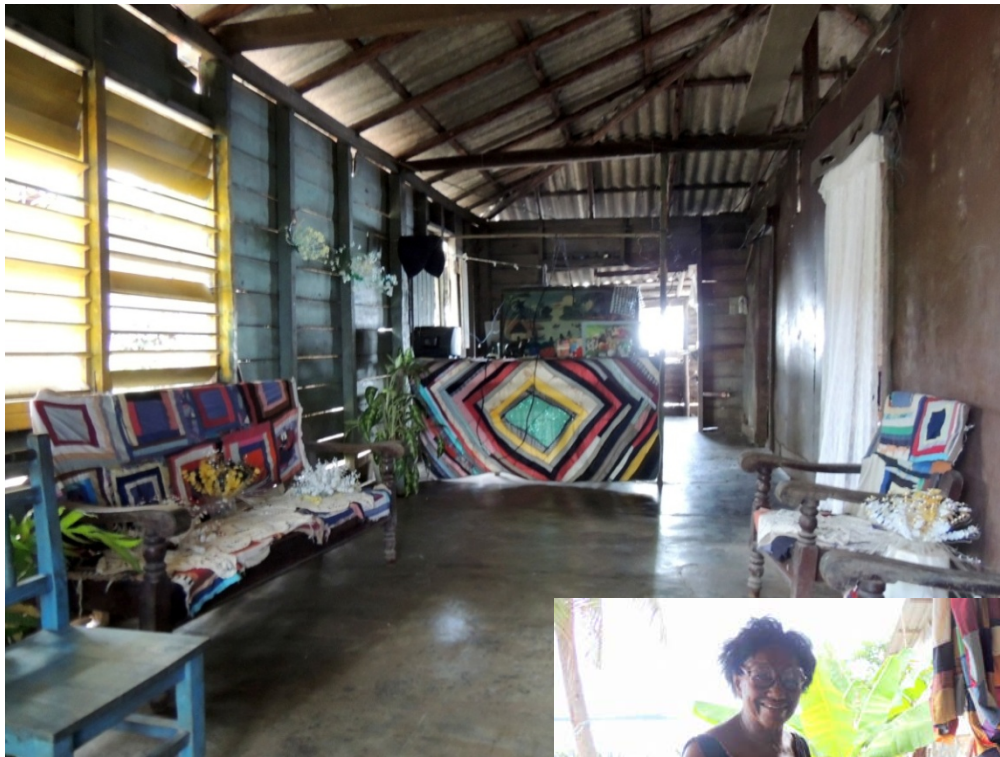


Main street, Yamanigüey

Yamanigüey is a small village of 2,400 inhabitants and is considered to be the cradle of *cuenteros* (story tellers). Apparently, in past times, when the men returned from a hard day working at the chrome mines, the whole community would gather together to tell stories as a pastime.



Lovely Sra. Josefina, with cousin Dilaida and husband Emilio in the picture, was our spontaneous guide in the village. Dilaida sews colorful quilts and other domestic pieced work from fabric remnants and other recyclables with an old treadle *Singer* sewing machine.



Cayo Moa

20°41.20N, 74°47.80W

16 Nm from Ensenada Yamanigüey

Rest anchorage at Cayo Moa Grande. Moa: Typical industrial town



Figure 133. Overview: Moa port area and Cayo Moa Grande

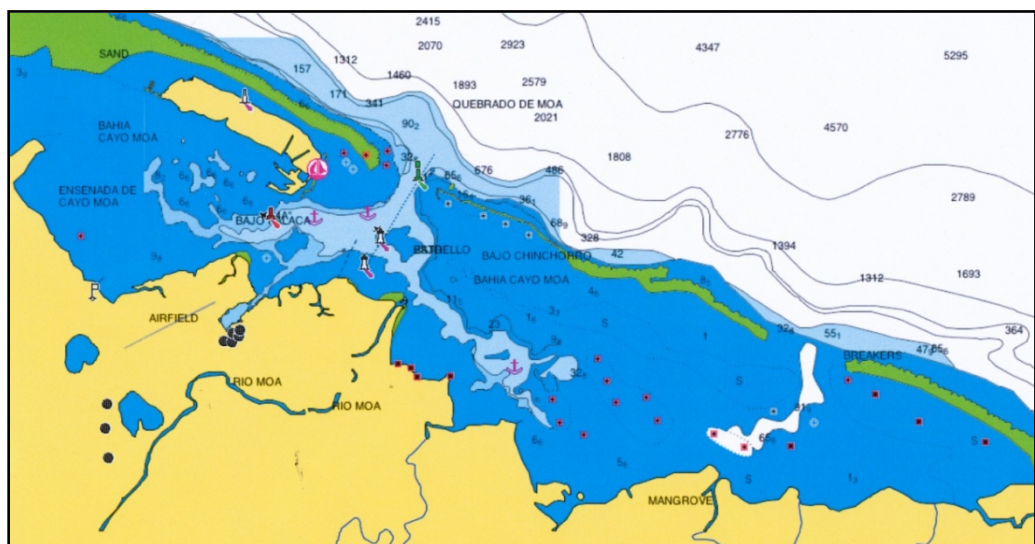


Figure 134. Bahia Cayo Moa area

The stretch of coast east and west of Cayo Moa has a coastal shelf that extends about 2 Nm offshore for some 30Nm from Yamanigüey to Yaguaneque.



Figure 135. Along the reef from Yamanigüey past Moa to Yaguaneque

The long line of drying reef has only two cuts big and deep enough to navigate to access *Bahía de Cayo Moa*. The SE channel is 300m wide and up to 40m deep, but it is unmarked and intricate. *Quebrado de Moa*, the NW channel, is shown in the following chart; it is 0.8Nm long, about 0.2Nm wide and as deep. It is also well marked, as it leads to the port featuring mineral loading facilities. Cargo handled includes nickel and cobalt plus general cargo for export; and bulk sulfur for import.

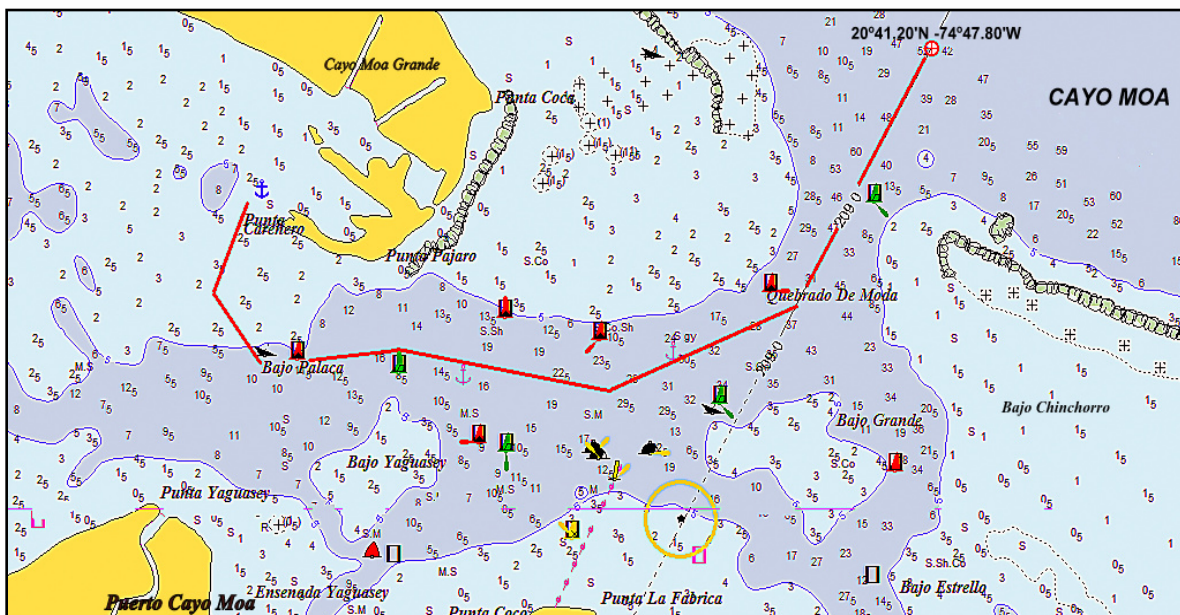


Figure 136. Entrance to Moa via Quebrado de Moa

To enter through *Quebrado de Moa*, go to a WP at **20°41.20N, 74°47.80W** and bear **209°** towards green marker #1, which must be left to port. Then, simply follow the string of red and green markers leading west towards *Cayo Moa Grande*, the islet on the west side of the channel. When off *Punta Carenero*, the southernmost sandy tip of *Cayo Moa Grande*, give it a wide berth to avoid the sand shoal that extends to its south and west, and head north to drop the anchor in 3-4m of good holding sand and mud. Note: Once out of the channel, depths will suddenly drop from 10m to 2.5-3m.

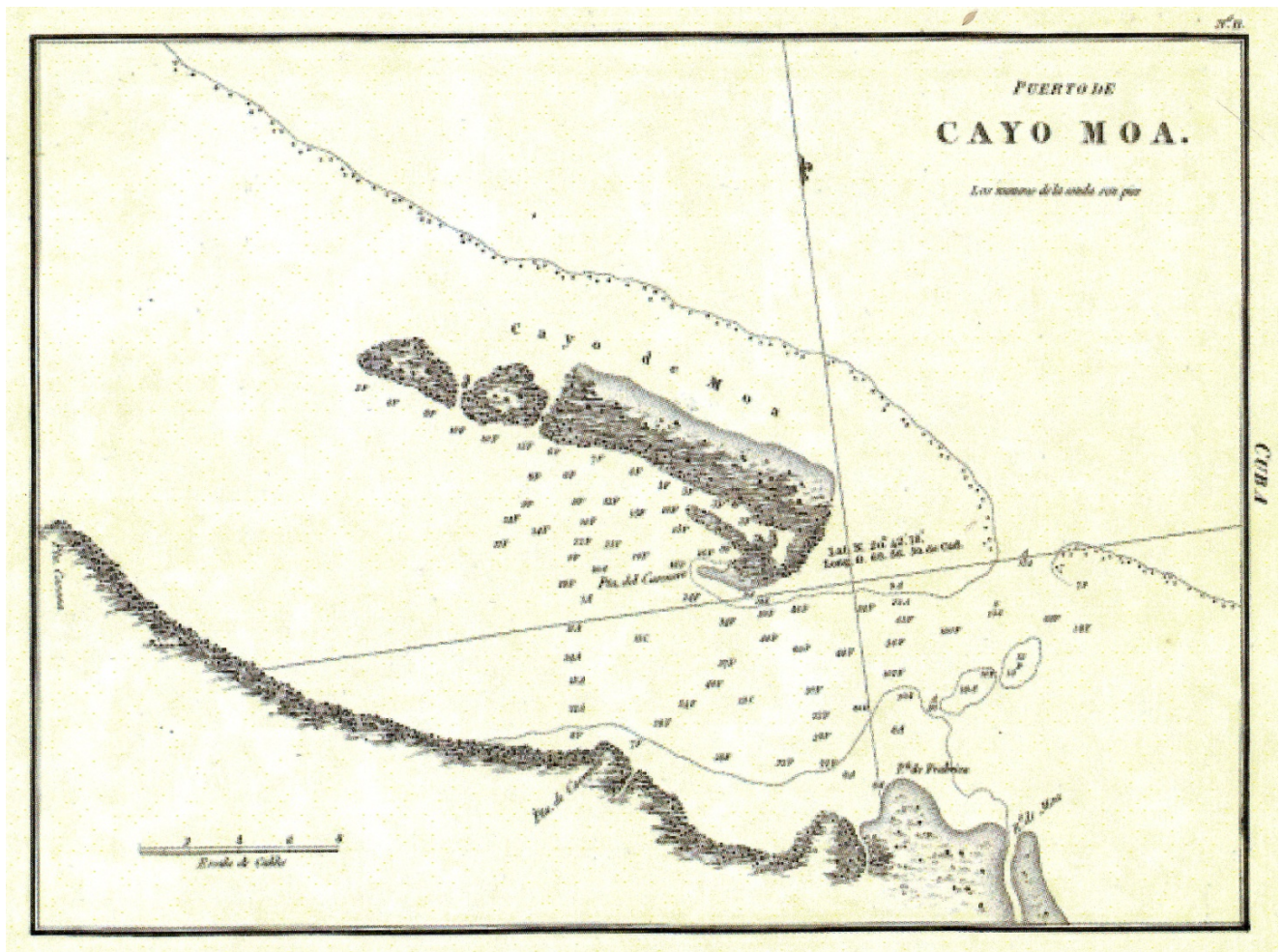


Figure 137. The more things change, the more they remain the same:
Moa chart from 1800 (Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico)



Port of Cayo Moa

Puerto Cayo Moa (20°41N, 74°52W) (World Port Index No. 10285) and its environs comprise a deep water area which, located S of Cayo Moa Grande, lies inshore of and somewhat sheltered by the outer barrier of the coastal margin. The red earth around Moa testifies to the vast nickel deposits in the vicinity which are a mainstay of the area's – and Cuba's -- economy. Cuba is the sixth largest producer of nickel in the world.



Pipelines on the bayside of the road



Comandante Ernesto Guevara nickel factory. Arroyo María divides the town in two.



Moa upland, red soil characteristic of nickel

These 3 bays between Cayo Moa and *Sagua de Tánamo* are: *Bahía de Yaguaneque*, *Bahía de Cananova* and *Bahía Cebollas*. They have deep entrance channels and offer good shelter. However, channel entrances run among sharp, deceptive coral heads and reefs. To make matters worse, they are all narrow, unmarked, and completely exposed to northers; making the approach to all three bays very dangerous when north winds set up.

Boca de Tánamo, the entrance channel into *Sagua de Tánamo* bay, is a deep, short but intricate channel, difficult to identify from off shore.

To enter the bay, go to the approach WP at **20°43.50N, 75°19.50W** from where the outer green marker #1, which must be left to port, is clearly visible. Head a rhumb course south following the marked channel until at position **20°42.68N, 75°19.56W**, where the passage makes a sharp turn west towards *Punta Gitana* at the inner end of *Boca de Tánamo*, the entrance channel.

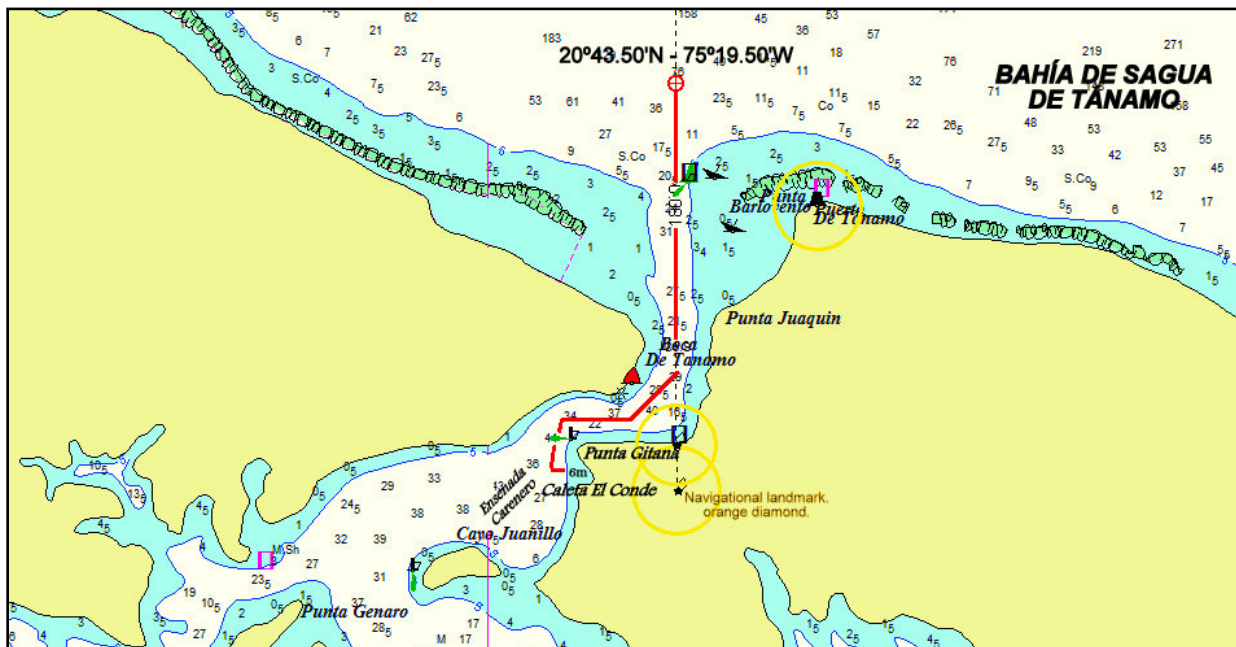


Figure 139. Boca de Tánamo

Rounding off *Punta Gitana*, the well protected cove *Ensenada de Carenero* precedes the bay of *Sagua de Tánamo*. On the NE corner of the cove, just behind *Punta Gitana*, *Caleta El Conde* offers excellent shelter in all weathers. The bottom is good holding sand and mud and there is 6m depth in the center of the inlet.



Figure 140. Old commercial pier across the bay from Caleta El Conde

Puerto Sagua de Tánamo (20°40.75N, 75°20.10W) used to be a satellite port of Moa where cargo boats would load sugar and molasses for export. It is now defunct, following the progressive dismantling of the sugar industry in the area.



Bahía de Sagua de Tánamo

Cayo Mambí, SW side of the bay



Hot afternoon in Cayo Mambí

Kampuchean water buffalo in the ranch land by Sagua de Tánamo



Bahía de Nipe (Cayo Saetía)

26 Nm from *Bahía Sagua de Tánamo*.

Approach WP: **20°49.00N, 75°31.64W**

Sheltered, easily entered, beautiful anchorage.

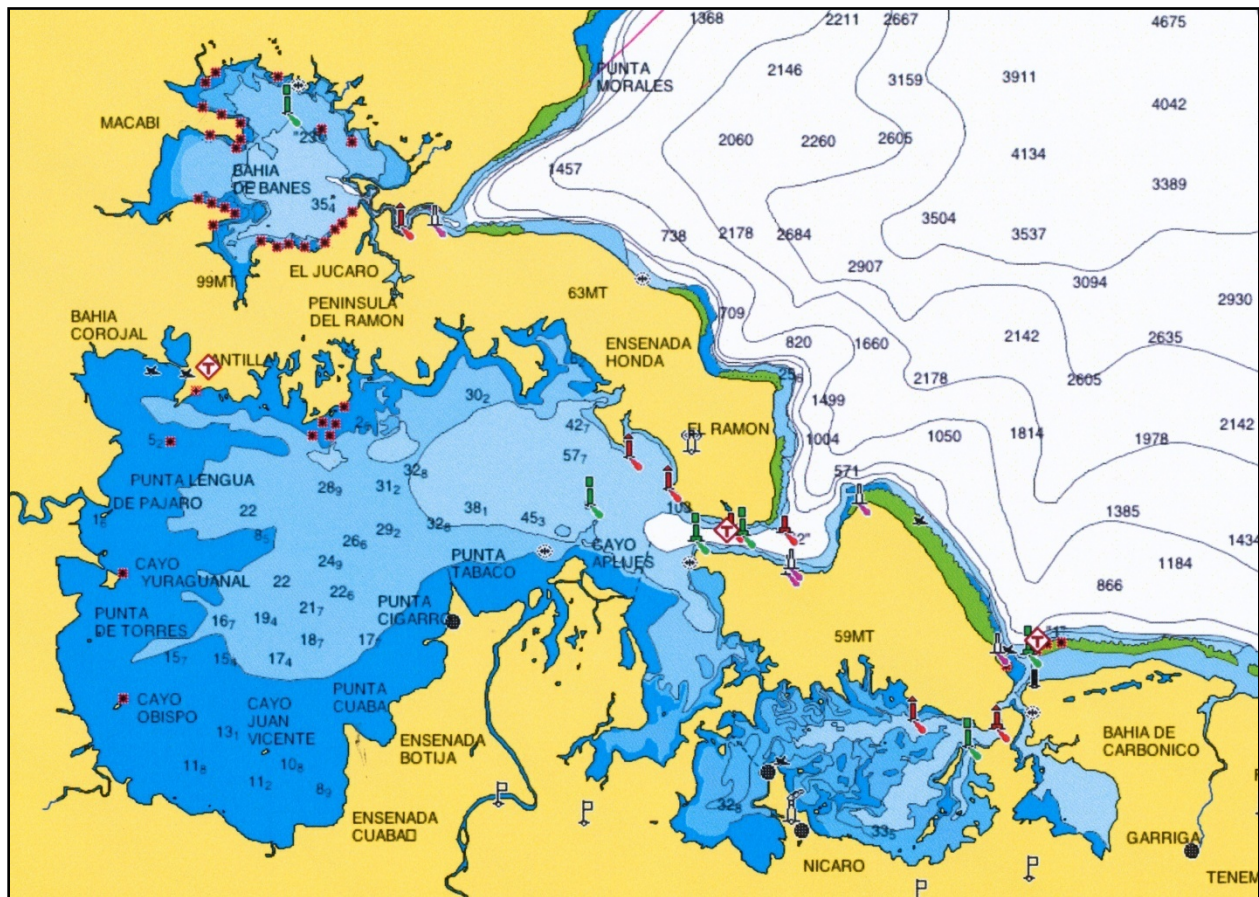


Figure 141. Overview: Bahías de Banes, Nipe, Levisa, and Cabónico

Between *Sagua de Tánamo* and *Bahía de Nipe* bays, there are two bays sharing a common entrance: *Bahía de Cabónico* on the east and *Bahía de Levisa* on the west. The interior of Levisa is separated from Nipe Bay by only a narrow neck of land.

Cabónico Bay is small and well sheltered but unmarked; quite shallow and full of shoals. Levisa Bay, on the other hand, is accessible by means of a deep and well marked but intricate and very narrow channel leading to *Puerto de Nícaro*. Nícaro

is the headquarters of the nickel processing plant, *Cmdte. Rene Ramos Latourt*, and a busy commercial port which nonetheless has known better times. Because it is considered strategically important as a satellite of the Port of Moa, the whole of *Bahía de Levisa* is off-limits for unauthorized foreign vessels.



Nipe Bay from Cayo Saetía. Off in the smog, the faint silhouette of the nickel factory chimney at Nícaro.

Bahía de Nipe, at 50 square miles, is the largest pocket bay in Cuba; some might say in the entire world. The bay is huge, deep and well sheltered in all weathers. It contains three commercial ports; Antilla in the NW of the bay ($20^{\circ}49.60\text{N}$,



$75^{\circ}44.26\text{W}$), Preston in the center ($20^{\circ}45.51\text{N}$, $75^{\circ}39.43\text{W}$) and Felton in the SE ($20^{\circ}44.41\text{N}$, $75^{\circ}35.63\text{W}$).

Figure 142. Bahía de Nipe

Cayo Saetía, on the south side of the channel, separates Nipe from Levisa Bay. It is a national park and exotic wildlife refuge that is the backdrop for a rustic resort once a celebrated international big game hunting resort. The Guardiafronteras base is on its NW corner, at the inner end of the entrance channel.

Bahía de Nipe is entered through a deep, easy transiting, mud bottom, well marked wide channel, with 1Nm width at the entrance and 0.3Nm at its narrowest off *Punta Caimán*. There are no off-lying dangers in the approach to the bay. However, it is influenced by strong tidal currents of up to 3 knots which can cause some turbulence at times, especially in *Punta Ramón* and *Punta Caimán* areas, and which makes it advisable to schedule the entry and exit in slack water, some 40 minutes after high or low tide.

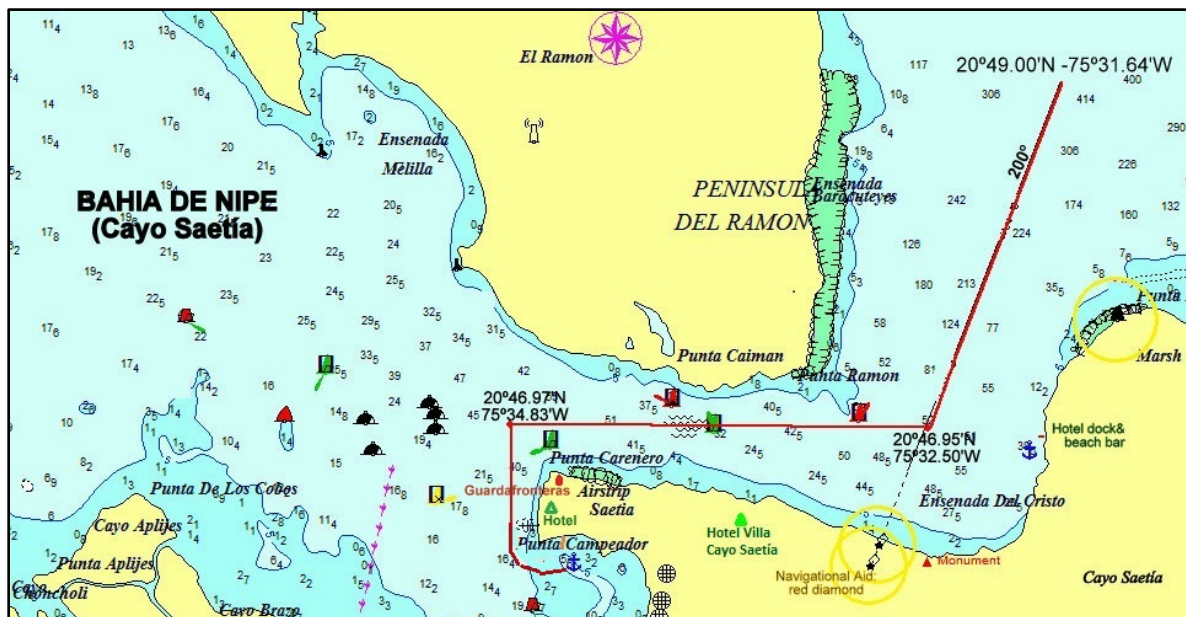


Figure 143. Entering Bahía de Nipe past Cayo Saetía

To enter the bay, go to the approach WP at **20°49.00N, 75°31.64W**. At that point, both the metal-frame lighthouse at *Punta Mayarí* (**20°47.50N, 75°31.46W**) and a red diamond-shaped navigational aid will be visible further south on shore. Head to the diamond range marker on a **200°** bearing till at WP **20°46.95N, 75°32.50W** off *Punta Ramón*.

Entrance channel to Nipe Bay, from inner side



Diamond-shaped range marker

Orange buoys near the dock



Close to this point, in *Ensenada del Cristo*, there is a delightful anchorage -- given the usual eastern conditions -- by the dock of the *Hotel Villa Cayo Saetía*, the rustic wildlife preserve resort.

The dock is set at **20°46.94N, 75°31.87W** and just south of it are two orange buoys free to use unless you are instructed on the contrary.

The approach to the anchorage is straight and free of dangers; depths in the dock area are over 4m close to the shore. The bottom is good holding sand and the water is crystal clear. There are two little beaches, one on each side of the dock, and a beach bar and restaurant at the bottom of the dock with game dishes on the menu.



Beach at the anchorage

The anchorage is a best-kept secret, visited mostly by day-charterers lodged at *Hotel Brisas Guardalavaca*, a huge tourist resort some 32Nm further NW, but visitors are welcome. No one will disturb your peace in this beautiful solitary cove, as the only human presence, if any, will be that of day cruisers and hotel staff.



Half way from *Ensenada del Cristo* to the *Hotel Villa Cayo Saetía* is this little beach where Castro came ashore to escape from Batista's men during his failed attempt to disembark with a bunch of revolutionary comrades in July 1947.



The *Hotel Villa Cayo Saetía* itself is located 2.5 miles further west and can be reached on one of the hotel jeeps for a 2CUC fare. Once a hunting getaway for visiting dignitaries, it preserves a certain Hemingway-esque African atmosphere in the decoration and sobriety of the premises and the roaming remnant big game



Hotel restaurant

which includes antelopes, camels, zebras, buffaloes, ostriches and gazelles. For 70CUC you can spend the night in a bungalow surrounded by wild animals and have breakfast under the fixed stare of a buffalo or a gazelle at the hotel restaurant. It is an exotic experience but the premises could do with some refurbishing.



Paving stone at the hotel



These curly tailed lizards are known as “perritos” by locals



Ma & Pa Turkey and chicks



Elusive African antelope

Yes, the cay/park is patrolled on road by jeep; but off road the rangers use real horsepower. When they need more mounts, they simply corral several wild mares and train them to ride.



If northers set in, *Ensenada del Cristo* becomes completely exposed to swell and wind, so you will be much better protected a couple of miles further west, rounding off *Punta Carenero*. To get there, turn west at WP $20^{\circ}46.95N$, $75^{\circ}32.50W$, following the marked passage until at WP $20^{\circ}46.97N$, $75^{\circ}34.83W$, just off *Punta Comprador* before turning east into the anchorage, in order to avoid the sand shoal that stretches S-SW of it.

There is a dock in the NW corner of the cove, used by the boats from the nearby hotel. It is in shallow waters but the cove has minimum depths of 2.5m quite near the shore and up to 10m in the center, it has a good holding sand bottom and is well protected in all weathers. Drop the anchor in 3-4m depth in the dock area, where there is easy access to land - and the only beach in the cove -- and enjoy the tranquil scenery.

Bahía de Banes

9Nm from *Bahía de Nipe*.

Sheltered anchorage. Narrow winding channel. Strong tidal currents.



Figure 144. Bahía de Nipe to Bahía de Banes

The absence of off-lying hazards along this stretch of coast allows safe navigation quite close to shore in depths over 20m.

A WP at **20°54.00N, 75°35.00W** will place you 4Nm from the entrance channel, far from the coast but in safe waters, whether you are approaching from the north or the south. The next WP, at **20°52.65N, 75°42.40W**, is located just at the seaward end of the channel entrance, in *Ensenada Caracolillo*. At that point, you will have in sight the *Ensenada de Banes* light and the first string of channel markers. Just follow the marked passage along the 2Nm long beautiful channel into the bay.

The bay is quite large and well sheltered but the tidal currents are very strong (up to 6 knots), so enter and depart on daytime slack water only. Besides, *Embarcadero de Banes* on the north of the bay is off-limits and *Puerto de Macabí*, on the west shore, is in ruins. If you are allowed to, and are interested in landing, *Ensenada de Raya*, on the east side of *Ensenada de Banes*, rounding off *Cayo La*

Raya, is a well sheltered anchorage in all weathers and away from the influence of the tidal ebbs. The bottom is good holding sand and mud and it is 2-4m deep all over. However, there are no beaches other than little clearings in the mangrove and mosquitoes will feast on you if you dare to anchor too near the shore.



Figure 145. Entrance to Bahía de Banes and Ensenada de Raya

Embarcadero de Banes is the site of a branch of *Instituto Geodésico de Cuba*, the institution in charge of the country's geodetic research and applications, including sea signaling. There stand piled neatly, side by side, huge signaling buoys of different shapes and sizes, waiting to be repaired or deployed to their official locations. We were told by the official in charge that *Embarcadero de Banes* is off-limits for unauthorized vessels but the bay and its main commercial port -- Macabí, out of use now -- are open to foreign recreational boats. We were witness to the strong current off *Embarcadero de Banes*. Both the winding entrance channel and the shoals as well as navigational hazards in the bay are well marked.

The surrounding landscape is quite flat below hills where farmed land and pasture abound. This is an agricultural area inhabited by hard working *guajiros* (peasants and excellent riders); a land of ox drawn carts and plows; and tough, honest, good hearted people.



Pleasant peasants at work in a corn field

Goat herd headed home from pasture



Guajiro horseman





Teenagers walking home from school



Oxen, beasts of burden coming and going; carrying stones for construction

Afternoon
in BANES

The town of Banes is a 4 mile walk north of *Embarcadero de Banes*.



Bahía de Samá

AWP: 21°07.76N, 75°46.22W

23Nm from *Bahía de Banes*.

Shallow bay. Open to northers.



Figure 146. Bahía de Banes to Bahía de Samá

Bahía de Samá is a shoal water inlet with a fishing village on the NW bank and a small marina a couple of miles further S. Most villagers have given up fishing to work in the nearby resorts of *Guardalavaca* and *Playa Esmeralda*. The bay was devastated by Hurricane Ike in 2008 but both village and marina have been rebuilt. Unfortunately, Ike also contributed to further shoaling of the bay.

Boca de Samá, the seaward side of the entrance channel, leads to a narrow and winding passage between cliffs, which is not marked.



Figure 147. Bahía de Samá

To enter the bay, go to an approach WP at $21^{\circ}07.76'N$, $75^{\circ}46.22'W$, where you will be in sight of Samá light tower and the Guardiafronteras base at *Punta Sotavento*. Head a S course towards the center to a WP at $21^{\circ}07.32'N$, $75^{\circ}46.21'W$ and hold to

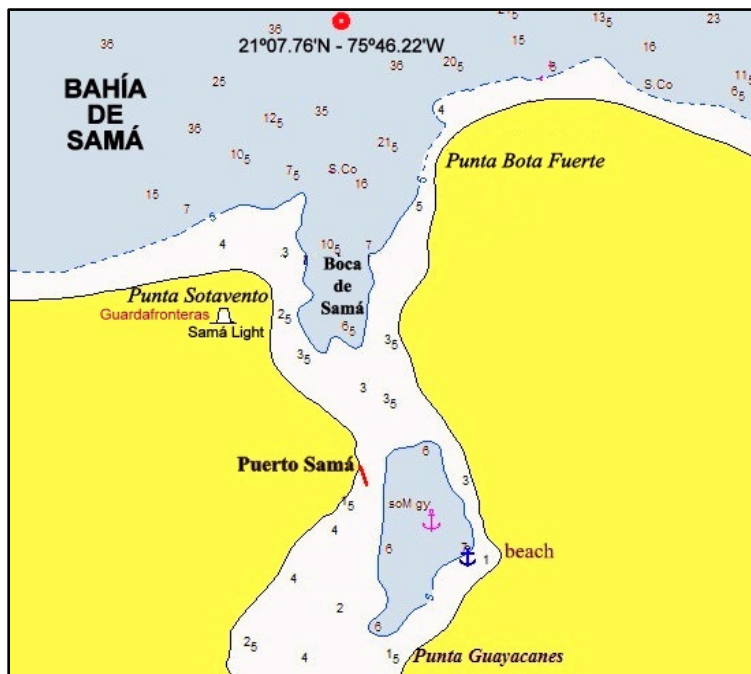


Figure 148. Boca de Samá

the center of the channel until off *Puerto Samá* dock ($21^{\circ}07.06'N$, $75^{\circ}46.20'W$). Depths will decrease from 35m at the approach WP to 10m off *Punta Sotavento* and 3m around the dock. The anchorage off the boating dock has 3m in depth and the bottom is good holding sand and mud. On the opposite bank, there is a small sand beach which makes a lovely anchorage but shoals rapidly from 3m to 1m as you approach the shore.

Further south from *Puerto Samá*, the bottom shoals to 1m in some areas of the unmarked bay. In spite of the shallow waters, there is a small Marlin marina further SW, located at **21°06.33N, 75°46.53W** in a protected inlet. In fact, it is not as much a marina as what they call a fishing base; it is used as a sport-fishing and chartering base for the tourists at the nearby resorts of *Guardalavaca* and *Playa Esmeralda*. Nevertheless, foreign yachts are welcome, draft allowed; only low keeled vessels can make it into the inlet.



Floating dock. Marina Marlin, Samá.



Samá Marina premises



Samá Bay



Fishing boats at Samá

Bahía de Naranjo

Approach WP: **21°07.90N, 75°52.83W**

7Nm from *Bahía de Samá*; 5Nm from *Bahía de Vita*.

Beautiful bay, well sheltered in all weather.

Bahía de Naranjo is a medium size, lovely pocket bay, sheltered in all weathers. A national Natural Park, it hosts a dolphin aquarium or “delphinarium” -- and some seals, too -- in the center of the bay. Visitors can swim with dolphins and watch the aquatic show for 40CUC.

The entrance channel is relatively narrow but straightforward; it has minimum depths of 5m and is very well marked.



Figure 149. Samá to Naranjo

The way from Samá to Naranjo is free of hazards. You can sail quite close to the shore until *Punta Cayuelo*; once past you must stay a safe 1 mile away from the coast in order to avoid the protruding submerged reef. On the way, you will see the huge resorts of *Guardalavaca* and *Playa Esmeralda* behind the reef. The entrance to *Bahía de Naranjo* can be distinguished by the conspicuous tourist resort at *Playa Esmeralda* on the E side of the entrance channel and the red cliffs at *Punta Barlovento*. The reef off *Playa Esmeralda* stretches north almost 1Nm, so do not shortcut your approach to the bay from the E and stay north of latitude **21°07.80N** in the area.



The distinctive red cliffs at Punta Barlovento

A well buoyed deep-water channel leads to the marina, which is at the SW corner of the bay. Like Samá, Bahía de Naranjo Marina is, in fact, a fishing and chartering base mainly for tourists lodged at nearby resorts along the coast; *Guardalavaca* and *Playa Esmeralda* east of *Bahia Naranjo* and *Playa Pesquero*, *Playa Turquesa* and *Don Lino* beaches W of it. Foreign cruising vessels do not call on a regular basis but the marina welcomes all that do stop. Unfortunately, there is no chance of berthing at their dock, so anchoring is compulsory. Formerly a Port of Entry, it is no longer so.

To enter the bay, go to a WP at **21°07.90N, 75°52.83W**, safely away from the NW tip of the submerged reef and bear a SSW course to a WP at **21°06.90N, 75°52.95W**. Then, steer to the SE and head to the center of the entrance, at about **21°06.67N, 75°52.84W**. From there, simply follow the well marked entrance channel. Just as you approach its inner end, the delphinarium will be visible at the front, in the middle of the bay. Pass E of it along the marked passage into the marina – at **21°04.30N, 75°52.30W** -- and drop anchor by the marina dock in 4-5m of good holding sand and mud. The marina has diesel (1.40CUC/L), gasoline (1.50CUC/L), fresh water, and taxi service to the nearby hotel area. They can arrange a visit to the dolphin aquarium, hire a taxi or rent a car.

In prevailing easterlies, there is a very nice anchorage on the NE side of the entrance channel, tucked behind *Punta Barlovento*. The small cove contains an appealing sand beach with a dinghy dock. Do not anchor too close to the beach, as the bottom shoals rapidly towards the shore. A trail leads among trees and shrubs to *Hotel Sol Río de Luna y Mares*, a short walk away at *Playa Esmeralda*.

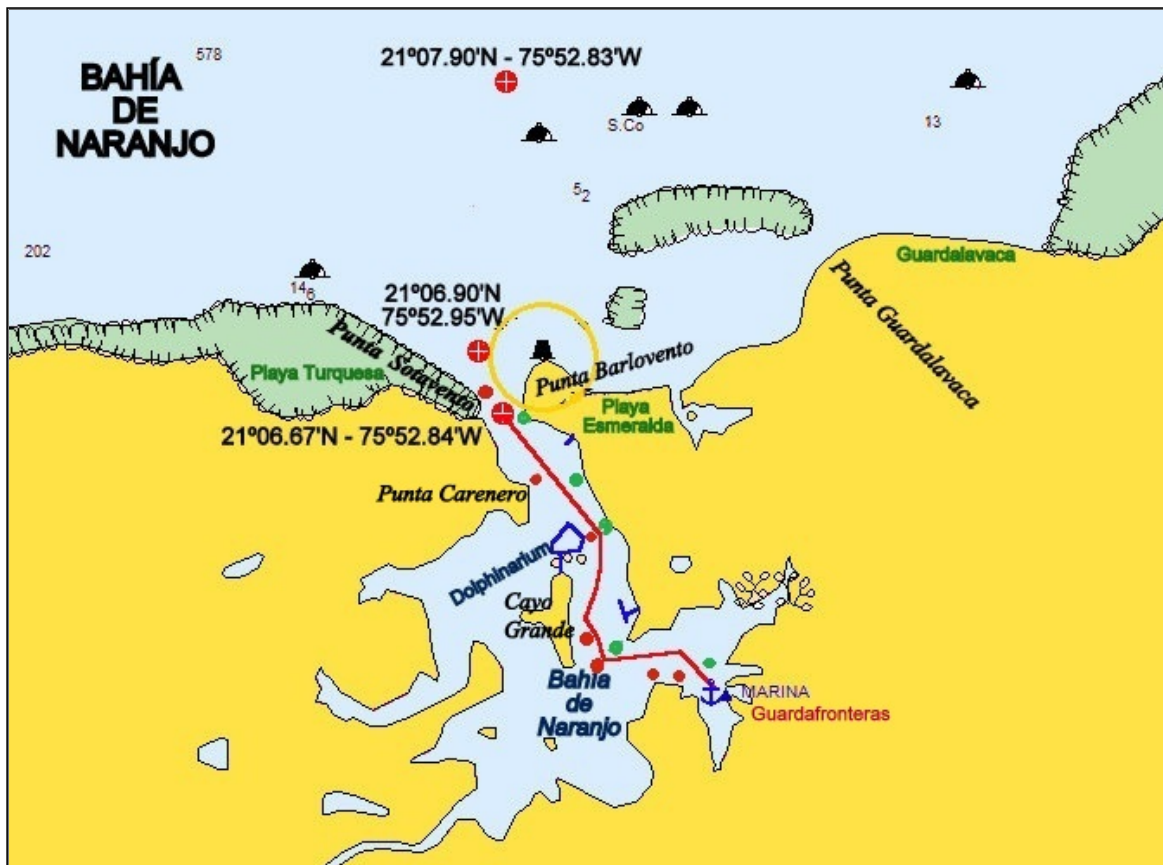


Figure 150. Bahía de Naranjo in detail

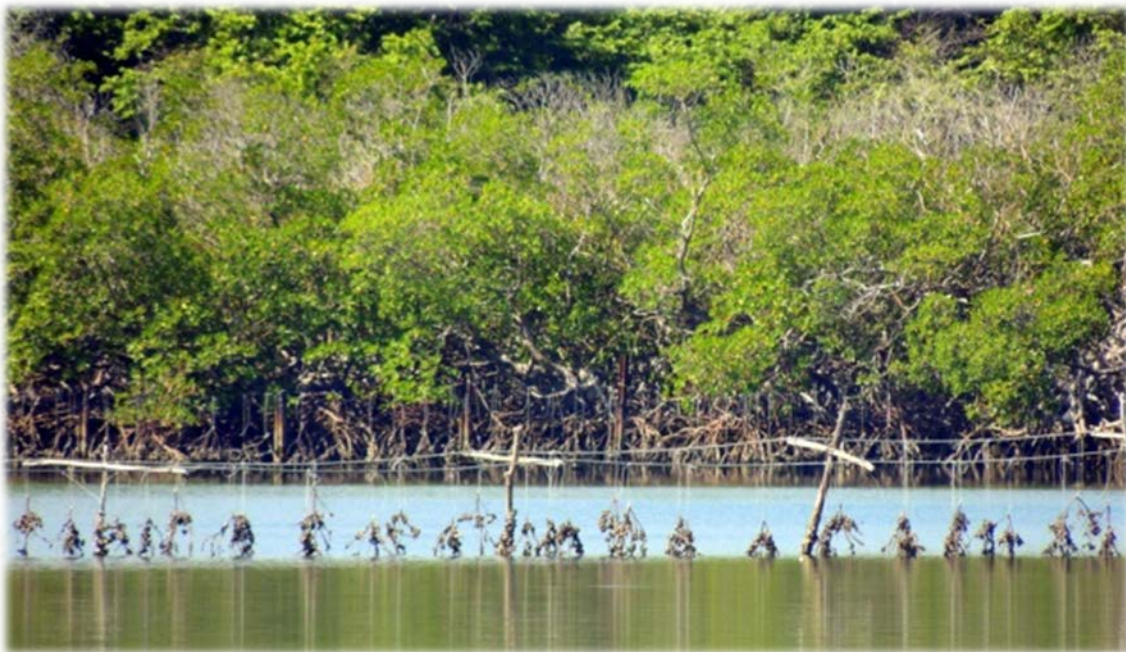


Marina Bahía de Naranjo



Dolphin aquarium = delphinarium

There are 5 different tourist resorts located in 5 different spots along the near coast, offering all sorts of tours and excursions (diving, fishing, sailing, hiking, horseback riding...). Despite the fact that the resorts operate on an all-included basis for hotel guests, day visitors are welcome to use the services at the hotels, *a la carte* as it were. Most restaurants are buffet style, and you *will* find lobster among other delicacies. Prices vary from 10-20CUC depending on the hotel category.



Oyster (ostion) farm at Naranjo Bay

Bahía de Vita

Approach WP: **21°06.00N, 75°57.95W**

Easternmost **Port of Entry** on the N coast.

10 Nm from *Bahía de Naranjo*.

Located 10Nm east of Gibara, *Bahía de Vita* is one more in the series of pocket bays along the north coast. It is entered through a deep and well marked but narrow and winding channel, which gives way to an extremely well sheltered bay and one of the hurricane holes on the north coast. However, as is the case with most bays on the north shore, entry during strong northers is difficult. In such a situation it is absolutely necessary to line up on the channel in advance of entering, and then hold sufficient speed to maintain steerage way through the channel into the bay.



Figure 151. Bahía de Naranjo to Bahía de Vita



There are no off-lying hazards on the approach to Vita, as long as you sail some 0.5Nm from the coast line. The 31m tall white light tower of Vita, on the east side of the entrance channel, can be spotted from some miles offshore. *Central Rafael Freyre* sugar mill's white chimney, located 4Nm SSW of the entrance, is another excellent landmark, visible from some miles away standing out in the surrounding flat landscape. The bay contains *Puerto Vita* commercial port, a Guardafronteras base and a marina on its south end, at Cayo Vita.

Vita light



Guardafronteras base at Puerto Vita



From left to right: watchtower, marina building and fuel dock at Cayo Vita

To enter the bay, go to a WP at **21°06.00N, 75°57.95W**, some yards north of a pair of red and green approach markers, and continue south to a WP at **21°05.77N, 75°57.95W** in the center of the entrance.

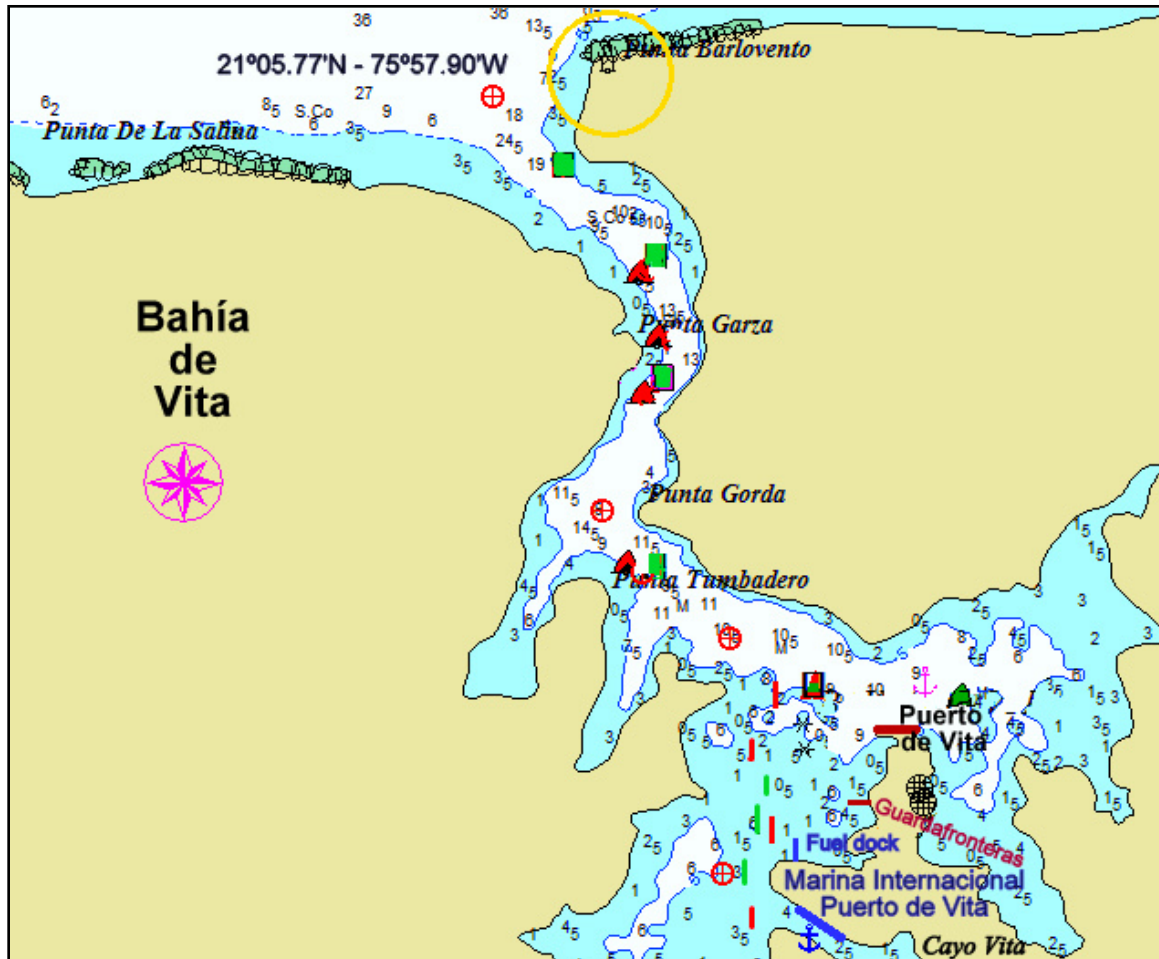


Figure 152. Bahía de Vita



At that point, the first marker of the channel, a port side green cylinder marked #1 over 5m of water, will be clearly visible. Come close to it and proceed along the marked channel to its inner end, just in front of *Puerto Vita*. The striped red and green pillar buoy #10 marks the spot where the channel forks in two: the E passage leads to the commercial port and the south channel leads to the marina, some 0.5Nm further south.



Striped red and green pillar buoy must be left to port on entering channel to Marina Vita

But the passage will be much more comfortable if you call the marina on channels 13 or 16 and ask for help. There is always someone around who speaks decent English and they will be glad to send a speed boat to guide you through the channel into the marina.

Marina Internacional Puerto de Vita

(Gaviota, Carretera de Guardalavaca) km.38, Holguín. Tel: +53 24 30 475. Fax: +53 24 30 446 VHF Channels 13&16. comercial@marinavita.co.cu) is located at **21°04.31N, 75°57.34W**, on *Cayo Vita*.

Marina Internacional Puerto de Vita is a Port of Entry. Set on the south side of Vita Bay, it offers excellent protection in all weathers and is, in fact, another of the hurricane holes on the N coast. We were told by our bay tourguide that 2008 Hurricane Ike, which devastated the area, hit Vita so hard that it ripped off absolutely all traces of vegetation. By the time God Eolo calmed down, the landscape had turned from vegetal green into soil ochre and the marina premises



were in ruins. In spite of the surrounding destruction, none of the boats which had taken refuge in the bay, including some foreign sailing vessels, suffered any damage.

Red right return

The marina has minimum depths of 3.5m and 38 slips with water, electricity, and satellite TV; a chandlery with the usual limited stock, gasoline and diesel, international phone booths, laundry service, a small restaurant, and car and taxi hire service. The small grocery displays the usual basic stuff but fruit and vegetables can be ordered and are brought in from the nearby hotels. You can either anchor – they provide a water taxi service if needed -- or berth at their dock. Berthing fees are 0.60CUC /foot/day.



Marina Internacional Puerto de Vita



Bahía de Vita

In spite of being a Port of Entry, Marina Vita works mainly with the visitors lodged at the surrounding tourist resorts. They offer bay tours, fishing and diving trips and live-aboard fishing tours.



Beach day at Vita bay

Bahía de Bariay

Approach WP: 21°05.73N, 76°00.74W

3Nm from *Bahía de Vita*.

Wide open to northers. Rest stop in calm weather only.

Located between *Punta la Mula* (also known as *Punta Bariay*) and Cayo Bariay, *Bahía de Bariay* is a small and unmarked shoal water bay completely open to northers. This feature makes it unsafe in the winter months and quite uncomfortable during the rest of the year, except in mild E and SE winds. And even so, it can get quite roilly at times. It is said to be the first place where Columbus set foot on the island.



Bahía de Bariay – wide open entrance



Columbus monument

The southern half of the bay, south of Columbus Monument (at **21°04.74N, 26°00.52W**), is very shallow and only feasible for small craft with local knowledge. *Bariay River* flows into the south side of the bay, contributing to further shoaling with its load of sediments. The advice is to use the bay only as a rest stop in settled E or SE conditions.

There are no off lying hazards on the approach to Bariay either from the E or the W. The landscape is quite flat and covered by low vegetation. Midway between Vita and Bariay, *Pesquero* and *Don Lino* beaches stand out in the green.

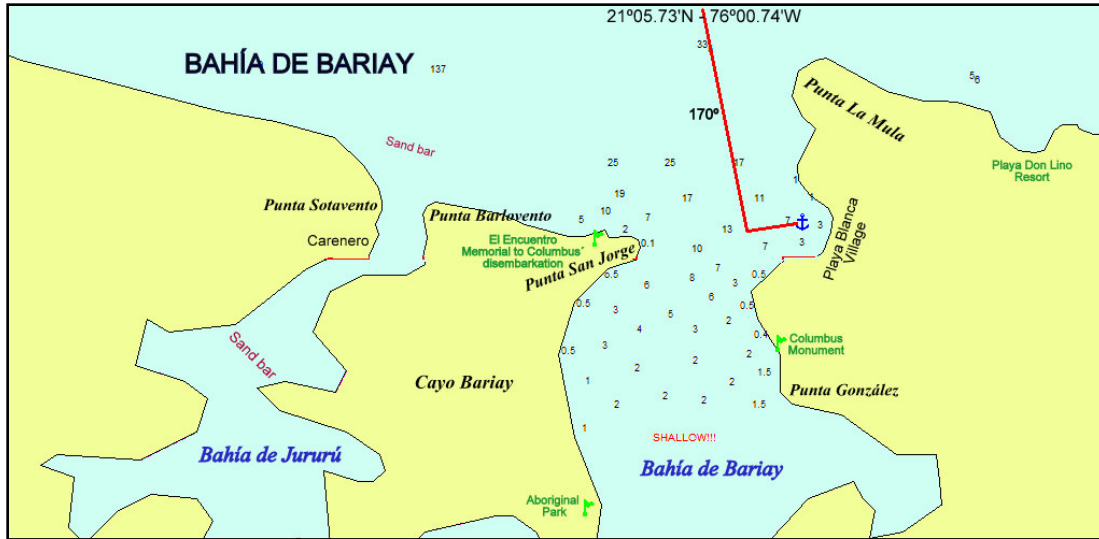


Figure 153. Bahía de Bariay

To approach the bay, go to a WP at $21^{\circ}05.73\text{N}$, $76^{\circ}00.74\text{W}$ and bear a 170° course toward *Playa Blanca*, on the E shore. When at about $21^{\circ}05.08\text{N}$, $76^{\circ}00.62\text{W}$, off *Punta San Jorge* in 12m of water, steer E towards the beach, where depths will decrease to 7m and down to 3m as you get closer to the shore.

Anchor in 3m of white sand in the northern half of the cove, in order to avoid the coral bottom further south. A short trail leads from the village to *Playa Don Lino Resort*, one mile further NE.

The village stretching along *Playa Blanca* bears the same name and most of its dwellers work at the nearby resort.



Bahía de Bariay



Ostión farm at Bariay Bay



Fishing port, Playa Blanca



Fishing in Bariay River



Back home after a hard day out fishing



Playa Blanca, Bahía de Bariay

Bahía de Jururúis is a small, shallow pocket bay just west of *Bahía de Bariay*. Two sand bars obstruct the entrance channel: The 4m shoal at the entrance, and the bar at the inner end of the channel, which blocks the way any further.

Bahía de Gibara

Approach WP: **21°06.96'N, 76°07.14'W**

6Nm from *Bahía de Bariay*.

10Nm from *Bahía de Vita*.

Unprotected. Open to northers. Rest anchorage only in calm weather.

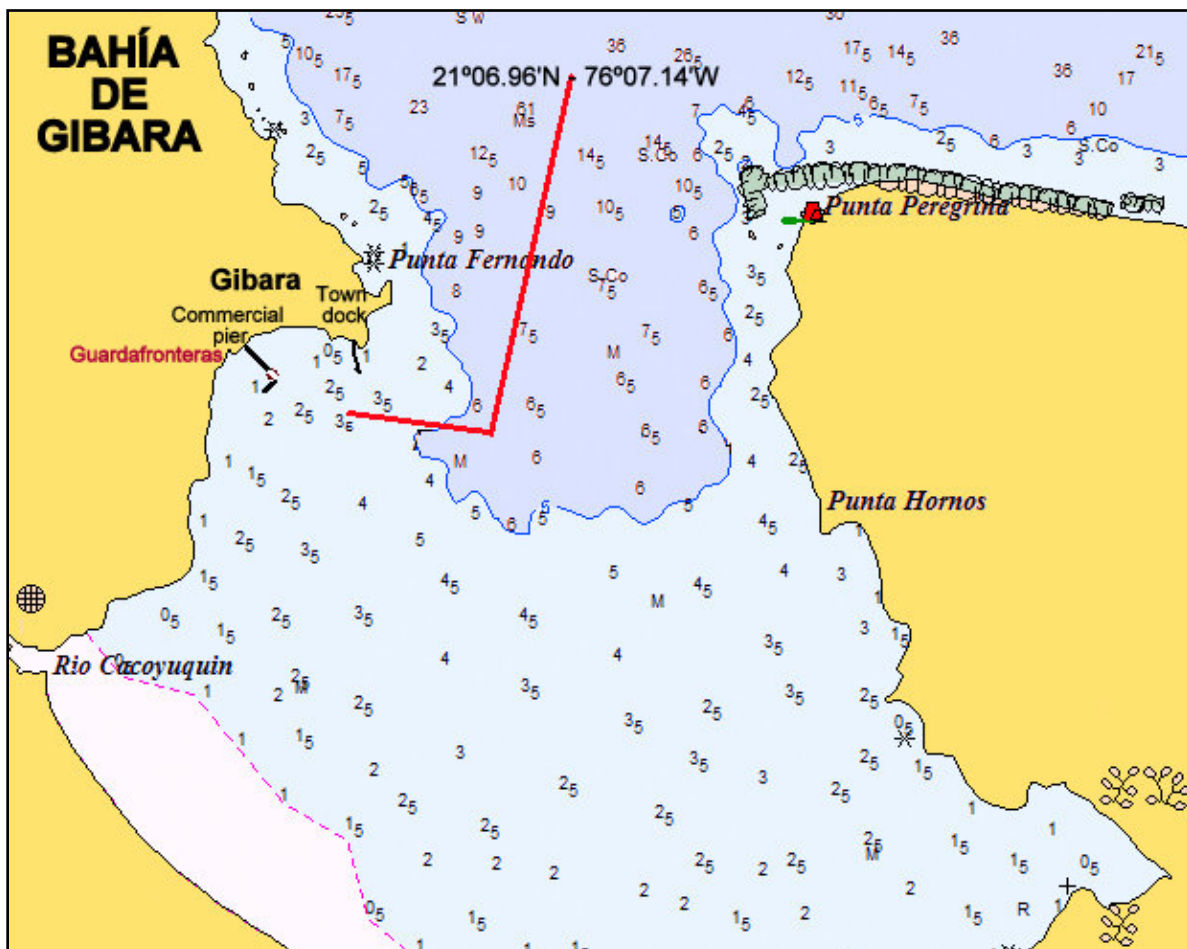


Figure 154. Bahía de Gibara

Bahía de Gibara is a small bay with a 0.7Nm wide entrance completely exposed to the north, making it untenable in northers and uncomfortable in any condition other than calm weather. No matter whether you choose the E side of the bay or the W, the anchorage will be exposed to swells.

Two rivers flow into the bay staining the blue waters with their brown sediments: *Río Cocoyuquín* on the west and *Río Gibara* on the south. Gibara, one of the first towns to be founded by the Spaniards on the island, stands out on the NW side of the bay.

There are no off lying hazards in the approach from either side of the bay. As a matter of fact, you can sail quite close to the coast all the way from Vita as the continental shelf is very narrow along this stretch of coast.

To enter the bay, go to a WP at **21°06.96N, 76°07.14W** and set a SSW course to the center of the bay. When off the town dock, steer west and feel your way into the port in 3-4m of water. Drop the anchor anywhere between the commercial pier and the town dock in good holding sticky mud.

Tucked behind *Punta Hornos* on the E side of the bay, there is a small cove with 3m depths in the center that can serve as an alternative anchorage. Some yards further S, there is a small fishing community settled around a shallow cove.

Gibara is a medium size colonial town well worth visiting. Unfortunately, unless seas and winds are in calm conditions, it is better visited by land.



Siesta time

Bahía de Puerto Padre

AWP: 21°17.37N, 76°31.86W

15Nm from Gibara

25Nm from Vita



Figure 155. Gibara to Puerto Padre

The coastline between Gibara and Puerto Padre displays a low-lying landscape bordered by a long sandy fringe. There are no off lying hazards on the way so you can sail quite close to the shore, as long as you leave 0.7Nm safety distance, especially off *Punta Mangle*, midway between the two bays. From *Punta Uvero* to *Punta Tomate* – on the east side of the bay entrance -- the semi submerged reef stretches almost a mile north.

Bahía de Puerto Padre is a large pocket bay divided into two well sheltered bays; *Bahía de Puerto Padre* on the W and *Bahía de Chaparra* on the E. The division is not due to an orogenic accident but to the 0.5 mile causeway which joins Cayo Juan Claro with the mainland and which is said to be the first such to be built in Cuba.

Puerto Carúpano, the largest sugar port in the world in its heyday, is located at Cayo Juan Claro on the N side of the bay, just off the inner end of the channel and next to Cayo Puerco --site of aboriginal archeological remains.

Puerto Padre, 3Nm SW of *Puerto Carúpano*, is a medium size, quiet colonial city. Devastated by Hurricane Ike in September 2008, damages have been repaired and houses rebuilt. However, many of the colonial buildings in the city center are in a dilapidated state.



Figure 156. Puerto Padre and the two bays



Figure 157. El Socucho and La Boca

El Socucho is a small town located on the W side of the entrance channel. A ferry boat carries passengers to La Boca on the opposite shore for 2CUC/round trip. La Boca boasts two long beaches: *Playa la Boca* along the E shore of the channel -- a favorite vacation spot for locals fleeing inland heat -- and *Playa La Llanita*, an endlessly long beach on the NE shore.

The entrance channel is 2.5Nm long, well marked and quite straightforward, except for 3 turns; the first is at the mouth of the channel, off *Punta Carenero* and the other two on the last lap of the channel. It has a maximum width of 200m and a minimum of 135m. Minimum depth is 8m over a rocky bottom.

Tidal currents of up to 3kn in the channel make it advisable to time entry and departure for slack water -- about 45 minutes after high or low tide. The rocky

bottom adds to the risk of dragging, swept along by tidal currents in the channel, as it makes it hard to set the anchor. In spite of that fact, you will probably be required by the Guardiafronteras at El Socucho to stop by at the ferry dock and to drop anchor in that area.



Puerto Padre Bay entrance. Punta Carenero on the right. El Socucho to the left.



Starboard-side buoy #8

To approach the bay, go to a WP at **21°17.37N, 76°31.86W** and head a rhumb course south straight between the first pair of buoys (#1) off *Punta Mastelero*. Then, simply follow the well marked channel down to starboard-side red buoy #8, at which point you will be in front of El Socucho ferry dock.



El Socucho ferry dock



Entrance markers dancing about

From there, bear west to approach the dock and anchor south of it in 3.5m of water and rock and mud, poor holding bottom. If you decide – or are requested by the Guardafronteras -- to anchor in the dock area, you will want to drop a second anchor to secure holding.

Further south in the channel, there are two small coves with 3-4m depths in the center which are better protected than El Socucho and not so influenced by tidal ebbs. The first is on the W shore, at about **21°14.77N, 76°32.10W**. The second is some yards further south on the E shore, at about **21°14.70N, 76°31.64W**. In bad weather, especially when northers set in, the area west of Cayo Juan Claro offers very good shelter and the anchor holds well in the mud bottom.



El Socucho



La Boca ferry dock



Playa La Boca



Enjoying a day out on Playa La Boca



Bucanero beer and homemade "ostiones" at La Boca



Moving stock near Puerto Padre



Dance break along the way to Puerto Padre



Avenida Libertad, Puerto Padre



Emiliano Salvador, Latin Jazz pioneer



"Taxi stand" at Terminal de Ómnibus. Puerto Padre



Avenida Libertad, Puerto Padre



The famous, *and* infamous, Fuerte de La Loma, Puerto Padre

Bahía de Manatí

Approach WP: 21°24.00N, 76°48.40W

17Nm from *Bahía De Puerto Padre*

Pocket bay. Not too well sheltered from northers.

Bahía de Manatí is a typical pocket bay. It enjoys a deep water, straight, and quite lengthy entrance channel that leads into a largely shoal water basin mostly ringed by forests of mangroves.

Five low volume rivers flow into the bay: *El Venero, Yariguá, Manzanillo, Manatí* and *Naranjo*. In spite of these, or more likely due to long term sedimentation from their runoff, most of the bay is too shallow for navigation. This natural dilemma determined the location of the port, which was finally built on the SW side on the entrance channel, 25 miles NE of the town of Manatí. The 2.5Nm long, well marked channel, though relatively narrow, is deep. In fact, it is the deepest natural channel on the island, with minimum depths of 11m.



The history of Manatí began when the Manatí Sugar Company purchased a rudimentary mill and its 95,000 acres of land in 1911 and built not only a “modern” mill, but also the town around it to house its workers, and a base of

operations on Manatí Bay which would eventually become *Puerto Manatí*. A 25 mile long railroad was built to connect the sugar cane fields with the *ingenio* and the port. Over the years *Puerto Manatí* became an important sugar port due to its natural 15m deep channel. After the decline of the sugar industry, it was used for some time as a coal loading station. Presently, the L-shaped, 140m long wharf is in ruins and the railroad is equally inactive; only a fish and *ostión* processing factory and a sleepy fishing village remain from its past splendor.



Figure 158. Puerto Padre to Manatí

There are no off-lying dangers on the approach from Puerto Padre, except for the submerged reef stretching almost 1.5Nm north between *Punta Malagueta* and *Punta Covarrubias*. The flat landscape is bordered by a fringe of long sandy beaches where *Bahía de Manatí* Light stands out as a conspicuous landmark on the west side of the channel entrance. The green hills of *Loma Tabaco*, 2 miles west of *Puerto Manatí*, and *Cerro Domañuecos*, a 130m high sugarloaf hill 10 miles SW of the entrance, are also good landmarks.



**Bahía de Manatí Light
on Punta Roma**

Although subject to tidal currents, these are not as strong in Manatí channel as in any other of the previous pockets bays. Nevertheless, timing entry and departure

for slack water is highly recommended.



There are 2 effective anchorages, both in the channel. The first one is off *Playa Chapaleta* on the NE side of the channel but it is open to northers and suitable only in E winds. The second one is off *Puerto Manatí*, much better sheltered, but still very uncomfortable in northers as the protection afforded by the wharf is limited by its open structure.

Figure 159. Bahía de Manatí



Puerto Manatí wharf, known as La Alicia, with railroad tracks to the bitter end

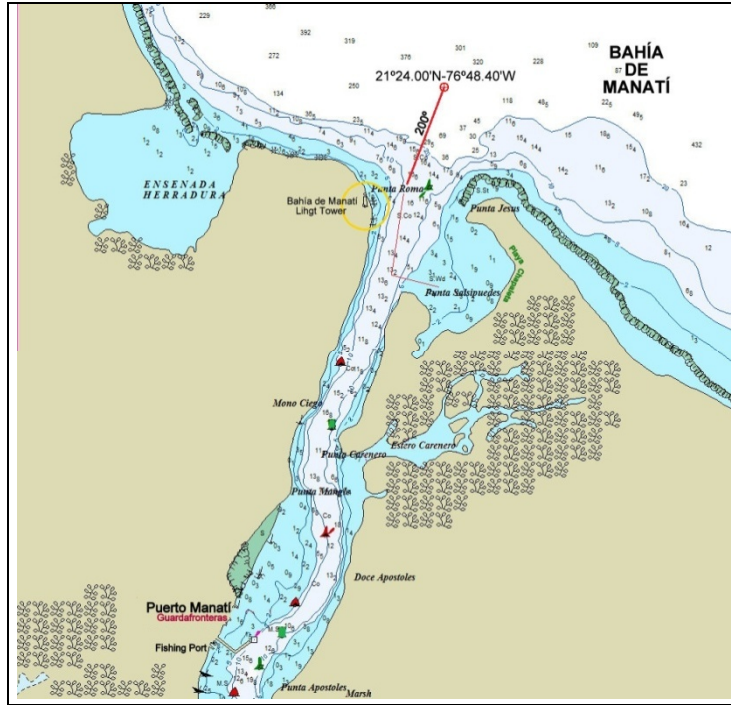


Figure 160. The channel at Manatí

To enter the channel go to a WP at $21^{\circ}24.00'N$, $76^{\circ}48.40'W$ and bear a 200° course toward a green pillar buoy marked #1, which must be left to port as usual. Then, just follow the well marked channel until at pillar buoy #11, off *Puerto Manatí* wharf, and turn toward the fishing dock, some yards south of the wharf. Depths will drop from 15m to 5m as soon as you leave the channel and will continue to rapidly decrease as you approach the fishing dock, so do not go too close to it. Anchor between the wharf and the dock in 2.5-3m of mud and rubble and check your holding as the bottom rubble increases the risk of dragging.



Fishing port – note submerged remnants of old dock!

If the wind is from the E, the anchorage on the NE side of the channel, off *Playa Chapaleta*, is lovely in turquoise waters surrounded by a shiny white sand beach. However, the cove is very shallow far from the shore, especially on the north area, so favor the south side. To approach the anchorage, follow the channel until north of *Punta Salsipuedes* on the SW tip of the cove and steer east towards the beach. Depths will decrease from 13m in the channel to 5m as you enter the cove. Drop anchor in 3m of good holding sand and weed and enjoy the bath and the landscape.



Guardafronteras post



Remembrance of things past



Railroad from mill to wharf



Puerto Manatí



Puerto Manatí



An afternoon nap



Iglesia de La Caridad del Cobre and Plaza Martí. Puerto Manatí





An afternoon stroll on the Plaza La Sirenita, Puerto Manatí



Abandoned rail switch and station



By the road from Puerto Manatí to the town of Manatí, piles of wood like the ones in the photo punctuate the landscape. Small trees and shrubs in the area are cut and the wood chopped and carefully piled before being covered with a thick layer of mud. A final layer of sticks is placed on top of the mud to hold it in place. Then, holes are dug at the base to light and ventilate the fire to allow the wood to smolder but not set it in flames. The result is charcoal, which retains ignition and slow burning power. A real art.





Welcome to the town of Manatí



Train museum Jesús Suárez Gayol. Manatí



Argelia Libre sugar factory. Manatí.

This “guarapera” next to the factory serves “guarapo”: chilled water with molasses. There is nothing better to beat the heat.





Public transport Manatí-Las Tunas



Bahía de Nuevitas

Approach WP: 21°37.50'N, 77°05.42'W

20Nm from *Bahía de Manatí*

Bay off-limits. Rest anchorage behind reef in settled conditions.



Bahía de Nuevitas is a large landlocked bay and the second largest pocket bay in Cuba after *Bahía de Nipe*. The bay is divided in half by the 3 mile long *Península del Guincho*; on the SE lies *Bahía de Nuevitas*, on the NW *Ensenada de Guayanabo*. *Península del Guincho* is also the location of Nuevitas, Tarafa and Pastelillo ports, once constituting the main sugar transshipment center on the island and still in use today but with far less cargo traffic.



Entrance to Bahía de Nuevitas



Puerto Tarafa on Bahía de Nuevitas

The bay is entered through a well marked, 9m deep, 0.2Nm wide, 7Nm long winding channel with strong tidal currents of up to 5kn. Unfortunately, the bay is off-limits for foreign unauthorized vessels. Nevertheless, in fair weather, a break in the reef on the NE side of the entrance allows entry to a nice anchorage between the shore and the reef.



**Strong tidal currents at Bahía
De Nuevitas channel**



Starboard marker



**Green port light at Punta
Salteadores**

Cayo Sabinal, on the west side of the channel, is the first of the string of cays which comprise *Archipiélago Jardines del Rey*, the archipelago that borders the south side of *New Bahama Channel*.

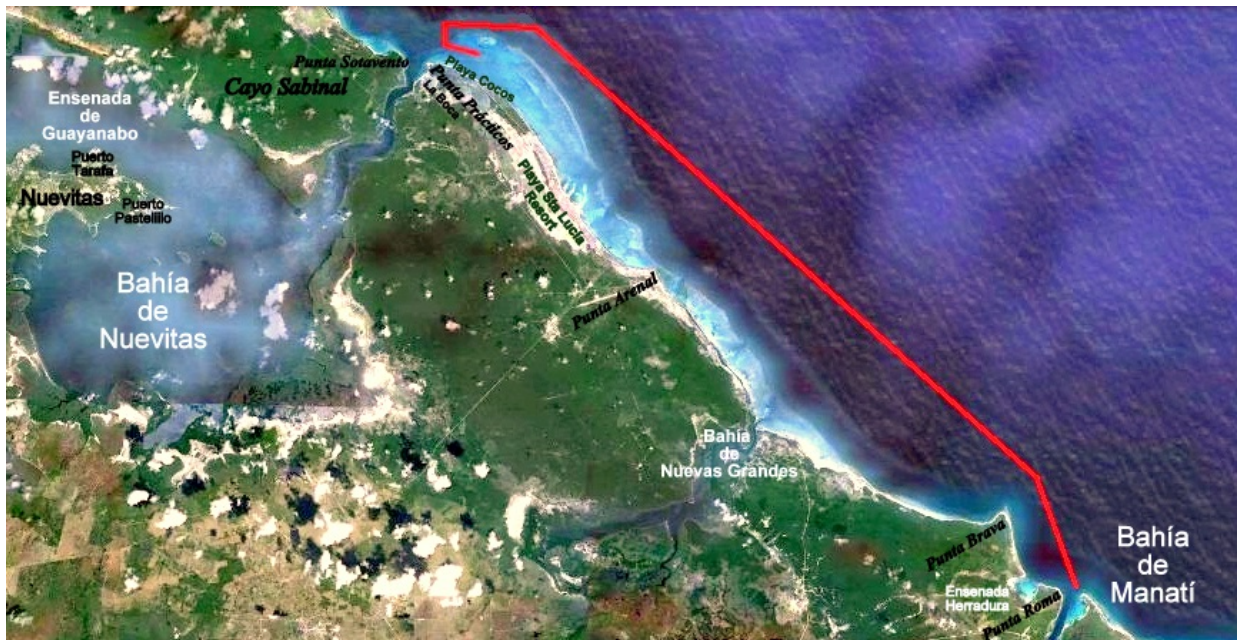


Figure 161. Manatí to Nuevitas

There are no off-lying dangers on the approach from Manatí. *Faro de Colón*, or Columbus Lighthouse, stands out on *Punta Maternillos*, 4.5Nm NW of Nuevitas entrance, as the only conspicuous landmark on the low-lying coastal terrain.



Playa Los Cocos on the NE of the channel



The long string of hotel buildings along *Playa Santa Lucía*, some couple of miles SE of Nuevitas Bay entrance, is unmistakable behind the reef against the green flat background landscape. However, the reef stretches further north as you get closer to Nuevitas entrance, to some 1.5Nm NE off *Punta Prácticos*.

La Boca



Faro de Colón, erected in 1847 on Punta Maternillos, is one of the oldest lighthouses in Cuba, built to mark the narrowest point at New Bahama Channel



Bahía de Nuevitas Light on Punta Prácticos, La Boca

A cut in the reef north of *Punta Prácticos* allows entry into the shallow area at the lee of the reef, where some protection is afforded from E winds but none from northers.



Green on green off Punta Prácticos, La Boca

To enter the anchorage, go to the approach WP at **21°37.50N, 77°05.42W** and bear a rhumb course south until at latitude **21°36.68N**, at which point you will be over 12m of water. Then, steer west to pass through the cut in the reef and feel your way into the anchorage. Do not stray south, in order to avoid the submerged coral head at about **21°36.42N, 77°04.48W**. Depths will steadily but rapidly decrease to 3m

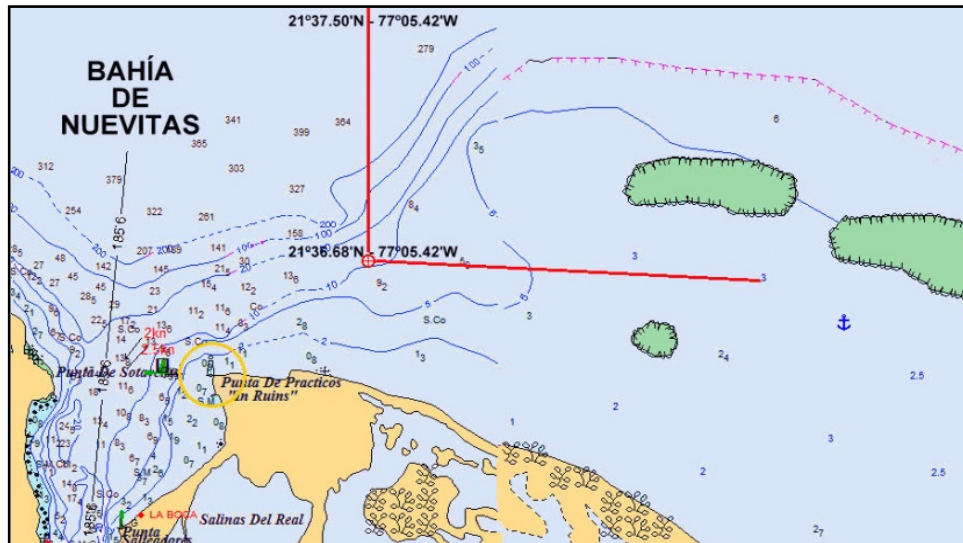


Figure 162. Anchorage at Bahía de Nuevitas

and below, the further east into the lagoon. Holding is not too good in sand and coral rubble.



Finished in 1920, Ferrocarril del Norte (North Railway) was built by big landowners who would use it to load sugar from their plantations in the province of Camagüey to go to Puerto Nuevitas. It is still in use today as public transport between Morón and Nuevitas and to load cement produced at the 26 de Julio cement factory at Nuevitas.



Small landowners join together in cooperatives to produce rice and other farm products, most of which are sold to the state at set prices. The rest can be sold privately, at controlled prices. Rice harvested by the side of the road is spread on the road to dry under the tropical sun. When ready, it is raked into piles to be shoveled into sacks to await pickup.



Pink flamingoes at Laguna del Real

JARDINES DEL REY – AN OVERVIEW

Between *Bahía de Nuevitas* and *Península de Hicacos* the coast is very swampy and low-lying, fringed by fields of mangroves. The shallow coastal margin, which extends some 20 Nm off the mainland in some places like Cayo Romano, is considerably narrower off the entrance to *Bahía de Nuevitas*. The shelf ends in a steep drop off at the *Old Bahama Channel*.

The coast from Cayo Sabinal to Cayo Confites is marked by sandy beaches and numerous lagoons and swamps, and skirted by broken reefs. The SW or Cuban side of *Old Bahama Channel* is considered quite dangerous for a distance of about 34 miles between Cayo Confites and Cayo Paredón Grande lights.

Currents normally set E along the N coast of Cuba and they run at an average 0.5kn in the *Old Bahama Channel*, although speed and direction can be affected by atmospheric variations.

Tidal currents on and off the banks also average 0.5kn between cays and are very weak within them.

Daylight passages are recommended, especially in the stretch of *Old Bahama Channel* between Cayo Confites and Cayo Paredón Grande; not only is it the narrowest area of the channel, but the bottom rises drastically along the edge of the reef. The IMO big ship separation scheme applies only 3.5Nm further into the channel. Besides, some signaling lights are well inside the reef and that might lead to a fatal confusion in the darkness. All these features make it advisable to navigate at least 0.5Nm off the reef, yet without straying into the IMO designated zone. An early morning departure will benefit the downwind passage west in prevailing E winds, since winds build as the sun rises in the sky until mid-afternoon and then calm down at night.

These are the waters where Ernest Hemingway reportedly sailed his yacht *Pilar*, searching for German submarines during the Second World War.



Figure 163. The Jardines del Rey Archipelago

Archipiélago Jardines del Rey is the name given to the 210Nm stretch of coast between *Bahía de Nuevitas* and *Península de Hicacos*. The archipelago comprises more than 2,500 cays and islets grouped in two: *Archipiélago de Camagüey*, from Cayo Sabinial to Cayo Francés and *Archipiélago de Sabana*, from Cayo Frago to *Península de Hicacos* where Varadero is located. Some of the cays are bigger than

some countries; Cayo Coco is the biggest with its 370km². All the cays are uninhabited, probably due to their distance from mainland Cuba.

However, since the causeway, or pedraplén, connecting Cayo Coco with mainland Turiguanó was built in 1987, the whole area has been developed with numerous hotels and tourist resorts. A second causeway connecting Caibarién on the mainland with Cayo Santa María was built in 2001 triggering the development of additional tourist resorts in the cay area.

Between the string of cays and the mainland there are a number of shoal water bays not suitable for navigation. However, on the seaward side of the cays, endless solitary white sand beaches bathed by crystal clear waters await the intrepid explorer. An intermittent coral barrier, the second largest on the planet after the Australian Great Barrier Reef, fronts the string of cays and makes *Jardines del Rey* a paradise for diving and snorkeling. The area between the reef and the cays offers countless possibilities of anchoring in relatively protected spots (sheltered basically from settled E winds but completely unprotected from northers) in the lee of some cays or the reef, which can be entered through cuts. Holding is not too good in general, as the bottom is mainly sand and coral rubble.

In spite of the virtually innumerable anchorages, we only include those a half day distance from the previous one -- to allow safe and comfortable navigation by daytime -- and the cays with tourist or nautical facilities where cruisers may enjoy different kinds of services and amenities. From E to W:

- *Punta Piedra*
- *Cayo Confites*
- *Cayo Paredón Grande*
- *Cayo Coco Marina*
- *Cayo Guillermo & Cayos Guillermitos*
- *Cayo Caimán Grande*
- *Cayo Francés (Brujas)*
- *Boca Chica*
- *Cayo Cayuelo del Cristo & Ensenada Jorobado*
- *Cayo Falcones*

Punta Piedra (Cayo Sabinal)

15Nm from *Bahía de Nuevitas*.

AWP: **21°45.70N, 77°19.86W**

From *Punta Maternillos* (3Nm NW of Nuevitas) to *Cayo Romano* the reef runs parallel to the shoreline in a NW axis about 1Nm offshore. Numerous breaks in the reef allow passage into the shallow waters between the reef and the coast. Midway between *Faro de Colón* lighthouse and *Punta Piedra*, lies *Playa Pinos*, a long sand beach bathed by turquoise waters where Cubans seek shelter from inland heat on weekends.

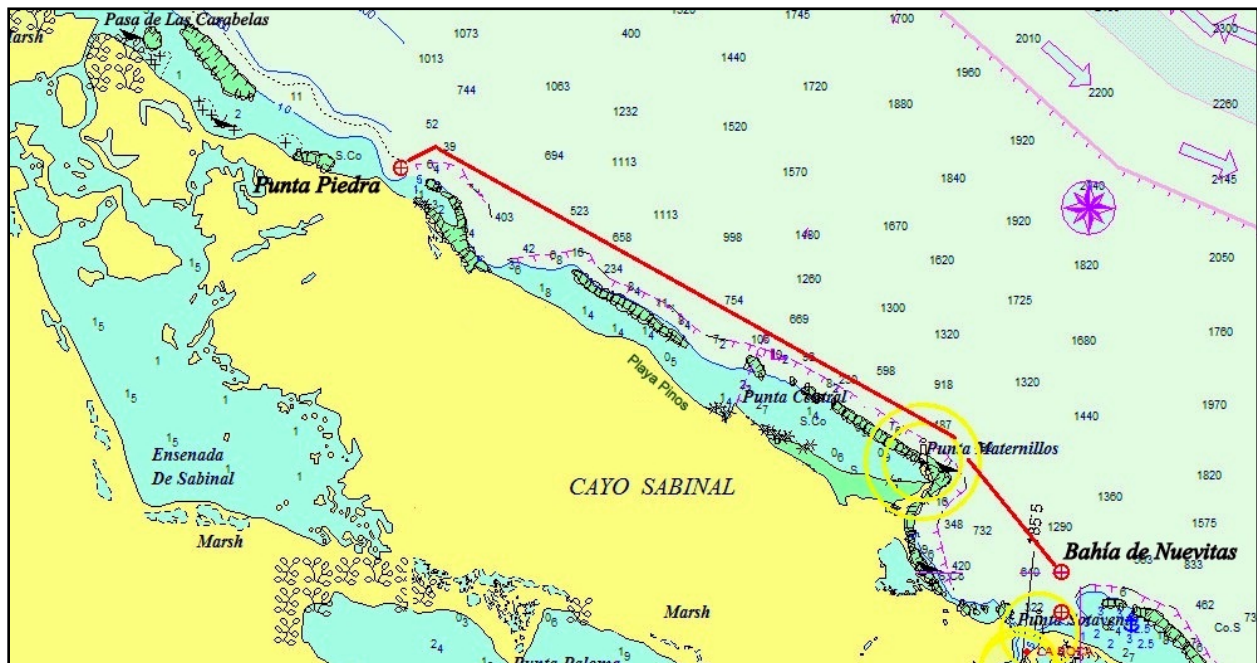


Figure 164. Bahía de Nuevitas to Punta Piedra (Cayo Sabinal)

To enter the anchorage, go to the approach WP at **21°45.70N, 77°19.86W**, well to the west of the visible stretch of reef, in order to avoid the submerged tip extending west, and set a rhumb course S until at latitude **21°45.40N**. Then, steer SW bearing **114°** and feel your way into the lee of the reef. Depths will gradually decrease from 6m at the AWP to 3m as you approach the inner side of the reef. The bottom shoals

slowly but surely the further SE. Drop anchor in 3m of water, avoiding the rocky patches on a poor holding sand and coral rubble bottom.

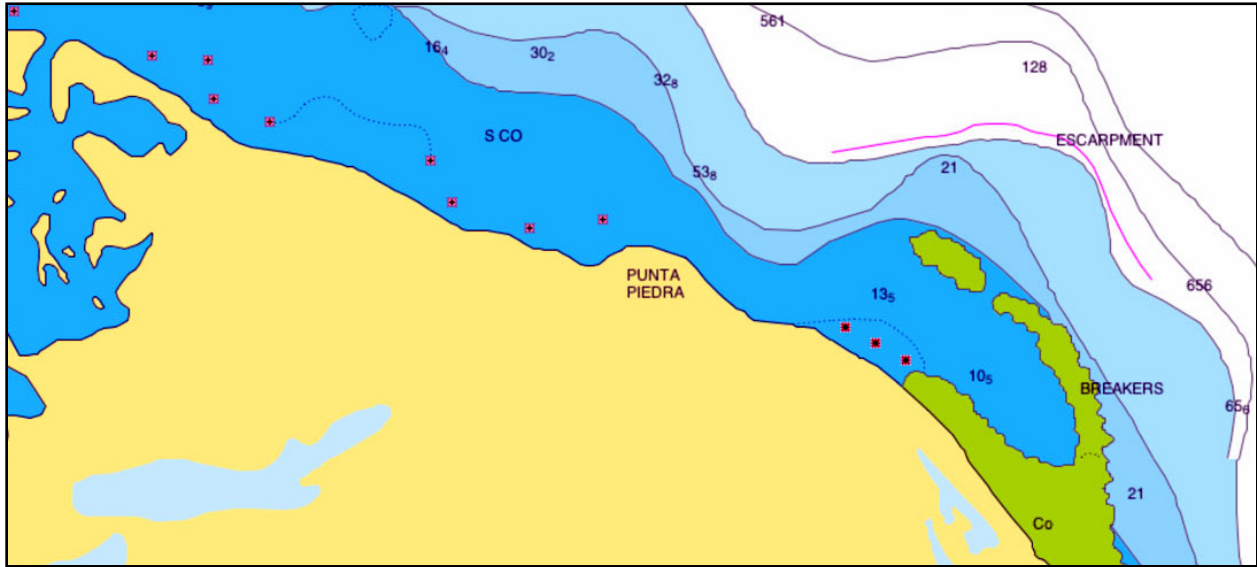


Figure 165. Closing on Punta Piedra

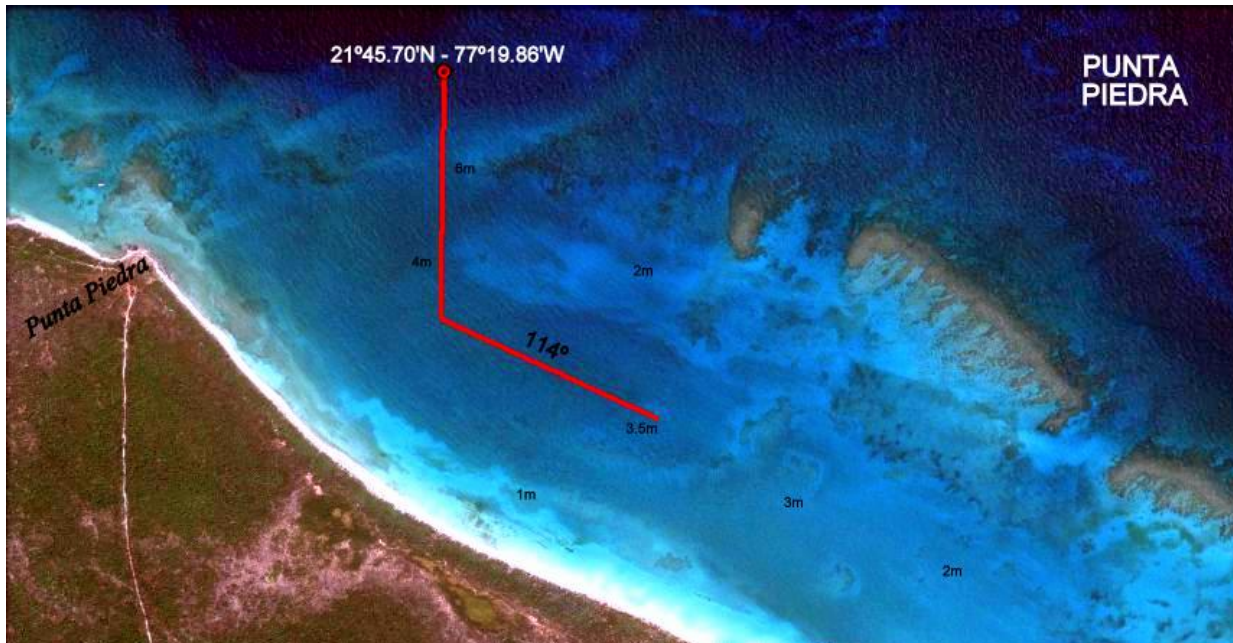


Figure 166. Making the anchorage at Punta Piedra

Cayo Confites

30Nm from *Punta Piedra*.

AWP: 22°09.30N, 77°38.10W

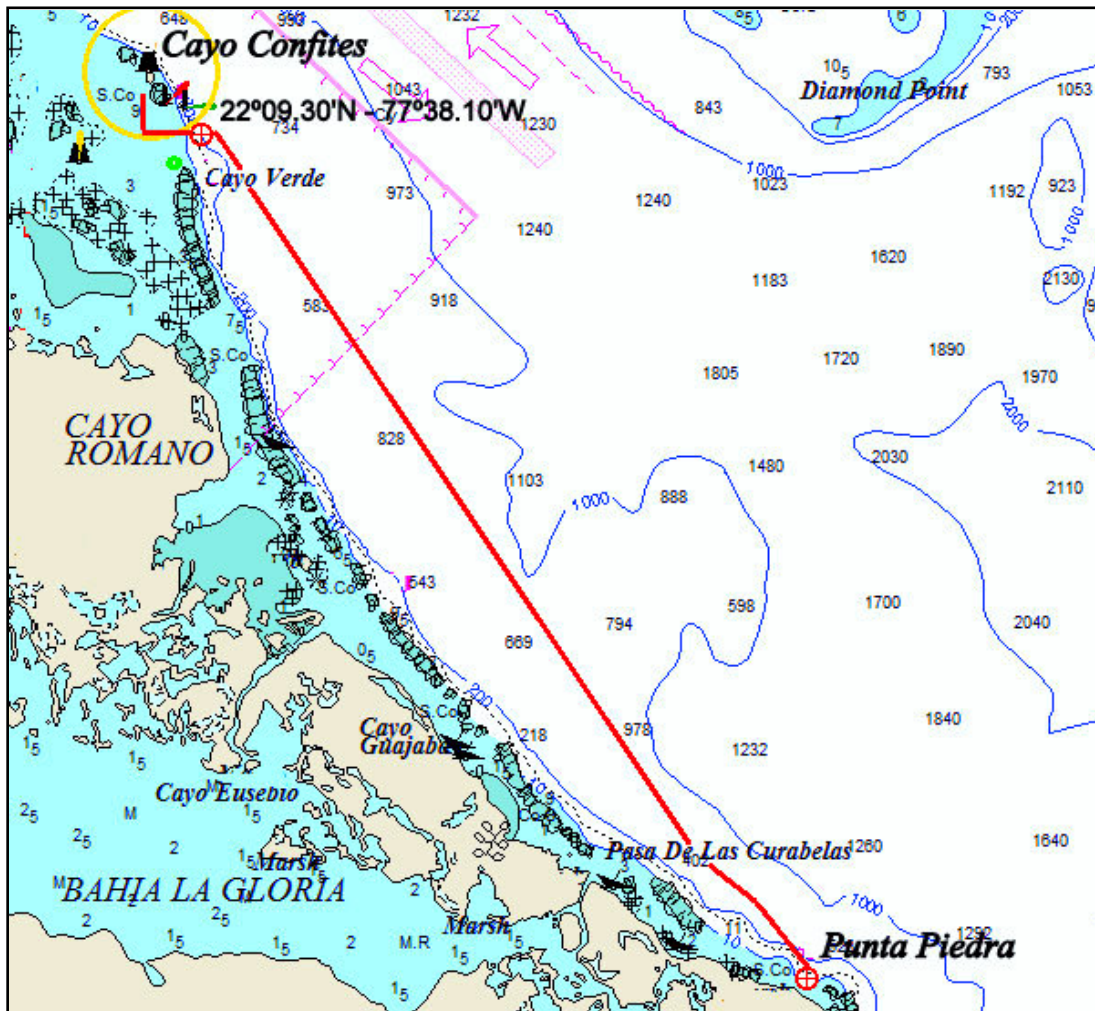


Figure 167. Punta Piedra to Cayo Confites

The coast between Cayo Sabinal and Cayo Confites is fringed by long sand beaches bordered by palm trees; surrounded by shallow lagoons, swamps, marsh and mangrove; and fronted by a broken line of reefs running parallel to the shoreline about 1Nm offshore.

Pasa de Las Carabelas, 6Nm NW of *Punta Piedra*, is a deep channel through cays and sand shoals into *Bahía La Gloria*. Sounds promising, but unfortunately, the entrance is blocked by a shifting sand bar.

Just off the south tip of Cayo Verde (4Nm SE of Cayo Confites) the reef veers suddenly further offshore until it is a good 4Nm away from the shore at Cayo Confites. That is also the point at which *Old Bahama Channel* is at its narrowest. Here the bottom comes up abruptly from 200m to 9m along the channel boundary close to the reef line. Exercise great caution in the area.

Cayo Confites is a small low lying cay protected in all winds but southern. The reef stretches out 1Nm SSE from its south tip and breaks on the south side, leaving a 1.5Nm wide passage into inward waters. Two beacons mark both sides of the break – red on the N, green on the S. A white lattice light tower stands out in the middle of the cay as the main landmark. On the south side of the cay there is a *Guardafronteras* base and the control station for the *Old Bahama Channel* traffic separation scheme, and a beautiful sand beach poking out from crystal clear



Figure 168. Cayo Confites

waters. The leeward side of the bay offers good shelter from all winds, except southern; the windward side offers excellent opportunities for diving and snorkeling – there are a couple of wrecks on the SW side.

To approach the anchorage, go to a WP at **21°45.70N, 77°19.86W** and enter the passage in a west course.

Depths will drop from 200m to 10m in the middle of the break. Once on the leeward side of the reef, head north toward the cay. As you approach the cay and the reef stretching south of it, depths will shoal from 9m to 3m. The rocky bottom covered with sand does not make a good holding ground for the anchor.



Cayo Confites is marked by a white lattice tower, 66' tall, that flashes white every 7.5 seconds

Cayo Paredón Grande

35Nm from Cayo Confites

AWP: 22°29.07N, 78°10.35W

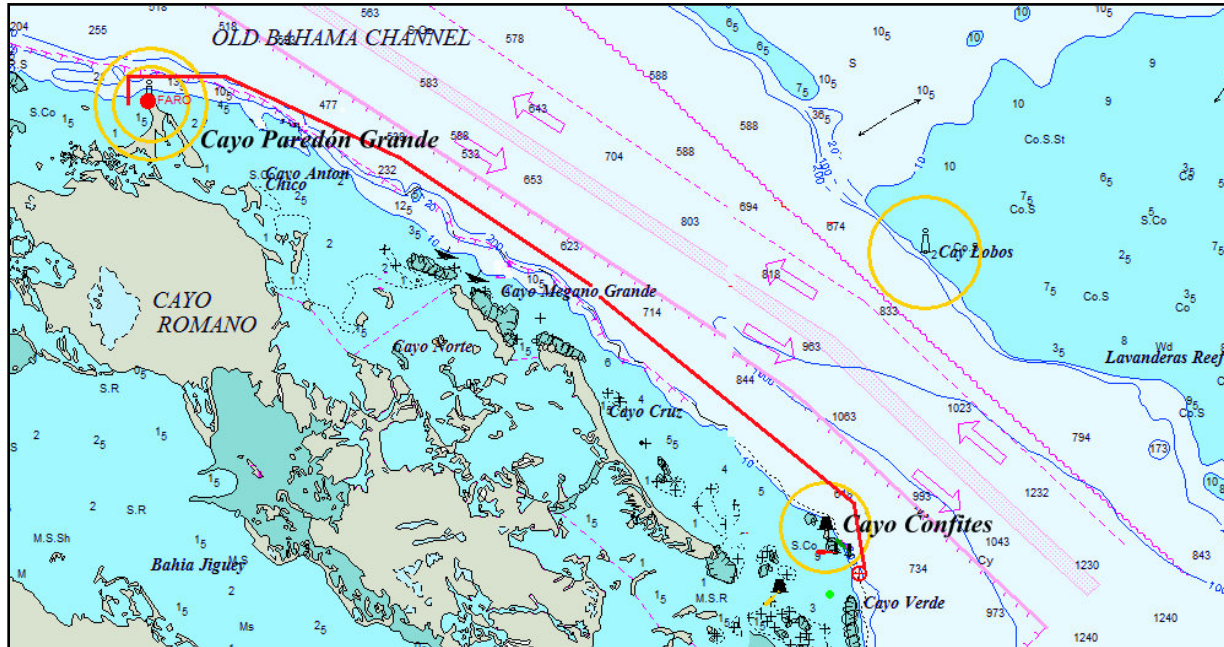


Figure 169. Cayo Confites to Cayo Paredón Grande

On the NW tip of Cayo Paredón Grande there is a beautiful lighthouse, built in 1857 and over 157 feet tall, and a Guardiafronteras base.



Cayo Paredón Grande



Figure 170. Approaching Cayo Paredon Grande



To approach the cay, go to a WP at **22°29.07N, 78°10.35W**, passing north of *Roca Paredón* (a flat rock sticking out of the water just east of Cayo Paredón Grande) and head south till off Cayo Paredón Chico, the caylet immediately west of the NW tip of the main cay. Give the caylet a berth and proceed slowly towards the lighthouse as depths shoal rapidly from 5m off the west tip of Cayo Paredón Chico, to 2m a short distance further SE and the bottom is shallow well off the beach. Drop the anchor in 3m of water on a sand bottom.



View of Cayo Paredón Chico off the NW tip of Paredón Grande



Anchorage at Cayo Paredón Grande



Cayo Coco

17Nm from *Cayo Paredón Grande*.

AWP: **22°34.02N, 78°27.12W**

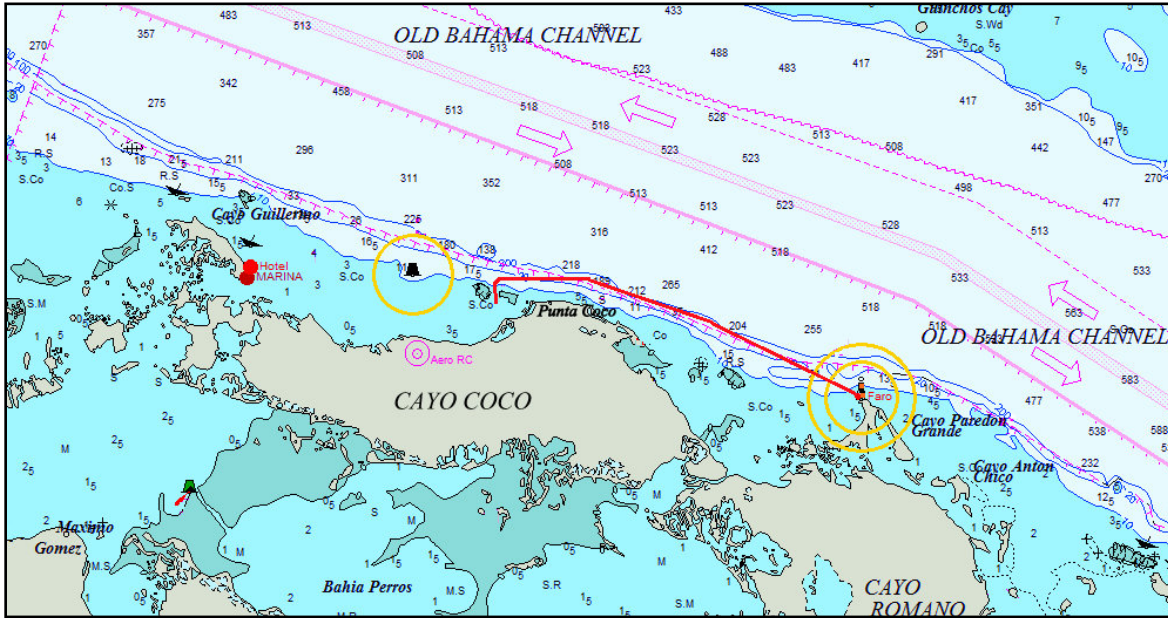


Figure 171. Cayo Paredón Grande to Cayo Coco

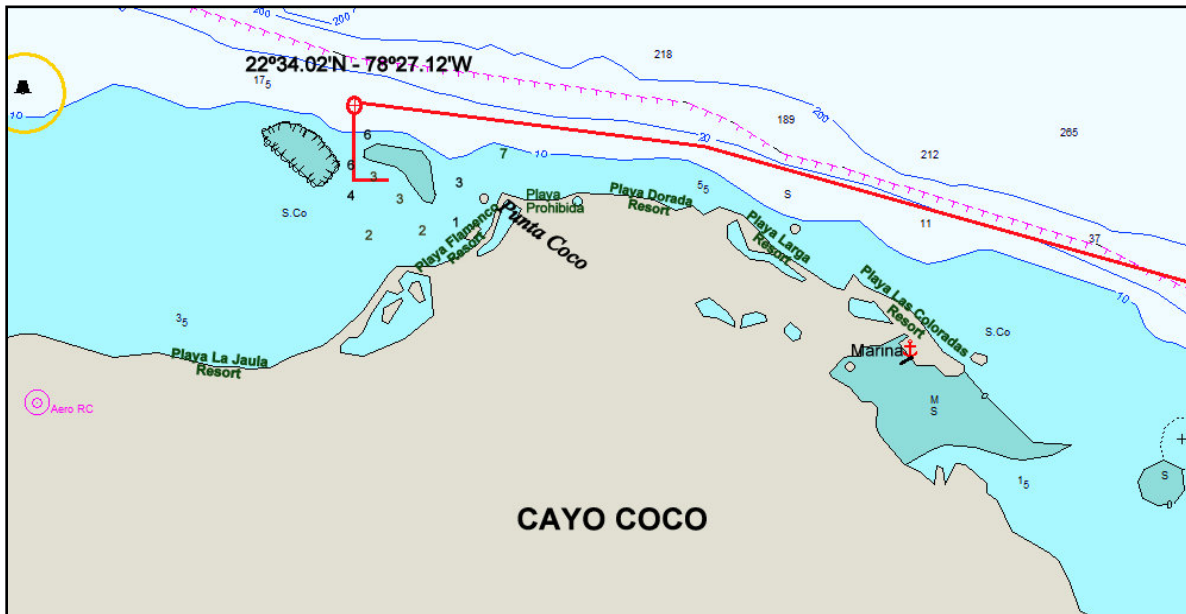


Figure 172. Maneuvering to the anchorage on Cayo Coco



One of the 14 bridges along the “pedraplén”



Baby cays



Cayo Coco

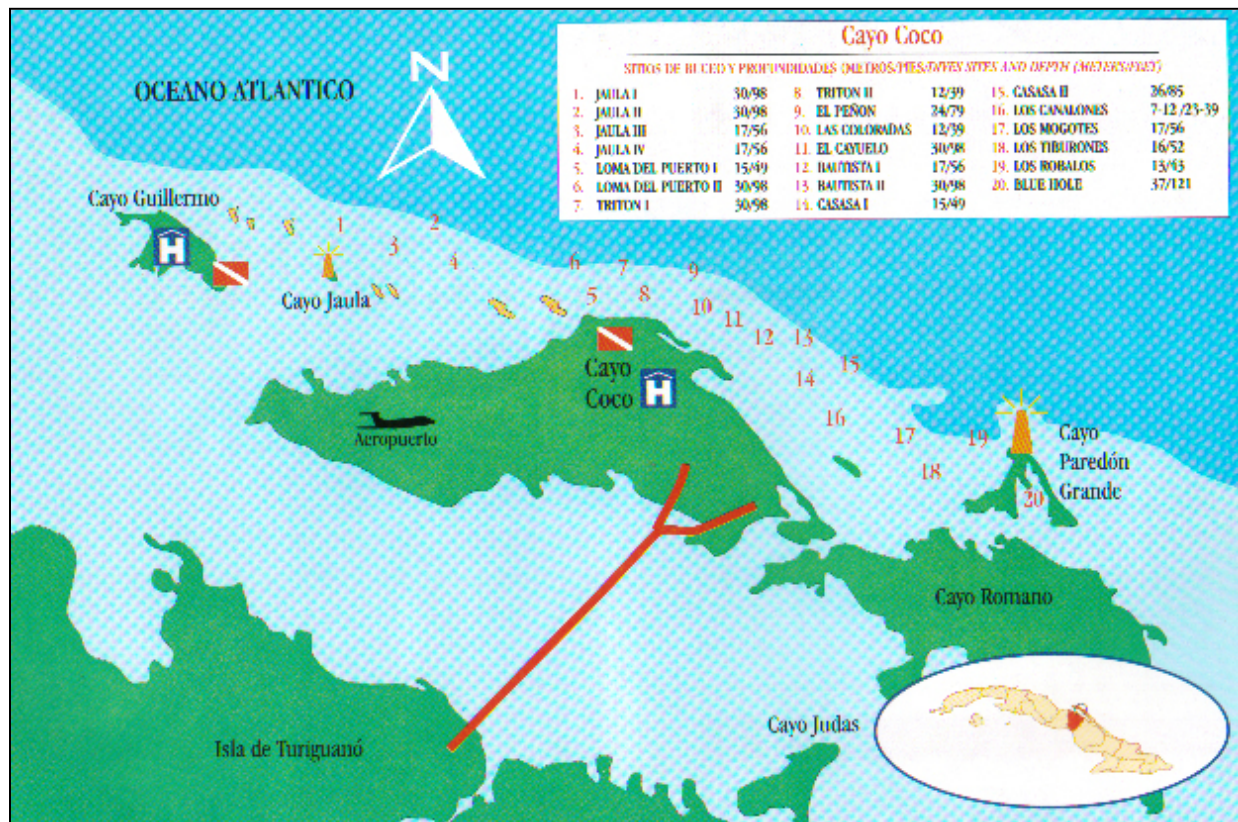


Figure 173. Dive sites along Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo north coasts

Cayo Guillermo

10Nm from *Cayo Coco*.

AWP: $22^{\circ}36.65N$, $78^{\circ}35.58W$

Cayo Guillermo boasts of being the first of the cays in the *Jardines del Rey Archipelago* to be developed; *Hotel Villa Cojimar* was opened in 1992 following the completion of the causeway. The cay is connected to Cayo Coco, Cayo Romano and Cayo Paredón Grande through a 53 mile long causeway.

The NE side of its coast has been developed along *Playa El Paso* but the NW side remains untouched by the tourist industry, although *Playa del Pilar*, on the NW tip of the cay, is regularly visited by the resort clients. *Playa del Pilar* is a small but pretty white sand beach whose claim to fame is its sand dune which is the highest in the Caribbean (15m above sea level). There is a beach bar and restaurant which can be reached by shuttle bus from the hotel areas, 4 miles away. For 5CUC/day

you can hop on and off the bus wherever you deem fit, all along the way between Cayo Guillermo and Cayo Coco.

There is an international marina on the SE tip of the cay. Marina Marlin Cayo Guillermo (**22°34.09N, 78°38.58W**) is located in an inlet sheltered from all weathers. However, the narrow channel into the marina is crossed by a sand bar at the entrance, shoaling the bottom to 1.6m at that point. If you can make it through, you will be over 3m of depth all the way along the channel into the marina. The marina has 36 berths alongside (0.45CUC/ft/day), fuel dock (petrol is 1.20CUC/l; diesel is 1.50CUC/l), fresh water, ship chandler, car rental, taxi service, water taxi service, 110 and 220V, national and international phone booths, a small grocery with the usual basics; and fishing, diving and sightseeing boat trips. Although it used to be a Port of Entry, it is not so at present, which leaves only 3 ports of entry on the north coast: Vita, Varadero and Havana. Nevertheless, checking out can be done at the marina.

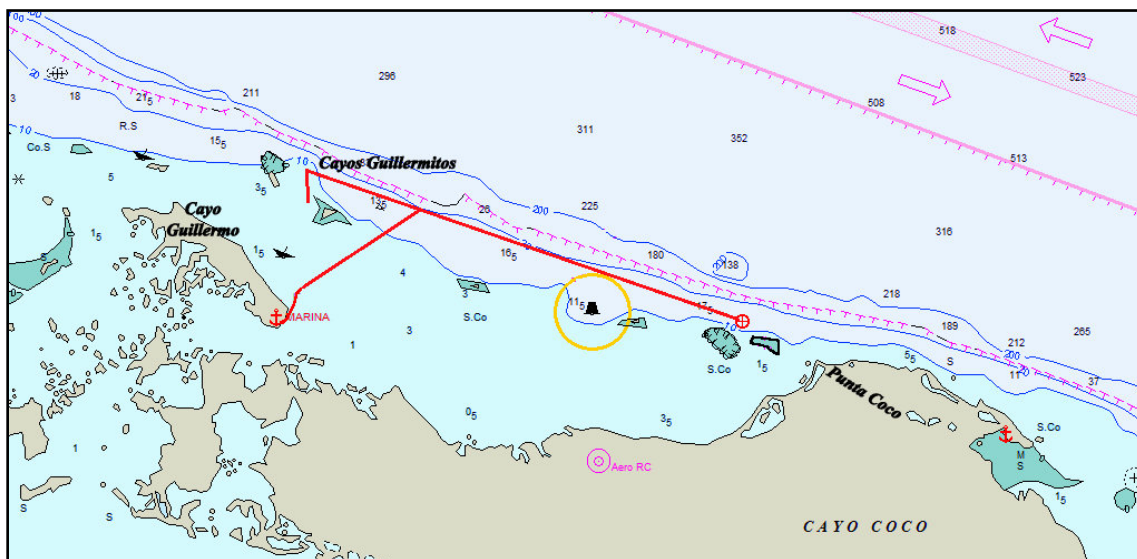


Figure 174. Cayo Coco to Cayo Guillermo

Intermittent reef patches with wide breaks between them run in a NW axis from *Punta Coco* to Cayos Guillermitos so you can cross the reef line safely in many a place along the way. The reef marks the 5m depth line and depths shoal gently from 5m to 2m as you approach Cayo Guillermo, which is very shallow quite far from the shore on the SE coast.

As good as any other, an approach WP at **22°36.65N, 78°35.58W** will set you in a break just E of Cayos Guillermitos. If your vessel drafts below 1.6m, you might want to make it into the marina.



Figure 175. Cayo Guillermo: Anchorage vs. marina

In such case, go to a WP at $22^{\circ}35.32\text{N}$, $78^{\circ}37.97\text{W}$ from where the buoy marking the channel entrance is clearly visible. Beyond the buoy, a sand bar running parallel to the shore shoals the channel entrance to a mere 1.6m. Once across this short stretch, the channel deepens again to 3m all along the marked way into the marina. Or you can simply call the marina on VHF channels 16 or 19 and you will be sent a guide boat.



A short distance east, by the bridge to Cayo Coco, Boat Adventures is a nautical base for boat trips in the shallow leeward waters which also fosters a small delphinarium.

In calm conditions only -- as the N shore of Cayo Guillermo is completely exposed -- you can anchor off the beach, where 3m to 5m depths can be carried quite close to the shore. The best beaches are on the NE shore where the resort area is located but waters are shallower in the area. Deeper waters will be found on the west side.

If drafting over 1.6m, anchoring is compulsory. A nice spot, sheltered in prevailing winds, although exposed to norths, is the leeward side of both Cayos Guillermitos. Cayos Guillermitos are two small cays outside the reef line which can be safely approached from either side. The eastern cay offers a nice anchorage on its NW side, just north of the long sand spit protruding SW from the center of the cay. To get there, continue on a WNW course from the AWP to a WP at **22°36.98N, 78°37.66W**, just off the north tip of the caylet. Then, give it a berth and feel your way into the cove. Drop the anchor in 3m of hard sand and make sure it holds well. The cay is flat with a rocky low shore and no beaches on the leeward side. But snorkeling is great!



Hotel Villa Cojimar seaside



Playa El Paso



Marina Cayo Guillermo entrance



Fuel dock



Simple delphinarium near Marina Cayo Guillermo

Cayo Caimán Grande and Cayo Santa María

15Nm from Cayo Guillermo.

AWP: **22°41.75N, 78°53.65W**

Cayo Caimán Grande is located along the reef line, on the 10m depth line. It is a 20 square mile, flat cay with a low-lying rocky shore and hardly any vegetation at all. There is a beautiful red and white lighthouse on the south and an impressive Guardafronteras post a few yards north of it.

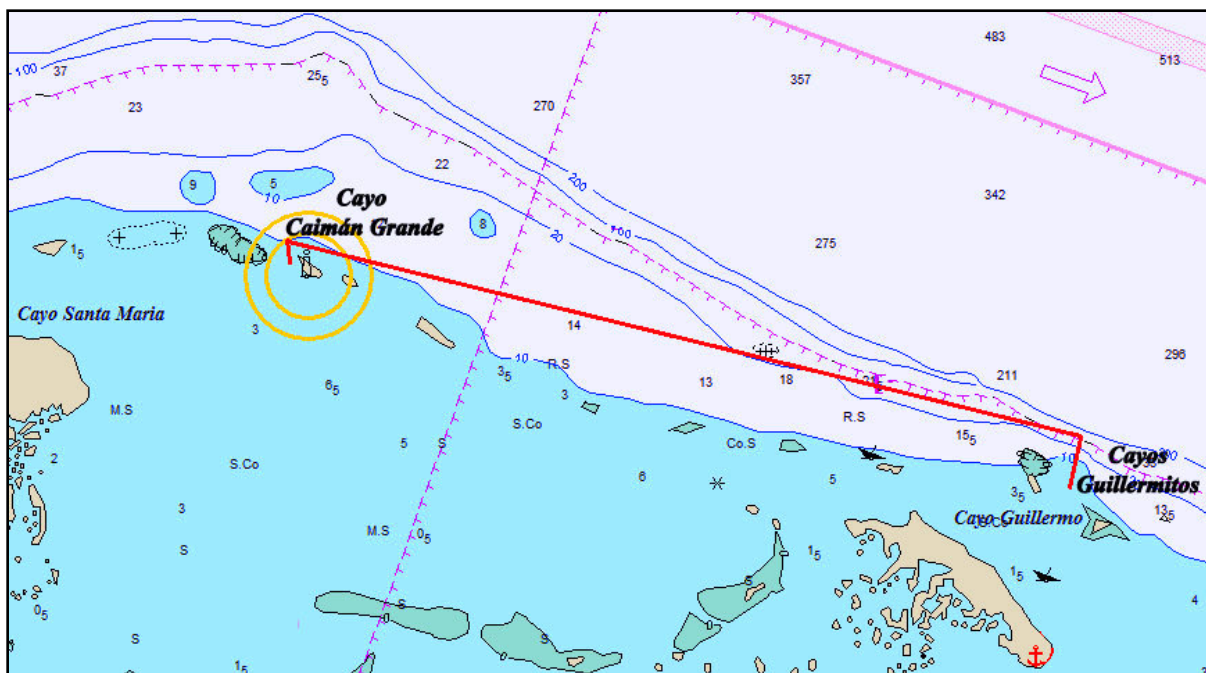


Figure 176. From Cayo Guillermo to Cayo Caimán Grande

The stretch between *Punta Coco* and Cayo Caimán Grande is relatively free of coral but there is always the odd patch poking out here and there, which makes it all the more dangerous as you tend to relax the watch. The prudent course of action is to sail beyond the 10m line until off Cayo Caimán Grande, which can be approached safely from any direction as it is surrounded by 9m deep waters along the north shore and over 2m along the leeward shore.



Figure 177. Entering the anchorage at Cayo Caimán Grande

To enter the anchorage, go to a WP at **22°41.75N, 78°53.65W** in 9m of water off the center of a break between two cays and proceed south. Then, steer E into the lee of Cayo Caimán Grande and anchor close to the shore in 4m of water. This anchorage is well sheltered in prevailing winds but not so much in a norther. In such conditions, better protection will be found on the south side of the cay, in front of the lighthouse.

Landing is not easy, as the shore consists of steep rock down to the water and there are no beaches on the leeward side. However, there is a small sandy patch with some metal stairs to the top between the Guardiafronteras post and the lighthouse.

Cayo Caimán Grande is 4Nm NE of Cayo Santa María, the other tourist area of *Jardines del Rey* connected to mainland Caibarién by a 30 mile long “pedraplén”. Another road connects Cayo Santa María to the other developed cays, Cayo Las Brujas and Cayo Ensenachos. The south side of Cayo Santa María is swampy and covered by mangrove but, on the north shore, miles of fine sand beaches in very shallow waters fringe the coastline. The NW seaside has been widely developed since the completion of the causeway in the 90s, with nine resorts and a new one under construction on *Playa Perla Blanca*.

Cayo Francés

20 Nm from Cayo Caimán Grande.

AWP: **22°38.90N, 79°14.40W**

Cayo Francés is an arrowhead-shaped cay completely covered by mangrove and no beaches. The anchorage is unremarkable but well sheltered in all weathers, one of the few completely protected spots in *Jardines del Rey*. The only signs of human presence on the cay are the Guardafronteras post and the lattice tower light on the NW tip. Water is deep all along the north shore and has minimum 2m depths close inshore on the south side along *Canal de La Piraguas*. A long sand shoal stretches southwards from *Punta del Asta* on the NW tip of the cay. An inlet located between the shoal and the NW shore of Cayo Francés has minimum 3m depths and is sheltered in all weathers. Just off the entrance to the inlet, there is a small cove sheltered in all conditions but wests. It is only another one of the numerous possible anchorages at Cayo Francés.

Canal de Las Piraguas, on the south, is a relatively deep channel (2m minimum) bordered by Cayo Francés on the north shore and Cayos Las Brujas and Ensenachos on the south shore. It offers good all-weather anchoring possibilities, too, but it is unmarked and very narrow on its final stretch.

In calm conditions, you can anchor off Cayo Las Brujas or the beach on Cayo Ensenachos, in front of the resort area where depths are over 3m quite close inshore. Both cays have been developed with exclusive hotels. Cayo Las Brujas has a small airport for domestic flights and connections to Havana, a gas station, a hotel, a restaurant and a long, deserted beach. Many visitors to Cayo Las Brujas are fly fishermen who come for the challenge of black tarpon.

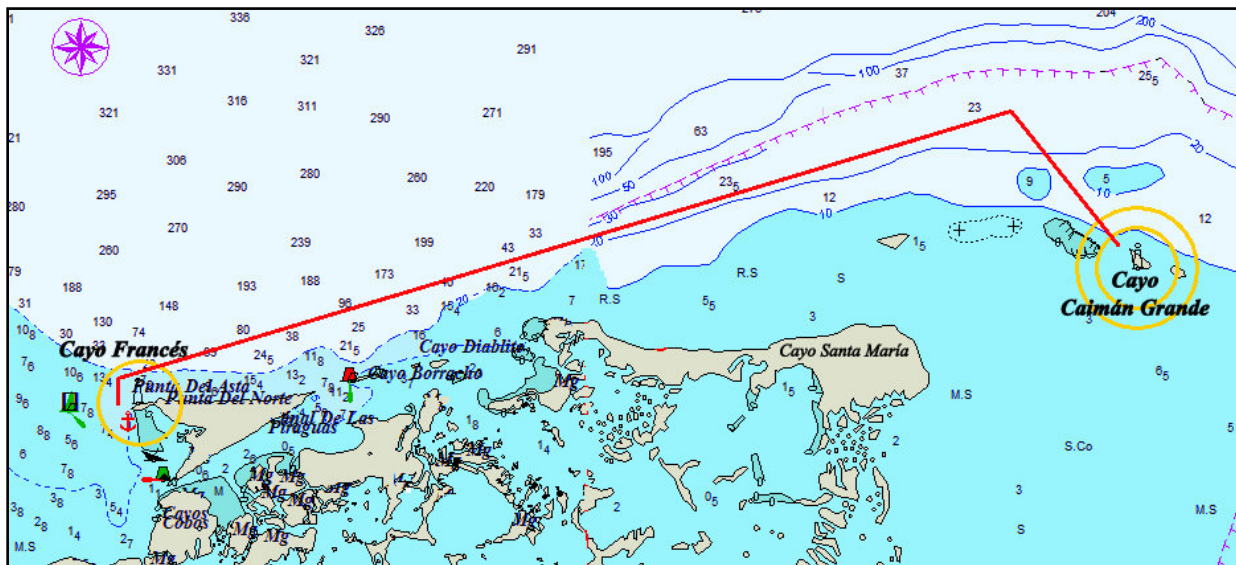


Figure 178. Cayo Caimán Grande to Cayo Francés

The 20Nm from Cayo Caimán Grande to Cayo Francés is free of hazards, as long as you sail beyond the 10m line which marks the reef line. There are numerous breaks in the line of scattered reefs, but this feature makes navigating close to it all the more dangerous, as the odd coral head can emerge unexpectedly. **NOTE: The coral patches in the vicinity of Cayo Caimán are larger and stretch further offshore than shown in charts.**

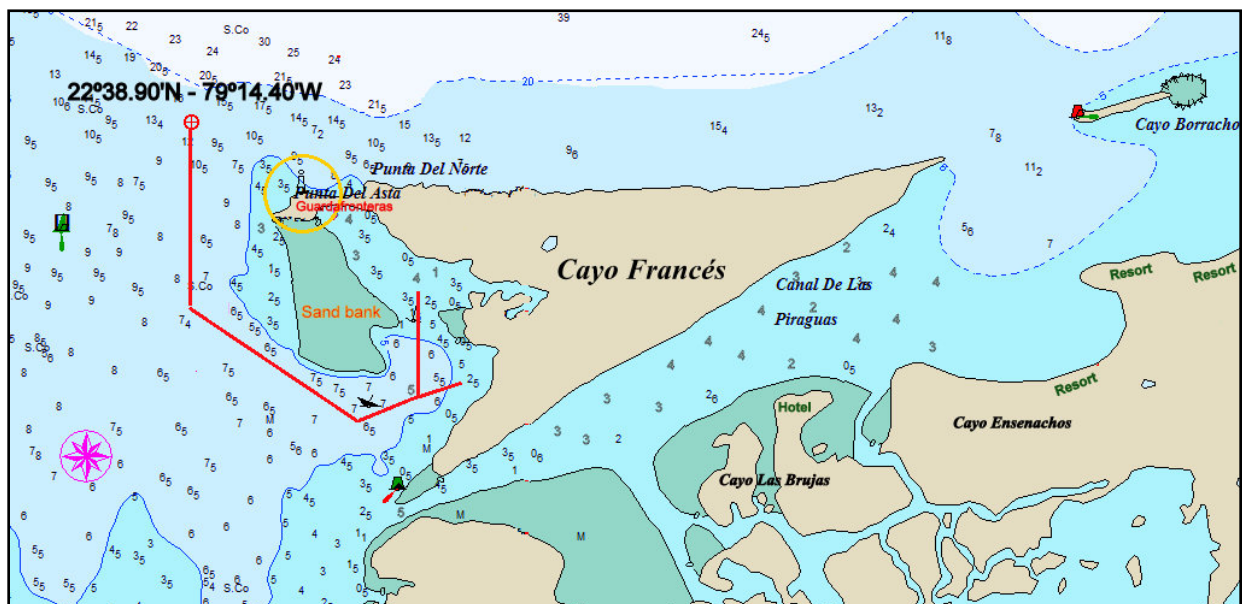


Figure 179. Approaching the Cayo Francés anchorage

To approach the anchorage, go to a WP at **22°38.90N, 79°14.40W**, NW of *Punta del Asta* on the NW tip of the cay, and head south to a WP at **22°38.06N, 79°14.34W**, off the west side of the sand bank. Then, set a SE course to hook around the shoal and proceed into the center of the bay. At this point, you'll be close to a wreck, the *SS San Pasqual*, which can be left on either side as you proceed into the bay. A small cove on the NW, off the inlet entrance, offers good shelter in all weathers but wests.

An all-weather refuge can be found in the inlet with minimum 3m depths in the middle along its length and located a short distance north of the cove. To enter the inlet, go to a WP at **22°37.78N, 79°13.02W** in the center of the entrance and aim at the Guardafronteras dock at the bottom of the inlet. Drop anchor in the dock area in 3m of good-holding sand and mud.



SS San Pasqual, a concrete cargo ship run aground in 1933, was built in San Diego only 13 years earlier. During her intense working life, she was an oil tanker, a molasses store ship, a sentry warship, a revolutionary prison and a floating hotel. Now abandoned, it has become a tourist attraction.



Cayo Las Brujas Airport



Taxi at Cayo Santa María dolphinarium



Very shallow waters around Cayo Santa María



Pedraplén from Caibarién

Pasa Boca Chica

35Nm from *Cayo Francés*.

AWP: 22°56.90N, 79°48.24W

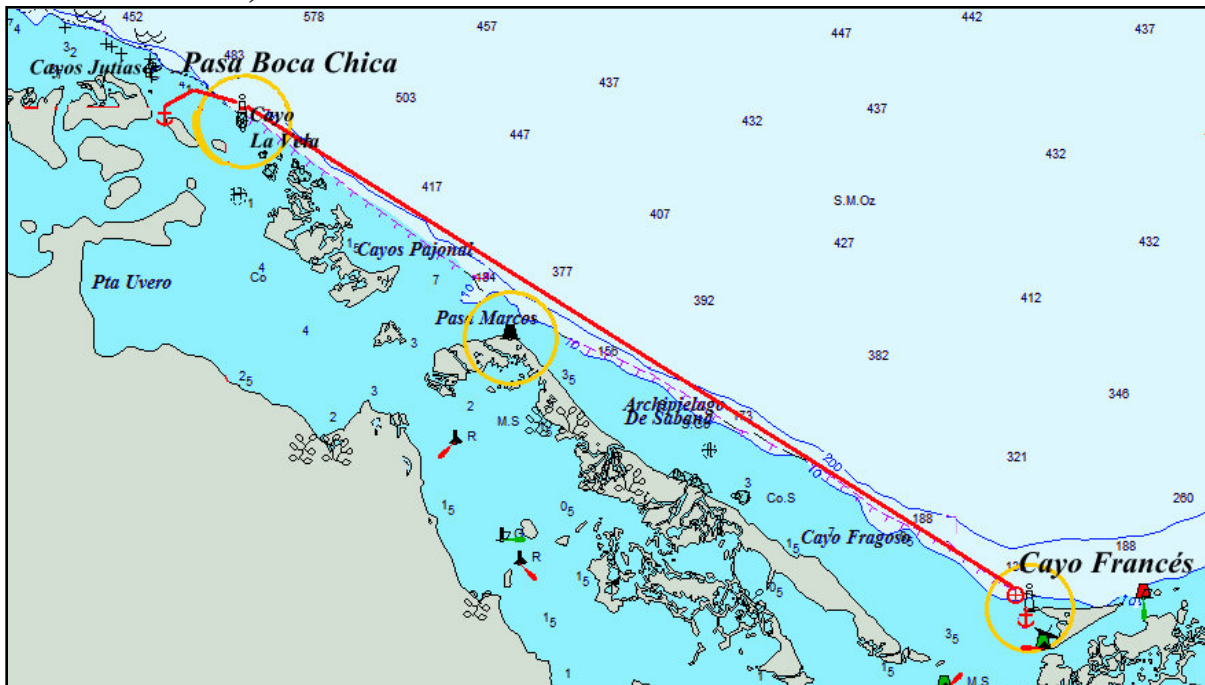


Figure 180. Cayo Francés to Pasa Boca Chica, passing Cayo Fragoza

NW of Cayo Francés, Cayo Frágoso with its 22Nm length is the largest barrier island in *Archipiélago Jardines del Rey*. Off its NE coast, the reef line consists of shoals and coral heads stretching 2Nm offshore and depths increase suddenly to over 100m very near to it. Navigating beyond the 20m line will keep you free of hazards all the way to Cayo La Vela, off Pasa Boca Chica.

Pasa Boca Chica is an unmarked channel between Cayo Lanzarillo on the E and Cayos Jutías on the W. Minimum depths along the channel into a well protected bay are 2.5m.

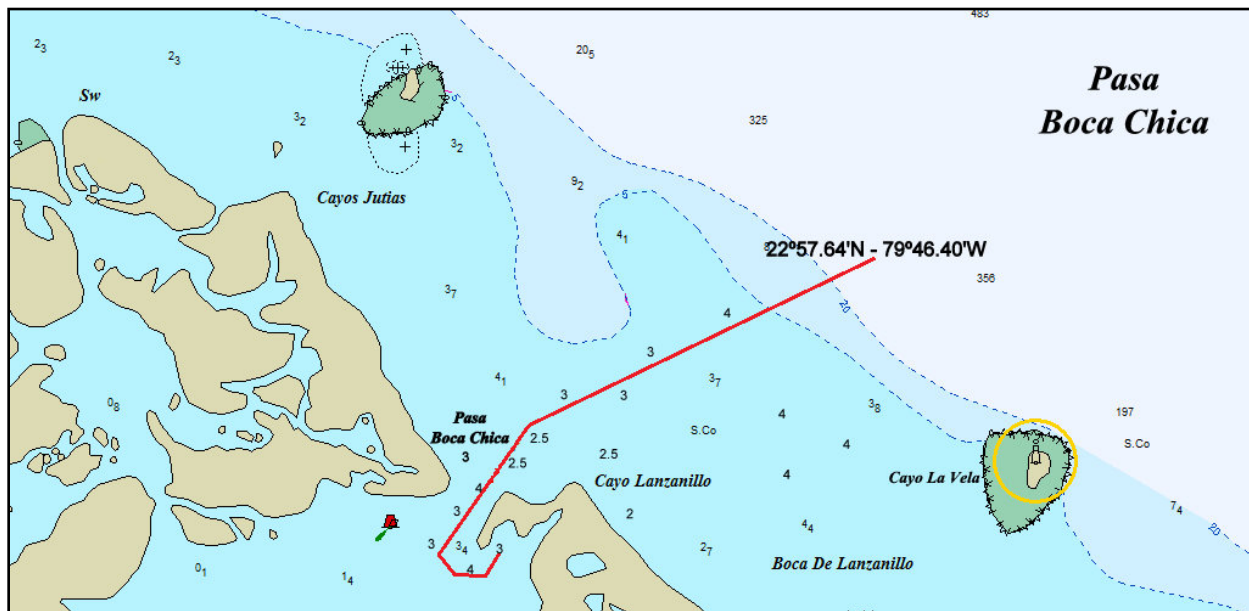


Figure 181. Reaching the anchorage behind Cayo Lanzarillo

To enter the channel, go to an approach WP at **22°57.64N, 79°46.40W** in deep water and proceed SW to a WP at **22°56.90N, 78°48.24W**, some distance north of the channel entrance. Along the way, depths will immediately go to 20m and decrease again to 3-4m on the approach to the channel. A minimum 2.5m will be reached off the entrance. Then, head to the next WP at **22°56.21N, 79°48.78W** off the tip of the sand spit in 3-4m of water and hook around it into the extremely well protected cove. Drop anchor in 3m of sand.

The cay is deserted and covered by mangrove. The only beach in the entire bay happens to be the sand spit.

Cayo Esquível del Sur

20 Nm from *Pasa Boca Chica*.

AWP: **23°05.30N, 80°05.40W**

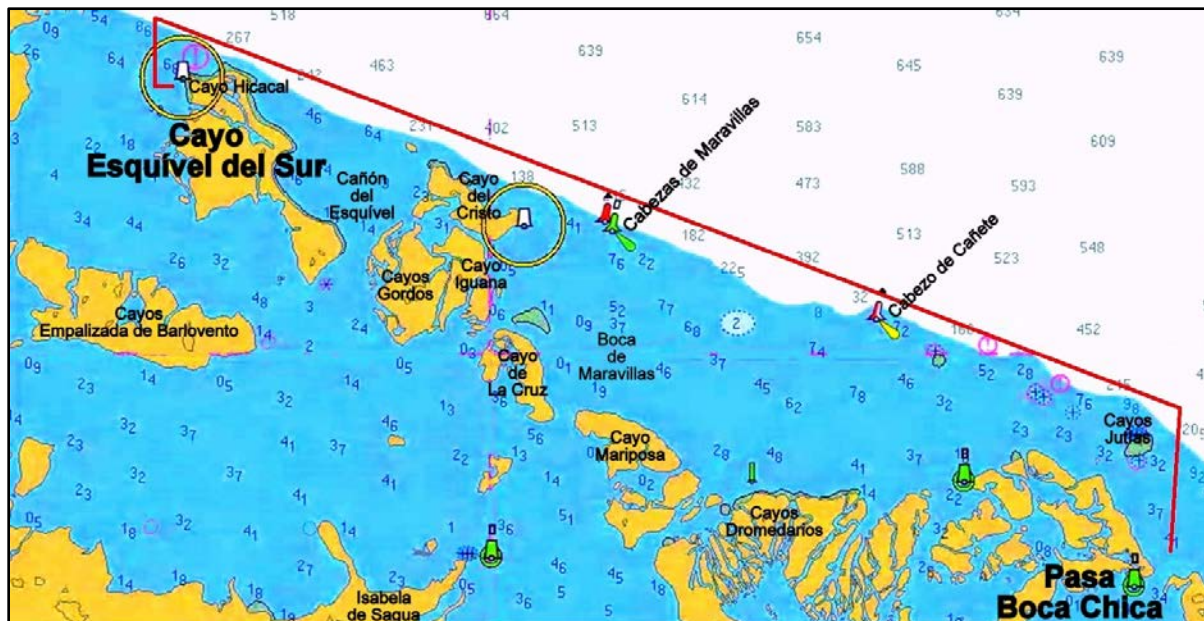


Figure 182. *Pasa Boca Chica* to Cayo Esquível del Sur

In the stretch between *Pasa Boca Chica* and Cayo Esquível del Sur, numerous mangrove-covered small islands lie behind the reef line, about 5Nm away from mainland. 6Nm south of Cayo del Cristo -- marked by a light -- is *Canal Boca de Las Maravillas*, the east channel into *Puerto de Sagua La Grande*, off limits for unauthorized foreign vessels.

Cayo Hicacal is the name given to the NW tip of Cayo Esquível del Sur. It is located on the east side of *Boca de Sagua La Grande*, the west channel into *Puerto de Sagua La Grande*. The channel is wide, well marked and free of hazards and the entrance is marked by an approach red buoy. To approach the anchorage, go to a WP at **23°05.30N, 80°05.40W** and bear a south course towards the NW tip of Cayo Hicacal. Depths will gradually decrease from 8m to 3m as you approach the shore and will drop rapidly once below 3m. The little cove south of the light tower

provides good shelter from prevailing easts but not quite from northers. The bottom is sand and the holding is good, but do not stray south as the bottom gradually shoals.

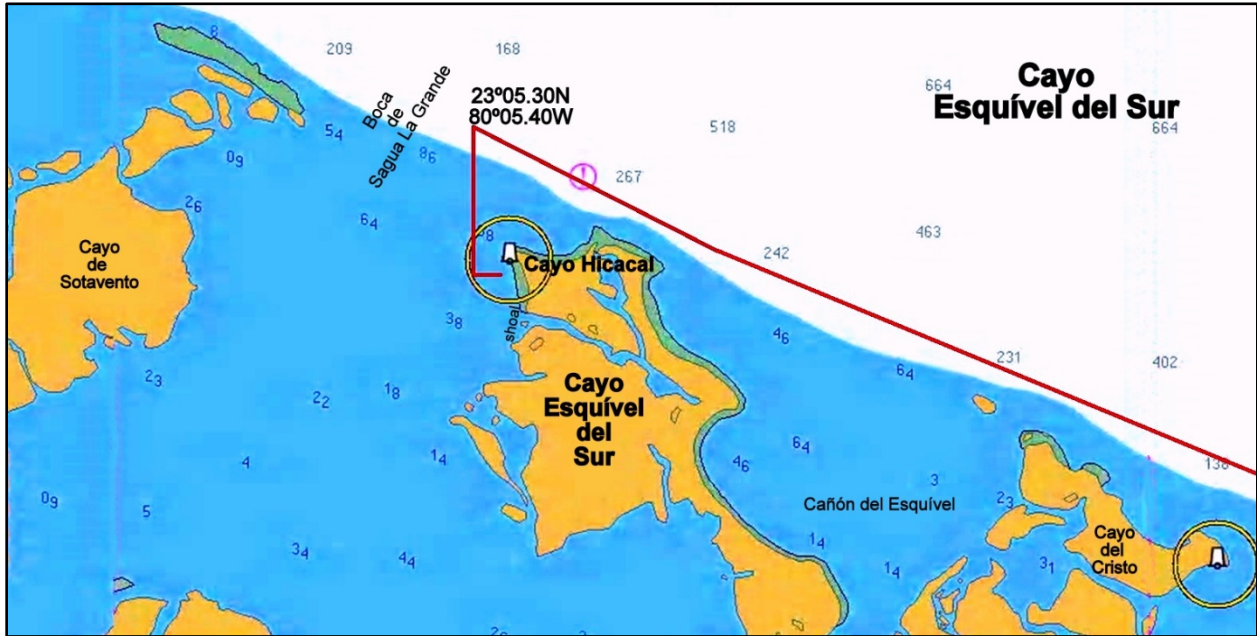


Figure 183. Approach to Cayo Esquível del Sur anchorage

Cayo Falcones

45Nm from *Pasa Boca Chica*.

25Nm from *Cayo Esquível del Sur*.

AWP: 23°13.93'N, 80°18.98'W

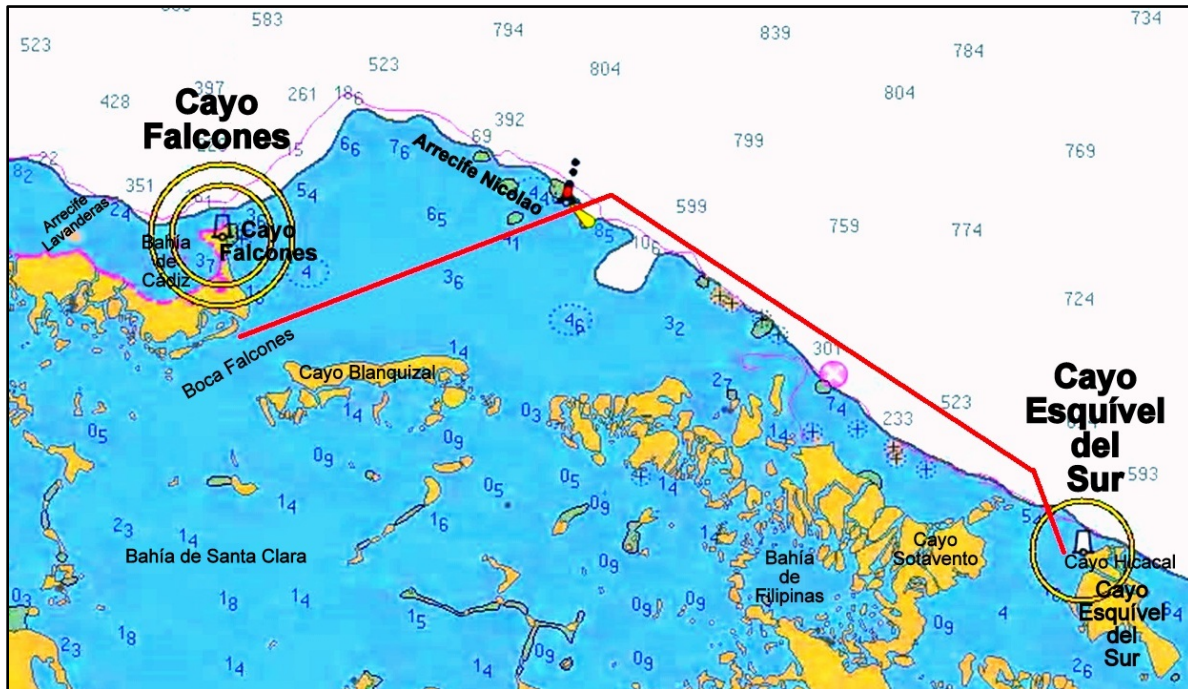


Figure 184. Cayo Esquível to Cayo Falcones

The 25Nm stretch from Cayo Esquível to Cayo Falcones consists of a long line of interrupted reef along the 10m line and reaches its furthest distance from the nearest cay at *Arrecife de Nicolao*, 5Nm offshore. The safest course of navigation in this passage is to never go below the 20m line. The waters around *Arrecife de Nicolao* reef are full of scattered rocks and dry coral heads, so pay special attention in the area. A red and black pillar buoy marks the south end of the reef and is an excellent aid to navigation.

Pasa Falcones is a wide break between Cayo Falcones on the west side and Cayo Blanquizal on the east side, leading into *Bahía de Santa Clara* over 3-4m of water

that shoal gently the further south one goes into the bay. A narrow inlet on the SE corner of Cayo Falcones, between the shore and a sand shoal, offers very good shelter in all weathers.

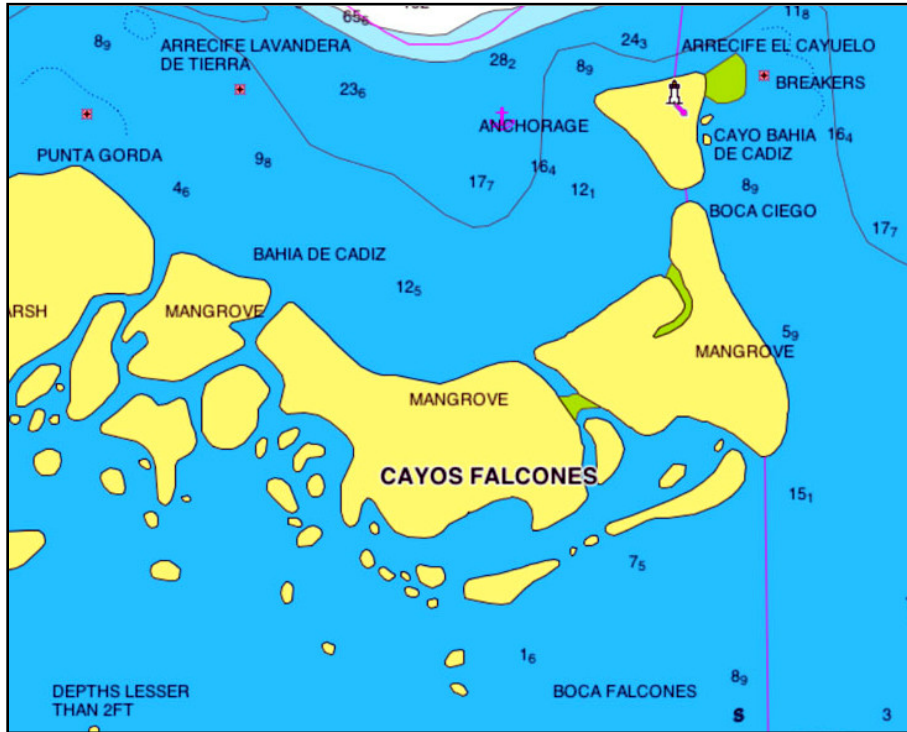


Figure 185. Cayo Falcones



Figure 186. Approach to Cayo Falcones anchorage

To approach the anchorage, go to a WP at **23°13.93N, 80°18.98W** in deep waters and head south toward the black and red pillar buoy marking the south end of *Arrecife de Nicolao*. When off the buoy, simply head to the center of the channel entrance at about **23°09.94N, 80°28.68W**. Depths will shoal gently from 6m off the buoy to 3-4m as you approach the entrance.



Figure 187. Entrance to Boca Falcones

The entrance to *Boca Falcones* is straightforward but the areas around Cayo Falcones and Cayo Blanquizal should be avoided as there are numerous rocks and sand shoals around them. Stick to the center of the channel until off the tip of the sand shoal and head to a WP at **23°09.72N, 80°28.68W** in the center of the entrance to the inlet. Feel your way into it in 3m depths, past the fishing station on the sand spit and toward the wreck at the bottom. Anchor in the center, somewhere between the wreck and the fishing station in a good holding sand bottom.

When leaving westward towards Varadero, track all the way back until off the SE point of Cayo Falcones and aim north, well off the east shore of the cay, in order to avoid the shoals and rocks in the vicinity. Wait to reach the 20m line before steering west and give a wide berth to *Bahía de Cádiz* – west of Cayo Falcones -- to avoid the reef patches and coral heads in the *Arrecife de Lavanderas* area all along the 10m line.

From *Bahía de Cádiz* to *Península de Hicacos*, where Varadero is located, a 40Nm long line of cays protect two large bays; *Bahía de Santa Clara* and *Bahía de Cárdenas*, large but shallow bays only apt for vessels drafting below 5 feet. Seaward, a second line of intermittent reef makes this area hazardous for navigation and allows hardly any opportunity of anchoring. Nevertheless, if going westward, wind and waves will be at your back and a mild Antilles Current in a NW direction will contribute to a fast straightforward passage. If navigating eastwards, favor night passages in calmer winds.

VARADERO

What is referred to as Varadero is really a long strip of land, the *Peninsula de Hicacos*, that runs east from Varadero to *Punta Hicacos*. This area is occupied by a number of hotels and if you like hotels, you will not have any difficulty with finding a nice lunch.

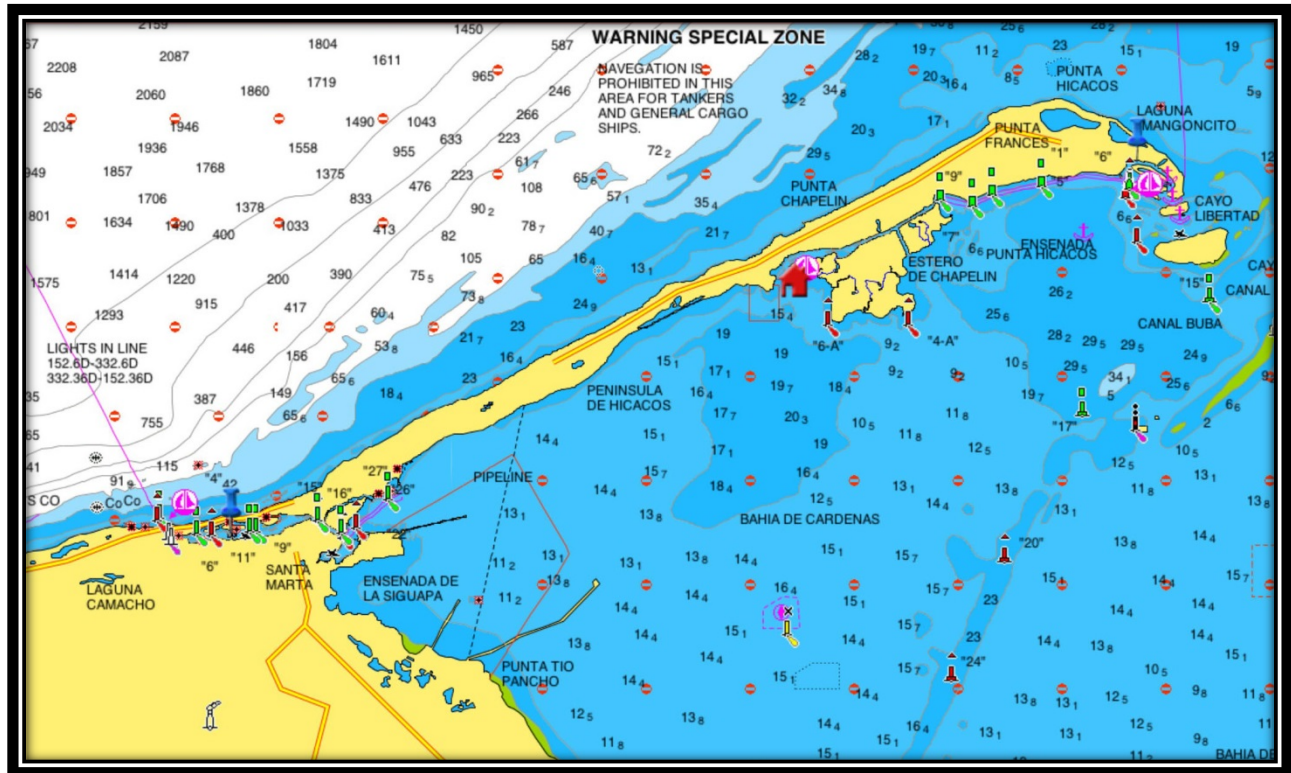


Figure 188. Varadero – the peninsula

At Varadero itself is Marina Darsena Varadero, an international marina that can be used to clear in or out. It is well protected and can be accessed by following the channel ($23^{\circ}08.01N$, $81^{\circ}18.74$).

The marina is ample and the staff is helpful and friendly.



Welcome to Marina Darsena Varadero!



Marina Darsena Varadero has been around for some time and the staff is well trained to help you with your needs. Most are bilingual but if you speak a little Spanish; so much the better.



You will not lack for company as there always seems to be a number of cruising boats of many different flags.

At the east end of the peninsula, just north of Cayo Buba ($23^{\circ}11.18\text{N}$, $81^{\circ}06.94\text{W}$), you will find the entrance to the Marina Gaviota. Be careful as you go west of Cayo Buba and then north to find the entrance channel as there are some shoal spots that must be navigated.

The Marina Gaviota is part of a mixed use project that includes condominiums which are sold on long term leaseholds. This marina can haul almost any size boat and the facility is one of the most modern and complete facilities that you will find in the Caribbean.



The tower for the marina resembles an air traffic control tower at an airport





A scale model of what the completed Gaviota project will be



All the machinery is new and oversized. You and your boat will feel “Lilliputian”

The *Bahía de Cardenas* is just to the south of the peninsula and provides a number of good anchoring opportunities, especially between the eastern tip and Cayo Libertad and between Cayo Libertad and Cayo Buba.

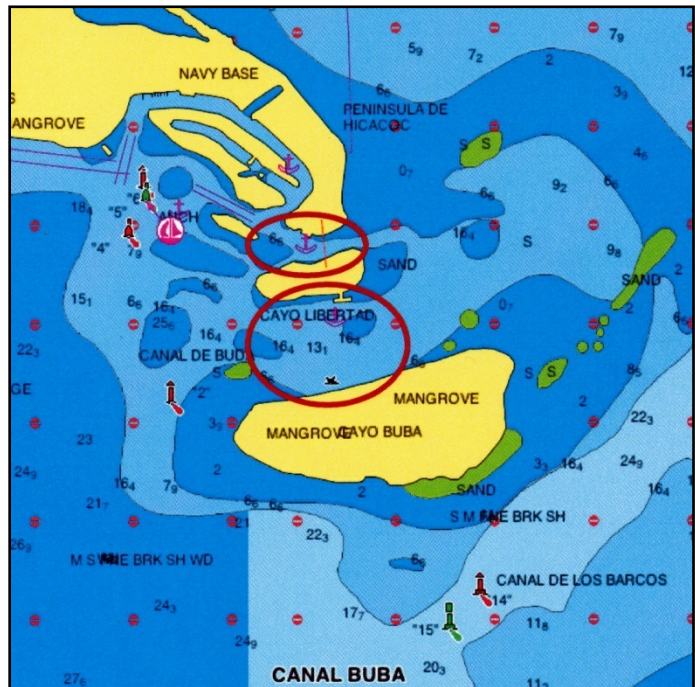


Figure 189. Anchoring at the tip of Varadero

POSTSCRIPT

As authors of this guide, we feel that this postscript is a worthy parting thought. I am a US citizen, born and bred in the USA. My co-author, Amaia Aguirre, is a citizen of Spain and resides there as well.

With regard to Cuba, there are many opinions about the government of President Fidel Castro. As you will see from the comments of the following author, there are some who feel that the Castro government was a poor government that has a track record of abuse. Others who favor the track record of the post revolution Cuban government make favorable comments in particular in the areas of education and health care. President Castro says that “History will absolve me”; and that history will be the ultimate judge is beyond doubt.

The balance of the speech, in fact the greatest part of his speech, by author Daniel Griswold of the Cato Institute, an American think tank, deals with the US trade embargo against Cuba now in its 5th decade. The speech was delivered by Mr. Griswold on October 5, 2005 and makes a very strong case as to how ineffective and unfair the embargo is. It does not in any way reinforce the security of the United States. It is hypocritical as to its posture regarding trade with a Communist country given the relationship the United States has with China regarding trade. Since 2003, the United States government has been the largest exporter of food to Cuba. The food must be paid for in cash but the amount of shipments continues to rise annually and a number of US States rely heavily on such exports to Cuba. It is good business. Why then, are US citizens not allowed to spend money in Cuba under an act characterized as “Trading with the enemy?” Why do US citizens have to either avoid visiting Cuba or find a clever way around the law? Institutions like the Smithsonian are required to undergo a government sanctioned permitting process to provide their very well subscribed educational tours to Cuba.

The embargo hurts everyone, everywhere. It is an obsolete force of will that has no value other than bullyship and it needs to end.

Whether you are a United States citizen or otherwise, we urge you to write to the President of the United States to end what is at best a cold war relic and at worst an act of ongoing immorality.



“Remember the Maine”

The above photo is a picture of the USS Maine, the US warship that exploded in Havana harbor in 1898. That incident resulted in the United States going to war with Spain which in turn resulted in the US acquiring Puerto Rico and Cuba. The Americans occupied Cuba for four years, but before they departed the Platt amendment was put in place.

The Platt Amendment allowed for unilateral US intervention in Cuban affairs as well as “negotiations” for the Guantanamo naval base; whose lease is still in effect. If one considers the amount of time Cuba was a Spanish colony and then the time from Spanish colony to the end of the reign of the US supported dictator Fulgencio Batista, followed by an almost immediate US boycott under which over 70% of all Cubans now living in Cuba have been born, it leaves one humbled to think of how one can define Cuba as one’s own homeland.

Yet if you visit Cubans on their island, you will find people who have a spirit so indomitable that you can only conclude it must be the climate or something in the food that can produce this type of resolve. That is not to say that everyone in Cuba agrees with everyone else on everything or that life is perfect under such a system. In a world where selfishness reigns, regular everyday Cubans, who have neither wealth nor power, seem to rise to a level of altruism that warrants our acknowledgement. Cuba has consistently sent medical teams to many places in the world to help resolve major crises, and in the case of the horrific events in Haiti during the last earthquake, gave support at a level that was clearly above and beyond the average or even the above average of many much larger and much more prosperous countries.

Cruising on a sailboat or any cruising boat is an act of free will at its best. It is an act that so fills the spirit that neither harsh weather nor rough conditions have seemed to dull the interest of cruising sailors to venture far and wide. It is time for us to make a statement; a clear statement as to how absolutely unacceptable the embargo is and why it needs to come to a quick and final end.

Following is a reprint of the speech that was given by Mr. Daniel Griswold on behalf of the Cato Institute.

Four Decades of Failure: The U.S. Embargo against Cuba

by Daniel Griswold

October 12, 2005

Presented at the James A. Baker III Institute Program, *Cuba and the United States in the 21st Century* at Rice University, Houston, Texas.

Let me begin by saying that I share the passionate opposition of Cuban-Americans to the communist regime of Fidel Castro. Castro's government stands against every value and principle we hold dear at the Cato Institute. His government is a tyranny by any definition. It allows no free elections or even organized political dissent. It has jailed, tortured, and killed its political opponents. Its centrally planned economic system has turned Cuba into one of Latin America's poorest nations and

kept 11 million people from enjoying the fruits of private property, free enterprise, and global trade. As much as anyone here tonight, I look forward to that day when the people of Cuba step into the sunlight of liberty.

A Half-Century of Failure

The real dividing line in U.S. policy toward Cuba is how best to undermine the Castro regime and hasten the island's day of liberation. For almost half a century, the U.S. government has tried to isolate Cuba economically in an effort to undermine the regime and deprive it of resources. Since 1960, Americans have been barred from trading with, investing in, or traveling to Cuba. The embargo had a national security rationale before 1991, when Castro served as the Soviet Union's proxy in the Western Hemisphere. But all that changed with the fall of Soviet communism. Today, more than a decade after losing billions in annual economic aid from its former sponsor, Cuba is only a poor and dysfunctional nation of 11 million that poses no threat to American or regional security.

A 1998 report by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that, "Cuba does not pose a significant military threat to the U.S. or to other countries in the region." The report declared Cuba's military forces "residual" and "defensive." Some officials in the Bush administration have charged that Castro's government may be supporting terrorists abroad, but the evidence is pretty shaky. And even if true, maintaining a comprehensive trade embargo would be a blunt and ineffective lever for change.

As a foreign policy tool, the embargo actually enhances Castro's standing by giving him a handy excuse for the failures of his homegrown Caribbean socialism. He can rail for hours about the suffering the embargo inflicts on Cubans, even though the damage done by his domestic policies is far worse. If the embargo were lifted, the Cuban people would be a bit less deprived and Castro would have no one else to blame for the shortages and stagnation that will persist without real market reforms.

If the goal of U.S. policy toward Cuba is to help its people achieve freedom and a better life, the economic embargo has completely failed. Its economic effect is to make the people of Cuba worse off by depriving them of lower-cost food and other goods that could be bought from the United States. It means less independence for Cuban workers and entrepreneurs, who could be earning dollars from American tourists and fueling private-sector growth. Meanwhile, Castro and his ruling elite enjoy a comfortable, insulated lifestyle by extracting any meager surplus produced by their captive subjects.

Lost Opportunities for Americans

Cuban families are not the only victims of the embargo. Many of the dollars Cubans could earn from U.S. tourists would come back to the United States to buy American products, especially farm goods.

In 2000, Congress approved a modest opening of the embargo. The Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 allows cash-only sales to Cuba of U.S. farm products and medical supplies. The results of this opening have been quite amazing. Since 2000, total sales of farm products to Cuba have increased from virtually zero to \$380 million last year. From dead last in U.S. farm export markets, Cuba ranked 25th last year out of 228 countries in total purchases of U.S. farm products. Cuba is now the fifth largest export market in Latin America for U.S. farm exports. American farmers sold more to Cuba last year than to Brazil. Our leading exports to Cuba are meat and poultry, rice, wheat, corn, and soybeans.

The American Farm Bureau estimates that Cuba could eventually become a \$1 billion agricultural export market for products of U.S. farmers and ranchers. The embargo stifles another \$250 million in potential annual exports of fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides and tractors. According to a study by the U.S. International Trade Commission, the embargo costs American firms a total of \$700 million to \$1.2 billion per year. Farmers in Texas and neighboring states are among the biggest potential winners. One study by Texas A&M University estimated that Texas ranks fifth among states in potential farm exports to Cuba, with rice, poultry, beef and fertilizer the top exports.

Compounding our Failures

Despite the success of our farm exports, U.S. policy toward Cuba has if anything been sliding backwards. In 1996, Congress mistakenly raised the embargo to a new level with passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act. Known as the Helms-Burton act, it threatens to punish foreign-based companies that allegedly engage in the “wrongful trafficking in property confiscated by the Castro regime.” The law is legally flawed because it allows U.S. courts to rule on actions of parties who were not U.S. citizens and were not in the United States when the alleged offense took place. As a foreign-policy tool, the law perversely punishes, not the Castro regime itself, but some of our closest commercial allies such as Canada and the European Union.

The Bush administration has compounded our failed policies by turning the screws even tighter on travel to Cuba. The administration has dramatically ramped up the number of Americans cited for violating the travel ban compared to the Clinton administration. Among the people caught in the government’s dragnet have been a 75-year-old retired schoolteacher from Wisconsin who was fined \$1,000 for a bicycle tour through rural Cuba, and a man from Washington state who was fined

for taking his father's ashes to Cuba, where the family had served as Assembly of God missionaries in the 1950s.

Double Standard on Sanctions

Economic sanctions rarely work. Trade and investment sanctions against Burma, Iran, and North Korea have failed to change the behavior of any of those oppressive regimes; sanctions have only deepened the deprivation of the very people we are trying to help. Our research at the Cato Institute confirms that trade and globalization till the soil for democracy. Nations open to trade are more likely to be democracies where human rights are respected. Trade and the development it creates give people tools of communication -- cell phones, satellite TV, fax machines, the Internet -- that tend to undermine oppressive authority. Trade not only increases the flow of goods and services but also of people and ideas. Development also creates a larger middle class that is usually the backbone of democracy.

President Bush seems to understand this powerful connection between trade and democracy when he talks about China or the Middle East. In a speech on trade early in his first term, the president noted that trade was about more than raising incomes. "Trade creates the habits of freedom," the president said, and those habits begin "to create the expectations of democracy and demands for better democratic institutions. Societies that open to commerce across their borders are more open to democracy within their borders. And for those of us who care about values and believe in values—not just American values, but universal values that promote human dignity—trade is a good way to do that."

The president has rightly opposed efforts in Congress to impose trade sanctions against China because of its poor human rights record. In sheer numbers, the Chinese government has jailed and killed far more political and religious dissenters than has the Cuban government. And China is arguably more of a national security concern today than Castro's pathetic little workers' paradise. Yet China has become our third largest trading partner while we maintain a blanket embargo on commercial relations with Cuba. President Bush understands that economic engagement with China offers the best hope for encouraging human rights and political reforms in that country, yet he has failed to apply that same, sound thinking to Cuba.

In fact, the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chavez is doing more to undermine America's national interest today than either Cuba or China. Chavez shares Castro's hatred for democratic capitalism, but unlike Castro he has the resources and money to spread his influence in the hemisphere. Chavez is not only bankrolling Cuba with discounted oil but he is also supporting anti-American movements in Nicaragua and other countries in our neighborhood. Yet we buy billions of dollars of oil a year from Venezuela's state oil company, we allow huge Venezuelan investments in our own

energy sector, and Americans—last time I checked—can travel freely to Venezuela. The one big difference between Venezuela and Cuba is that we don't have half a million politically active Venezuelan exiles living in a swing state like Ohio.

This is not an argument for an embargo against Venezuela, but for greater coherence in U.S. foreign policy. In a world still inhabited by a number of unfriendly and oppressive regimes, there is simply nothing special about Cuba that warrants the drastic option of a total embargo.

Cuban-American Politics

For all those reasons, pressure has been building in Congress for a new policy toward Cuba. In the past five years, the House and occasionally the Senate have voted to lift the travel ban to Cuba, and also to lift the cap on remittances and even to lift the embargo altogether. Yet each time, efforts in Congress to ease the embargo have been thwarted by the administration and the Republican leadership. Support for the embargo certainly does not come from the general American public, but from a group of Cuban-American activists concentrated in southern Florida. By a fluke of the electoral college, Republican presidents feel obligated to please this small special interest at the expense of our broader national interest.

It's ironic that many of those very same Cuban-Americans who support the embargo also routinely and massively violate the spirit if not the letter of the law. Each year, Cuban Americans send hundreds of millions in hard-dollar remittances to their friends and families back in Cuba. Another 100,000 or so Cuban Americans actually visit their homeland each year. These are supposed to be so-called "emergency" visits, although a disproportionate number of the emergencies for some strange reason occur around the Christmas holiday. In the name of politics, Cuban American leaders want to restrict the freedom of other Americans to visit Cuba while retaining that freedom for themselves.

Expanding Our Influence in Cuba

Instead of the embargo, Congress and the administration should take concrete steps to expand America's economic and political influence in Cuba. First, the travel ban should be lifted. According to U.S. law, citizens can travel more or less freely to such "axis of evil" countries as Iran and North Korea. But if Americans want to visit Cuba legally, they need to be a former president or some other well-connected VIP or a Cuban American.

Yes, more American dollars would end up in the coffers of the Cuban government, but dollars would also go to private Cuban citizens. Philip Peters, a former State Department official in the Reagan administration and expert on Cuba, argues that American tourists would boost the earnings of Cubans who rent rooms, drive taxis, sell art, and operate restaurants in their homes. Those dollars would then find their

way to the hundreds of freely priced farmer's markets, to carpenters, repairmen, tutors, food vendors, and other entrepreneurs.

Second, restrictions on remittances should be lifted. Like tourism, expanded remittances would fuel the private sector, encourage Cuba's modest economic reforms, and promote independence from the government.

Third, American farmers and medical suppliers should be allowed to sell their products to Cuba with financing arranged by private commercial lenders, not just for cash as current law permits. Most international trade is financed by temporary credit, and private banks, not taxpayers, would bear the risk. I oppose subsidizing exports to Cuba through agencies such as the Export-Import Bank, but I also oppose banning the use of private commercial credit.

Finally, the Helms-Burton law should be allowed to expire. The law, like every other aspect of the embargo, has failed to achieve its stated objectives and has, in fact, undermined American influence in Cuba and alienated our allies.

Lifting or modifying the embargo would not be a victory for Fidel Castro or his oppressive regime. It would be an overdue acknowledgement that the four-and-a-half decade embargo has failed, and that commercial engagement is the best way to encourage more open societies abroad. The U.S. government can and should continue to criticize the Cuban government's abuse of human rights in the U.N. and elsewhere, while allowing expanding trade and tourism to undermine Castro's authority from below.

We should apply the president's sound reasoning on trade in general to our policy toward Cuba. The most powerful force for change in Cuba will not be more sanctions, but more daily interaction with free people bearing dollars and new ideas.

How many decades does the U.S. government need to bang its head against a wall before it changes a failed policy?

Thank you.



Daniel Griswold is director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute.

The following table is a list by year of the United Nations vote regarding the US embargo against Cuba. The vote has continued through November 2012 when the final tally remained 188 against and 3 for.

YES-NO

1992	59-2 (US, Israel)
1993	88-4 (US, Israel, Albania, Paraguay)
1994	101-2 (US, Israel)
1995	117-3 (US, Israel, Uzbekistan)
1996	138-3 (US, Israel, Uzbekistan)
1997	143-3 (US, Israel, Uzbekistan)
1998	157-2 (US, Israel)
1999	155-2 (US, Israel)
2000	167-3 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2001	167-3 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2002	173-3 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2003	179-3 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2004	179-4 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)
2005	182-4 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)
2006	183-4 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)
2007	184-4 (US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)

Figure 190. UN vote on the Cuban embargo, 1992-2007

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY TO A *CRUISING GUIDE TO CUBA*

●Calder, Nigel. *Cuba A Cruising Guide*. Wych House, St Ives, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, England: Imray Lauie Norie & Wilson Ltd, Revised Edition 1999. First edition 1997. Print.

This very thorough cruising guide is written by a man who has dedicated his life to precision in the marine industry. Calder is an innovator for marine equipment and a man whose research is tireless and very evident in the work that went into this guide.

●Charles, Simon. *The 1995-96 Cruising Guide to Cuba*. Dunedin, Florida: Cruising Guide Publications, Inc., 1994. Print.

A Cruising Guide to Cuba has had two editions and some reprints. It contains some good source information about harbors and anchorages. The guide is well illustrated with hand drawn insets by Sally Erdle, owner and editor of *Caribbean Compass*.

●Charles, Simon. *The Cruising Guide to Cuba*. Dunedin, Florida: Cruising Guide Publications, Inc., 1997. Print.

This is the second edition of the above guide published in 1997. Contains updates and improvements of the first edition.

●Chomsky, Aviva. *A History of the Cuban Revolution*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. Print.

This is a history of the Cuban Revolution of which there are many with various interpretations. The difference here is that this history is by Aviva Chomsky (name sometimes shortened to Avi Chomsky; born April 20, 1957, [Boston](#)), an American historian, author, and activist. She teaches at [Salem State University in Massachusetts](#), where she is also the coordinator of the [Latin American Studies Program](#). The book is neither dry nor unreasonable in its point of view. If you want to understand more about why the Cuban Revolution took place, Professor Chomsky does a very good job.

●Cirules, Enrique. *El Hemingway de Cuba*. Cubaliteraria. DVD.

This is a CD Rom for those interested in knowing more about Hemingway in Cuba. It is based on the book *Hemingway in the Romano Archipelago* by Enrique Cirules. Can be obtained through: <http://www.cubaliteraria.cu/producciones.php>
Note: US Citizens may not be able to purchase this DVD through this source as it may be construed as “trading with the enemy.”

●Dodge, Justin. *Cuba*. Safari the Globe. 2012. eBook, Kindle.

This is an ebook available for under \$1.00 US and its ratings are consistently high on Amazon.com. The book is easy to read and does an excellent job covering basic information regarding a visit to Cuba but you will also need a travel guide that covers the country by province and town.

●Engle, Margarita. *The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba’s Struggle for Freedom*. New York: Henry Hold and Co, 2008. Print.

A story told through poetry about the early wars of independence against Spain. Narrated by Rosa, a Cuban nurse and healer, her great grandparents were two of the refugees of the “re-concentration camps” that many were forced to go to and where so many lost their lives. She starts the book with a quote (by Jose Marti from *Versos Sencillos*, 1891) that could easily tell Cuba’s entire story to those willing to let it unfold. “Yo se los nombres extranos,/ De las yerbas y las flores,/ Y

de mortals enganos,/ Y de sublimes dolores." (I know the strange names, of the herbs and the flowers, and deadly betrayals, and sacred sorrows).

●Gelburd, Gail. *Ajiaco: Stirrings of the Cuban Soul*. Connecticut. UP of New England for the Hispanic Alliance of New London, Connecticut.

This large format book is a summary of the works included in this exhibition of contemporary Cuban art and its principal influences. The *Ajiaco* exhibition travelled through a number of USA museums. It provides great insight into the culture of Cuba and its art.

●Hall, Arthur, D. *Cuba: Its Past, Present and Future*. New York: Street & Smith, 1898, 2010. eBook, Kindle.

This book is a short history of early Cuban wars of liberation against the Spanish. It is concise and a quick read. It is listed here in its e-format, because if you have a Kindle reader, the book is free of charge.

●Lennon, Eddie and Napier, Julie. *Wonderful Havana*. Cool World Books, 2012. eBook, Kindle.

This Kindle edition is a good and concise guide for those that want to spend time in Havana and want to make their time count. In my experience, if it misses anything, it does not miss much!

●Marti, Jose *Selected Writings*. Comp. Allen, Ester. New York: Penguin Books, 2002. Print.

José Martí (1853-1895) is the most renowned political and literary figure in the history of Cuba. A deep thinker who expressed himself in many ways, he became the martyred revolutionary leader of Cuba's fight for independence from Spain. His ideas are essentially the history of Cuba; ideas that no struggle and no obstacle has been able to erase. They are ideas that nourish the human spirit and give us hope for the future. Regardless of your point of view regarding Cuba and its various governments over the last 100+ years, Jose Marti is an essential read if one is to

understand the tremendous influence this one man has had on the development of that nation. The book gets consistently high ratings at Amazon.com.

●Miller, Tom. *Trading with the Enemy: A Yankee Travels through Castro's Cuba*. New York: Basic Books, 2008. Print.

Tom Miller is a writer who chose to take a trip through Cuba. These are his observations. He provides a wonderful quote as to why he went, which is reiterated in this guide in the Introduction. Perhaps the *Miami Herald* summed the book up best, "It is a welcome change of pace to read a book that does not tell readers what to think about Cuba's political system, and *Trading with the Enemy* is a sensitive introduction to a country with a rich past and complex present." Coming from the Herald located in Miami, the comment is noteworthy! *The Lonely Planet Guidebook* of Cuba states, "May just be the best travel book about Cuba ever written."

●Nieto, Clara. *Masters of War: Latin America and United States Aggression from Cuban Revolution through the Clinton Years*. Trans. Chris Brandt. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003. Print.

This book reviews the history that allows those in Latin America who are opposed to US hegemony to express their position and provide proof for it. The historical review goes far beyond Cuba to cover the entire "south of the border" American involvement in the various countries and the effect of that involvement from the author's point of view.

●Nieves, Angel Antonio Jr. *Cuban Cuisine; Ahi Nama!* Indian Springs, Nevada: Luna Angel of Life Corporation, 2013. Print.

There are a number of good cookbooks about Cuban food for those interested in the cuisine of the country. What makes this one unique is that the author focuses on organic Cuban ingredients and recipes that are well known throughout Cuba. His phrase, "Ahi Nama", literally translated means "here no more" or "This is it!", a popular slang phrase used in Cuba when someone wants to say "This is it!"

●Schaffer, Dave. *Sailing to Hemingway's Cuba*. New York: Sheridan House, 2000. Print.

Schaffer's book is a wonderful story of a cruise to Cuba by a journalist who found its lore too hard to resist. He comments on a broad spectrum of Cuban life as well as his interest in Ernest Hemingway.

●Stone, Oliver. *Looking For Fidel*. Cinema Libre, 2011. DVD.

Oliver Stone delivers a candid, in-depth conversation with one of the most controversial world leaders of our time, Fidel Castro. Readily available through Amazon and other DVD sellers, it gets consistently high ratings. Stone's film addresses topics of interest concerning President Fidel Castro and his government.

●Sweig, Julia E. *Cuba: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: UP of Oxford, 2009, 2013. Print.

In the newer edition, the author updates her 2009 edition and includes material from her 2010 interview with Fidel Castro. The new edition covers the key events of the last few years: Raul Castro's assumption of power from his brother Fidel, economic and political reforms since Raul came to power, and the changes in US-Cuba relations following the election of Barack Obama. It is a history book but one that is current and alive by an acclaimed author whose credentials include the position of Nelson and David Rockefeller Senior Fellow for Latin America Studies Program and Director for Latin America Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. The book gets consistently high ratings at Amazon.com.

●Weiss, Mark. *The Whole Island: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry*. London, England: UP of California, 2009. Print.

Cuba's cultural influence, especially in the Western Hemisphere, has been large for so small a country. This book of poems is a comprehensive overview of Cuban poetry written over the past sixty years. For those that like poetry, it provides an insight into the Cuban spirit, poetically expressed, over six decades - very moving.

●Winter, Mick. *Cuba for the Misinformed: Facts from the Forbidden Island*. Napa Valley: Westlong Publishing, 2013. eBook.

Mick Winter is an academic researcher and author of *Scan Me – Everybody's Guide to the Magical World of QR Codes*, *Peak Oil Prep: Prepare for Peak Oil, Climate Change and Economic Collapse*, and most recently, *Cuba for the Misinformed: Facts from the Forbidden Island*. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of California Santa Barbara, and a Master of Arts from the University of Brighton in the UK.

The book is very opinionated as is the case with this author's work but the opinions are worth knowing and understanding. In the introduction, he quotes Wayne Smith, former head of US Interests Section, in Havana, "Cuba has the same effect on American administrations that the full moon has on werewolves". The author maintains that "Americans have never been given a clear picture of what Cuba is actually like" and it is his purpose in this book to provide one. The book consistently gets 5 star ratings at Amazon.com.

●Sainsbury, Brendan and Waterson, Luke. *Lonely Planet Cuba*. Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 2006, 2013. Print.

There are many travel books and we each have our favorites. Whatever one you pick, do not visit Cuba without one. This one is particularly well written and very comprehensive, It is only available in paper, for a modest price.

●*Cuba Plus* A quarterly magazine by Taina Communications, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Email: cubaplus@taina.com

A colorful, touristy magazine that provides across the board insights as to what Cuba has to offer with excellent articles, recipes and notes on Cuban special events.

SPONSOR & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Great thanks to *Sr. Rafael Baez*, president of Marina Zar Par in Boca Chica DR, who provided the budget for the research and work that went into the guide and offset all the expenses to produce this guide. It is through his generosity that the guide and the cruising guide website are made available at no charge.

Nathalie Virgintino, editor of Free Cruising Guides, has done an outstanding job in editing what could very well be the largest cruising guide ever. Her quiet and continuing work has made the guides the success that they are.

Emilio De La Hoz is the “eye” that captured a number of the photos that enliven this guide. He is a great sailor and a good friend.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the time and talent that my close friend *Catherine Hebson* has brought to the formatting of this guide to make its presentation first rate.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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In the process of writing this guide all of the harbors listed were personally researched by the authors as was all of the information about, and knowledge of, Cuba contained in the guide. It is hoped that this guide will make Cuba easier to access and understand for the cruising community.

The authors believe this guide should serve as an excellent, current source of information for this beautiful island although it should not be used for navigation at any time. *All charts, latitude and longitude positions given, and inserts exhibited should be used as a frame of reference only. Navigation should only be undertaken with appropriate charts of the area.*

Anchorage, harbors and facilities are dynamic and thus in a state of constant change. This cruising guide should be a tool that provides for insight and basis for your research, but it is a “guide” only.

Comments and/or questions can be sent to Frank Virgintino at fvirgintino@gmail.com or Amaia Agirre at amaia@freecruisingguides.com

Fair winds and great cruising!

SPECIAL NOTE

It bears repeating: *Please keep in mind that cruising guides are not meant to be used for navigation.* They are **GUIDES** to assist and enhance cruising and should be used only for reference.

All of the latitudes and longitudes provided here are given to the best of the authors' ability. However, they should never be relied on. The skipper of the boat must remember that he/she has the sole responsibility for proper navigation.

Additionally, facts and circumstances related to statements made in the guide can change; sometimes facilities and services that existed during the writing of the guide may no longer be available.

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