

We're there!!!!

What a great trip down! We had great winds reaching us all the way down. We did the planned 5 day trip in 4.

It was a challenge at times to get off the dock, but then it always is. I told Deb a month ago that this was going to be an easy trip to get ready for....boy was I wrong! She also reminded me of that several times." I thought you said you WON'T be running around like a chicken for this trip", or words of to that effect. Well, let's see, the entire delivery crew dropped out, the exhaust manifold on the newly rebuilt engine cracked and there were a couple of other minor issues that cropped up.

As time came closer to departure I sent out a note to the folks that had said they wanted to sail down. I wanted a minimum of 3 to make the trip, that's what we've had in the past and it works well. DEB wanted me to have 4 or 5 but she'd settle at 3. Some of the reasons for not going fell in the category of the dog eat my homework. 'My wife is expecting our first child', this is in August mind you. How about 'I got this great gig with BMW', and then there were several 'WORK' issues. I thought I had it under control by signing up Kris when about 2 days before the planned departure 1 of my crew called to say he couldn't go. OK, down to 2 and the clock is ticking.

Luckily I had a few extra days plugged into the schedule. I start all over looking for a third crew. I checked several of the local bars just looking for someone who didn't have much to do for a week. I found a number of people, maybe 150-200, that told me that if they'd only known a week ago, or a day ago, or whatever, I could have booked the trip several times over! Rick found a friend who was able to put off working on his house. This is a man with the right priorities. Dave Krazak would join the crew with 2 days to go. So I now had a crew of 3, Dave, Kris Scheppe and myself.

With the help of Tony Pocklington I got the engine back in the boat. The plan was to run her hard during the break-in period to see that there were no problems. Well, with 2 hours on the running clock I was preparing to take the boat to the yard to do a few chores when we found several gallons of water in the engine. This is NOT good!! Discovered this at 10:00pm, since that seems to be the only time I can get a low tide to go under the Cape Coral Bridge.

Called the mechanic first thing the next morning and he had me take the injectors off and purge the water out of the cylinders and change to oil while I waited for him to come by. He confirmed that we had a cracked manifold and he would look around to find one. The only one he could find was a new one in Alabama. It'll be several days before we can get it here and in the boat. So that's going to hold up other projects and we didn't get to the yard to do the bottom and put the through-hull in for the refrig.

There goes all of that "extra" time I had!!

We get the new manifold in and make new plans to get the boat to the yard. I call the yard boss to get a new date but he's out. The girl there is very accommodating and I can come in 2 days. Check the tides and lucky me, low tide is at 5:00am! I get the help of Chalmers, Adam and Will and we take the boat to the yard at Ft Myers Beach. The plan is to make most of the time they've given us, 1 night in the slings.

I return to the yard in the afternoon with the army of small helpers. The yard guys pick up the boat and ask what work needs to be done. I told the foreman that there was a deal that we would be in the slings for the night and that we were being allowed to do our own work. Well that's against company policy I'm told. The guy that had made the arrangements with us was out sick all week and failed to let his foreman know.

OK kids, have we ever talked about COMMUNICATIONS????!!!!

Then, the girl in the office sees Amanda drive the truck down to the boat with what appears to be a load of small Cubans in the back. As soon as the kids got to the boat I get them scraping the bottom. The foreman comes to me and says that there can't be any kids in this yard and we haven't confirmed your story, so..... I walk with him back to the office but tell Amanda to get the kids scraping quickly because this wasn't looking good! I stalled the staff in the office as they worked on confirming my story. They finally got the boss who said NO kids and let them do the through-hull only and throw them out at 4:00pm, it's now 3:35. The kids have done a great job at scraping and most of the big chunks are gone. They have to go to the car to wait for Amanda and me to get the through-hull in. We got the job done in time. I asked the foreman when to return in the morning. He said he'd be there at 7:00 and they'd drop the boat in at 7:30 or so. I asked if I got there at 7:00 if I could clean the through-hulls he said we could.

I picked up the boys at 6:00am to make the run back to the beach. We got the rest of the bottom scraped and they splashed us on time and we motored home. We were a little worried about making the bridge as we'd be an hour behind the tide. As it worked out a front had winds from the NE keeping the water out and we made it with no problems.

Solo, back to loading the boat. Kris was a great help those last couple of days. We got the gear on the boat and had a plan to leave Sat night around 10:00. I thought that would get us under the bridge. (I still don't know why I can't get a low tide during the day!!!???) Well I had looked at the wrong site for the tide and low tide won't be until 4:00am! We left the dock at 3:30am and got to open water at 6:30am. Finally on the road!!!

We settled into life on the boat. The breeze was light when we got outside so we motorsailed for a couple of hours. When the breeze filled in a little better we shut down the engine for some quiet. It was rather uneventful for the next several days. We had a great reach. It did lighten upon Tuesday and we set the chute for awhile. Then the wind filled back in at 20 and we were reaching with the main and jib. Everything on the boat worked and the autopilot did an OUTSTANDING job!! The wind was behind us most of the time and the motion was not very steady.

We sailed within 8 miles of Cabo San Antonia on the western end of Cuba. The light at the end of the island was very bright, not usual for Cuban lights! As we got around the end of Cuba boat traffic increased and we saw everything from tramp steamers to cruise ships. The run from Cuba to Roatan was a tight reach as we hardened up about 30 degrees. Wind still around 15-25 and we were making 6-9 knots against the current! Thank goodness for the new dodger!! It kept us dry and warm the entire trip.

The last night out we did see the wind pick up to 30-40 for a couple of hours. I couldn't sleep because of the way the boat was rocking and rolling. I went on deck early for my watch to find we were bombing along at 10-11 knots! Full main and jib and smoking. It was time to shorten sail for sure. We tried to roll up the jib but the load was too great so we dropped and secured the main. In the process of dropping the main, to give the guys on deck a flatter surface to work on, the jib was luffing a lot. The leach finally said enough and tore about midway down from the top. It's not a big tear, just enough to need to find someone with a sewing machine to repair it. With the sail reduced the motion on the boat got a lot better, we were just stoked from the exercise and couldn't sleep! The next couple of hours were taken up in trying to identify the lights we were seeing. As it turned out, the lights were on the island. We thought at first they might be fishing boats.

With the boat settled down and the wind dropping we got to the island with a large pod of about 100 dolphins to welcome us at day break. The sun was coming up and the dolphins were jumping all around us. What a great way to arrive!!

At daybreak I got on the radio and called Joe. For those of you that are new to the club, Joe was around for several years living on his boat at the old club and helping out with whatever he could do. Joe came down to this area last year and has been here since. He met a local Honduran school teacher and they are expecting a child in June. He was waiting for my call and gave me directions to where he was anchored. We came around the end of the island and motored to French Harbor. Joe came out in his dink to meet us and pilot us in. He was excited to see a familiar face.

He got us into the harbor and we anchored up. Now we had to clean up the boat which was a mess from the last 8 hours and get checked into the country.

Getting to a new country can sometimes be a challenge but going through the process of checking in is ALWAYS a challenge!! Every country has its own rules and costs and those can even change from one site to another in the same country! We put up our quartertone flag and Joe called the local Customs office to see when we should come in. They said to stop in after lunch. We picked up Joe and Berthy for the trip into town. Joe led us to the Roatan Yacht Club as the place to dock our dink. We caught a cab from there into town.

The first stop was Immigration. It was great to have Berthy doing our talking for us! They knew the Immigration officer from Joe's coming in so actually things here went well and fairly quickly for this part of the world. The next stop was Customs. It was here that we were looking like the Gringos that had some bucks. One of the Customs officers

commented to another in Spanish that we 'looked' like we should pay to check in. There is NO OFFICAL charge to entire Honduras, but you may find that you will be taken advantage of if you don't know what's what. Berthy told them NO, there was no fee for us and that was that! We got our papers signed and off we went, legally entered into the country.

Joe filled us in on a lot of the local knowledge and we stopped for ice at the grocery store just down the street from the YC. Joe and Berthy came to the boat for dinner but we needed to get some sleep so we bagged it in early.

Life on the boat is settling in. The locals get up at the crack of dawn and since they don't do daylight savings here and they're an hour behind us that's 5:00am your time. I'll take a couple of pics to go with this and send it from the YC later today.

Dave leaves in the morning and Kris Sunday. Deb, Kenny, Al and Alan arrive Sunday afternoon. Joe and I are going to help with a BBQ at the YC on Saturday.

Until next week.



Joe and Berthy at the local "MacDonald's" for our first breakfast ashore.



Jose, the local 'MacDonald's' owner, is treating his helpers to a piece of candy for sweeping the sidewalk in front of his store.



The water boys taking a load of water home. The island is having a problem with the water system so you have to get your water from a central depot.



This is a shot across the small bay from the YC. Each house has its own outhouse built over the water.