



Cruising notes from Brazil.

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Yacht '*Pelerin*'

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The RCC Pilotage Foundation is grateful to Colin Speedie for allowing us to publish these notes, arising from his cruise to the Brazil in 2013.

This document should be read in conjunction with [RCCPF Cruising Guide to Brazil](#). Information on this documents, and others relevant to sailing in the area, may be found on www.rccpf.org.uk.

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These notes have been prepared by the author on the basis of the information obtained in the course of a visit to the areas described. In particular, soundings shown reflect the route taken by the author and the absence of soundings does not indicate that depths are necessarily safe. The notes are in no way comprehensive and refer only to the conditions encountered at the time of the visit. Any plans are simply sketches and do not represent the results of a survey of the places referred to. They should be used with extreme caution. The RCC Pilotage Foundation and the authors have published these notes in the hope that they may be of some help to mariners but the safety of a vessel depends ultimately on the judgement of the skipper who should access all information, published or unpublished.

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We departed from Marina Mindelo in the Cape Verde Islands on the 20th of December 2012 bound for Salvador in the state of Bahia, Brazil. There were three of us aboard our 13.2m Ovni 435 '*Pèlerin*', myself, my wife Louise Johnson and a friend from Scotland, Ronnie Mackie, joined us for the crossing.

We enjoyed a fast run down towards the equator in fresh NE winds for the first few days, then the wind swung around more to the SE at around 5°N. As is the usual practice we were aiming to cross the line at about 25° W so that we would be able to comfortably lay the course to Salvador without tacking. In the event we ran into the lighter conditions of the doldrums at about 3° N of the equator and met an unexpected and strong (up to 3 knot) counter current that pushed us farther W than we would have liked. During our time in the doldrums the wind fluctuated between flat calm and 40 knots + in the worst of the squalls. We finally crossed the line at

around 28° W on the 29th of December, and soon made our way through the doldrums and picked up fresher SE trades at around 2°S.

We then enjoyed several days of fast sailing with the sheets just cracked on port tack, although conditions below deck were pretty stifling as there was simply too much water flying around to open any hatches. The wind began to ease as we approached the Brazilian coast, and freed enough for us to fly the spinnaker by day. We maintained a distance off the coast of around 50NM to avoid the worst of the inshore fishing vessels that set long nets at right angles to the coast.

We had been warned about these vessels, which are almost all less than 10m long, built of wood and as such make a very poor radar target. Most of these vessels show only a single white light at night which makes it very hard to judge their distance, and we saw them almost constantly on some nights, but miraculously managed to avoid getting too close to any of them. We had seen very little shipping at any stage of the crossing so far, but there was a steady stream up and down the coast for the last few days. The current that was supposed to run south down the coast was non-existent at times, something that we noticed all the way down to Vittoria, and is not to be relied upon, at least at this time of year, I'd guess.

We finally had Salvador in sight on the 4th of January 2013, and were amazed at the size and extent of the city, which sprawls along the coast to the north for miles. This close to the shore we picked up a land breeze and we finally hardened up and sailed into the Baía de Todos os Santos that evening after 15 days at sea.

We were aware that there had recently been a number of boardings and robberies (accompanied with violence) of yachts anchored off the Terminal Náutico de Bahia marina, so we opted for the more expensive Bahia Marina for our first stop, to regroup and clear in. In fact, the Marina was not that expensive and (unusually) had English-speaking staff in the office, which was very helpful in terms of helping us to face the trials and tribulations of Brazilian bureaucracy. The Marina is very self-contained, with a fairly basic chandlery and some pleasant bars and restaurants. Facilities were good and there is a fuel dock and travelhoist – the last one for many miles, so if you need to scrub off or do some bottom maintenance this is the place to do it. Yachts are placed in a secure compound inside the marina.

It is perhaps worth mentioning at this early stage that a yacht in Brazil almost inevitably means a powerboat. Despite Brazil having produced a number of notable yachtsmen in recent years sailing is still very much a minority sport, so don't expect to find much in the way of sailing kit in a chandlery. Nor are there many English speaking assistants that could help you find what you require. In Salvador, at least, there is a useful option in the form of Marcelo Brocchini, (mentioned in Tim Barker's excellent notes) the immediate turn-to guy whenever you need advice on spares or services in Salvador. He knows everybody who can help with just about anything you require and had very recently opened a chandlery and rigging shop just along the main road towards the Comércio district. This was very much in its infancy when I visited and still looked like a bombsite, but he already has a very extensive selection

of second hand parts available, salvaged from yachts that have limped in for repairs. Rummaging through his stock proved fruitful in our case as I discovered two used waterproof deck glands that got our solar panels back in action. From what he told me, he can assist with getting spares and parts in through Customs (a nightmare otherwise, I'd imagine) and with his fluent Brazilian and thick book of contacts, if you need help he's your best (and perhaps only) hope. He also hopes to stock some of the more basic spares for yachts in time.

The city is vibrant and fun. Salvador is the original capital of independent Brazil and is now the capital of Brazil's largest state, Bahia. Bahia has a strong African influence and is also the party state of Brazil and many claim the Carnival is much better than the one in Rio de Janeiro. It may certainly be the loudest, and deafening music is an abiding memory of the whole state. We didn't visit the Carnival in Salvador, but watched the much smaller local version on the island of Itaparica which was great entertainment.

By day the area around (and between) both marinas is safe enough, but we were strongly warned about walking between the two by night. As Tim Barker rightly points out, this is very much the case with the historic Pelourinho district, too. By all means take the Elevador Lacerda by day, but get a cab back after dark. There's a good supermarket in the relatively upmarket suburb of Barra easily reached by taxi, for you to stock up before moving on.

Formalities:

There had been one change to the procedures for entry since Mina 2 was in Salvador, in that the requirement to visit the Health Ministry had been dropped, but the Policia Federal (Immigration) Receita Federal (Customs), and Capitania dos Portos must all be visited in that order. Unusually, these offices are all in the area within walking distance of the Terminal Nautico, which is very welcome as in other ports they are often in highly insalubrious dock areas far from the marina!

As Tim Barker outlined whenever you shift between major ports (and certainly if you move from one state to another), you will need to clear out of your current port/state and then clear in anew on arrival at the next. Here are a few things to bear in mind, wherever you are:

- English is very rarely spoken – take a translation of what you want to do on paper (even a Google translate translation is better than nothing)
- Of the three offices you will have to visit, not all will be in the same place, and may be miles apart – always find out the address of the office you require and have it on paper to show to a taxi driver
- Ask for a Saida with the right to stop along the way (con escale, from memory). You won't always get one (we were told) but did in Salvador, which was good because we planned to visit a number of places along the coast of Bahia

- In many cases the various offices work hours that do not coincide or overlap – so start as early as possible if you want to leave the same day. And you *do not* want to be hanging around some of these places towards evening.
- Yachts (in most places) are rare visitors and the various authorities may not have an idea what to do with you! This happened to us in Vittoria, where we basically ended up writing our own Saida and getting it signed by one and all. The only office that gave us anything official made a complete cock up of it and sent us on our way as a container vessel with a Polish Captain and 16 crew. I didn't notice this until later.....
- Finding some of the offices is a nightmare. In Rio, the RF couldn't tell us where the PF were. It took us two hours to find them – 200m away on the other side of the road in the Cruise ship terminal.

Practical considerations:

Foolishly we didn't turn up with much Brazilian cash (Reals). This was a mistake as many of the ATM's and Banks wouldn't accept any of our cards, Visa or even American Express. We walked around nearly every Bank in the Comercio district and in the end could only get money from the Citibank branch (Citibank also came up trumps elsewhere, such as Vittoria). Otherwise, look for ATM's marked '24 Horas' with Visa signs on them, which are more likely to pay out – but it's by no means certain. Beware of machines in very obvious, exposed places. Muggers like to hang around them and some have been doctored to steal data. Louise had her card skimmed in this way in Rio.

So get cash whenever you can and guard it carefully.

The Bahia de Todos os Santos:

Once we had caught up with some sleep and seen the sights around the city, we shifted across the Bay to the popular island of Itaparica. There is a marina there, but it caters mainly to local boats, although there were a few foreign boats that had been left there for longer-term storage. The anchorage is fine though, and well sheltered from the prevailing winds. Depths vary from around 10m off the town to a drying sandbar, perfect if you have a boat like ours designed to take the ground and need to scrub the bottom. If you have deeper draft, there's a wall beside the restaurant where we saw an Amel 54 changing anodes.



The anchorage, Itaparica

There were quite a few boats from different nationalities at anchor there and we enjoyed some pleasant walks ashore. The village has a range of small shops including a butcher and there's a bakery and a liquor store and small supermarket up the hill. The restaurant in the

marina is inexpensive and good and there's an ATM in the building that will work with foreign cards, but it is often out of cash! As before, stock up when you can.

There are quite a number of anchorages dotted around the Bay and up the Rio Paraguaçu. We didn't try them all, but visited the following ones:

Ilha do Frade

A quiet anchorage on the NW of the island with good shelter from most directions. Balette (p.61) shows the anchorage closer to the island of Bom Jesus, but this would be a mistake in my view as there's quite a lot of small boat traffic at times exactly where he suggests. We followed his later sketch (p.63) which shows the anchorage farther south, and we anchored



Dawn rush hour, Ilha do Frade

between two small mangrove islets in 2.5-3m in position 14°00.641S 38°59.840W in much better shelter during a period of rain and thunderstorms. The holding is good, but you would need relatively shoal draft to get the best shelter.

If you're planning go up the Rio Paraguaçu it's best to work the flood tide as we saw up to 3 knots in places. Other than that it's an easy passage leaving plenty of time to marvel at the ancient buildings from the early Portuguese era along the riverbanks on the way to visit Maragogipe and the monastery of São Francisco do Iguape, both of which we'd thoroughly recommend. You can anchor off the monastery watching the contours carefully as the bottom comes up quickly close to shore and dinghy in, but the village behind the monastery can be noisy so an overnight stop may not be peaceful. There's a pleasant little bar to admire your boat from just across from the monastery with as many goats and chickens as two legged clientele, so you know you're in the country. There was an elderly guard at the monastery when we visited who gave us a wonderful tour of the buildings in return for a modest fee – well worth it.



São Francisco do Iguape

The anchorage SW of the jetty at Maragogipe is open but with good holding so the daytime breezes should present no problems. Saturday is market day in town and is great fun. There's masses of choice in fresh produce and just about everything else you can imagine. You'll be beset by kids with wheelbarrows vying for the chance to take your purchases back to the jetty in exchange for a small fee, which is no bad thing as it's a long hike and steep in places. It's a very friendly town with a couple of

fairly basic supermarkets and a variety of shops and a Bank or two. This is a world apart from Salvador, not many miles away, with wooden 'saveiros' plying their trade up and down the river, dugout canoes carrying livestock to market and teams of men hauling nets in the river by night, quietly chanting their ancient songs – a lovely place.

On our way back down the river we anchored for lunch in the reserve behind Ilha Arromba (Balette p.71 Wpt 3) where we had seen scarlet ibis in the trees. We were approached by two fishermen in a dugout who warned us in no uncertain terms not to be there after dark, pointing emphatically to the industrial town on the other side of the river which we presumed was the source of concern. Such warnings from local people are seldom fanciful; so we moved on, down to anchor once more at Ilha do Frade.

As we wanted to go inland for a few days we made arrangements to leave our boat at the inexpensive Marina Pier Salvador in the Baía de Itapagipe where we had heard foreign yachts were welcomed. Access to this marina is limited due to shoals in the approaches to the Bay, even for our boat, but it's certainly possible around high water. The marina is pretty ramshackle and the berths inside the pontoon are very shallow indeed – even we ran aground, so follow the instructions very carefully. The berths on the outer face are deeper but much more exposed and the wind across the bay was fresh on occasion. The owner of the marina is a charming guy, speaks good English and is very welcoming and helpful. It's a good place to stop if you need to get any maintenance work done because he has contacts with local tradesmen and can translate for you. He also understands the labyrinthine requirements of the various Government bodies if you have to leave the boat while you are out of the country for any reason – very few places are prepared to do this or actually understand the procedures.

On our return we set off to head South towards Rio. The prevailing winds and current along this coast for most of the year are favourable for passage making down the coast and are lighter in the northern section (F3-4) and increased steadily as we made our way farther south (to F4-6) and we had good sailing conditions for most of the time.

Our first stop was at Morro de Sao Paulo, a very popular spot with some lovely beaches on the seaward side of the island. This is very much a young persons place, we found, and was noisy and expensive. Balette (p.81) suggests anchoring near the entrance, close to the old 'late Club' near his Wpt 1 but I wouldn't recommend this as there are trip boats travelling from Gamboa at full speed down to the landing jetty just beyond this anchorage day and night throwing up an endless wake. In addition any swell outside gets into this anchorage – by day it must be like being in a washing machine. The old late Club is long closed and when we there was clearly being squatted in by some decidedly colourful characters. As you can anchor no great distance up the river off the much quieter town of Gamboa where there is less boat traffic and swell, I'd recommend that. You'll have to find yourself a spot amongst the moorings or anchor outside them (which is more exposed) but it's

much more pleasant. The town is friendly and there are many restaurants along the waterfront that serve local food at far lower prices than in the main town by the beach.

If the swell is making itself felt off Gamboa, you can also anchor on the other bank between the point and the village of Bom Jardim, but the as tide runs strongly there (especially towards the point) and the best of the water is close to the shore it may be best to lie to a Bahamian moor.

If you want to visit Morro de Sao Paulo from Gamboa it's a short (if wet) dinghy ride down to the jetty. As there are no cars allowed on the island all goods and baggage are taken into town by an army of porters with trolleys and a good number of these worthies have appointed themselves as unofficial harbour masters on the jetty. If you want your dinghy to be there on your return then you'll have to negotiate with one of them to 'guard' your dinghy in your absence. As I had to go and find the 'guard' on our return and our dinghy was trapped under a ladder I resisted his attempt to bankrupt us with his extortionate claim for recompense and in the end we settled for a fraction of the sum demanded, albeit with considerable bad feeling on both sides. Personally, if I were to return to Brazil this would be one place I'd definitely avoid.

Balette (pp. 83-84) shows an anchorage on the eastern side of the Ilha de Tinaré in the Enseada de Garapua. Local yachtsmen warned us that this was not as simple an entry as he suggests and that the line he shows between Wpts 9 and 10 will lead you too close to the reef on the northern side. On the day we looked at it there was too much onshore swell to make it worthwhile attempting to enter and the one yacht at anchor was rolling wildly so we cannot confirm or deny the comments we heard. Undoubtedly care should be taken in any case!

Instead we carried on to the Baía de Camamu. We had heard that the entrance was tricky, but actually found it to be very straightforward following Balette's sketch. The only thing we did notice was that many fishing boats gather around the shallow bar near Balette's Wpt 3 (p.86) and sweep around very unpredictably, but (apparently) at only at certain stages of the tide, certainly approaching HW. We had to work our way through them, but it wasn't impossible. The outer anchorage at Barra Grande looked untenable, due to the swell, so we carried on to the anchorage at Campinho.

It seemed that many changes had occurred here since Balette was last there. There are now quite a few moorings in the anchorage, so you have to pick your spot with care and all of the Pousadas (guest houses) mentioned have gone, having been bought up (we were told) by wealthy people from out of the state. On the other hand, the prosperity that Brazil was enjoying at that time had resulted in many more local bars and small, inexpensive snack bars opening that cater more for the local people. There are some good(ish) restaurants such as the one on the Ilha do Goiό alongside the anchorage at Sampinho so it's still possible to eat out should you wish, and there's a small food store on the road towards Barra Grande from the jetty at Campinho within easy walking distance.

The anchorage at Sampinho is pleasant but narrow and the tide runs quite hard through it, so it's best to lie to a Bahamian moor. As at Campinho, there are now lots of moorings, too, to complicate matters. We anchored down towards the southeastern end where there is more space as there were fewer moorings. We also anchored at Ilha dos Tatus in position 14°00.641S 38°59.840W close to the position suggested by Balette (p.93 + 97), although we edged in closer at Ilha dos Tatus than he suggests due to our shoal draft. We also anchored in the deeper channel SE of Ilha Germana. These are lovely spots, particularly the former, which lies just off a deserted island in total peace. We also went up the river to Marau which was something of a disappointment, as we had been expecting to fill up with water at the jetty (Balettep.95) but the water system had clearly been out of action for many years. We did manage to source some water in the town from a standpipe, though.

The whole of the Baía de Camamu is well worth a visit, especially before the inevitable development of the area gathers pace, but stock up on food and water first.

We were keen to press on south, so did an offshore leg down to Caravelas. Balette warns of reefs (p.110) but these are all well charted as far as we could see, and the approach was straightforward following his instructions. The whole area is fairly shallow, though, and would be a challenge if the wind and sea were up. The chart shows two possible entrances to the river, but we were warned that the one from the north east is very tricky due to shifting shoals and drying banks. This necessitates going on around a long detour around the banks to the dredged channel at Wpt 3 (p.110).

Dredging was actually taking place when we entered and the channel is narrow (but well marked). Take care with the flood tide, though, which sweeps hard across the shoals to the east of the channel and will push you strongly to the west into the very shallow water at the edge of the channel. Once through the dredged channel into the river proper the best of the water is on the southern shore and there are several very shoal patches in the middle – beware of cutting across to the northern shore until you are well up the river and can see the jetty. You can anchor off the jetty or head back down the northern side from there watching your echo sounder and there are a couple of long, narrow pools that you can anchor in if you have relatively shoal draft (say 1.5m).

There is a Yacht Club (late Club) mentioned on the chart and some people apparently anchor off there, but it's actually a hotel and seemed very run down when we were there.

The main reason to visit Caravelas was, for us, to visit the Arquipélago dos Abrolhos that lies approximately 35 miles out from the town in the Atlantic. We had been led to believe (Balette p. 114) that permission to visit had to be sought from IBAMA (the Brazilian Nature Conservation bureau) in Caravelas but locals in the town told us that this was not so, but that we should call the reserve base on Ilha Santa Barbara via VHF on arrival. Which we did and had no problem with the authorities.

This is an amazing place and quite unique. These islands are a nature reserve mainly for the birds (boobies, tropic birds) and visitors are only allowed ashore on one island (Ilha Siriba) in the company of a guide. There was a small charge for this which we felt was well worth it as the birds are beyond tame and the atmosphere extraordinary. In the event we actually were lucky enough to be invited to visit the main island (Santa Barbara) as there was a party of guests there for an open day – for which we were very grateful. The view from the top of the lighthouse was spectacular.



Ilha S. Barbara, Abrolhos, moorings

These islands are exposed though, and the swell is ever present. We had heard that officially anchoring is not permitted and that visiting yachts must use the moorings (marked with yellow buoys) that are dotted around the islands. On arrival we picked up one of the buoys in bay to the south of Santa Barbara, where there were a number of liveaboard dive boats already moored up. But even in quiet

conditions the movement was pretty wild and when I dived on the mooring I found that it was in a shocking state, which didn't fill me with confidence. We had heard in Caravelas that anchoring was permitted in sand (i.e. not coral) and that there was a nice patch in a perfect spot in the lee of the reef that runs between Ilha Redonda and Ilha Siriba, so the next day we headed around there. We anchored in approximately 10m in position close to 17°58.046S 38° 42.6.866W in pure white sand close to Balette's Wpt A4 (p.113) . This anchorage is much more sheltered than it looks on the chart, largely because the reef breaks the swell. Snorkelling on the reef is excellent with reef fish and rays of sizes you'll never see in the Caribbean. Remember – this is all a nature reserve of long standing and spear fishing is definitely not allowed! We enjoyed several wonderful days in the islands and were told we were only the second foreign yacht that season to visit.

Later in the season (July-September) the whole area is besieged by humpback whales in major numbers, something we would have loved to see, but time and tide sent us on our way south again, to Vitória.

So far we had enjoyed almost ideal conditions for passage making south, with winds that seldom exceeded F5, mostly with a strong easterly component. Add to that a favourable current which seemed to come and go at up to 1 knot and fast passages can be made. Winds tended to drop light overnight, especially close to the shore, but by day we were enjoying some really good sailing. By the time you're past the Abrolhos, though, the average wind speeds pick up a notch, so we made a fast passage down to Vittoria arriving off the anchorage outside in the early morning with a fresh following breeze. This helped us to shape our course through the maze of anchored VLCC's outside waiting their turn to berth at the huge port of Tubarão on the northern shore of the Baía Do Espírito Santo. Care has to be taken here as

there is a dredged channel from the anchorage to the port and small boat crews must have their wits about them to avoid getting in the way of ships entering, using or leaving the channel - the traffic in the channel is nose to tail. We went around the outside of the channel for safety's sake. AIS was very useful here to see who was getting underway and we listened in on the VHF to the pilots talking to the various ships to hear who was getting ready to move— all in English, of course!



Mangled shuttering, Marina Vitoria

Once safely across the bay there aren't many options for visitors, unfortunately. The late Clube Marina is pretty much packed, apart from some berths inside an eastern arm where they have tried to expand the marina by installing hefty steel shuttering to protect these berths. But judging by the state of the shuttering when we were there this is a losing battle, as the bay is wide and

winters storms must give the place an awful pasting. Balette mentions some moorings but we could only see one available to the west of the entrance to the Marina, and that was far too close to a sunken motor boat! So we anchored to the east of the Marina in around 10m in position 20°17.892S 40°17.166W. Holding was good, which was just as well as the wind got up every day to 25 knots + from the E or NE, straight into the anchorage. But, we were close to the facilities of the Marina, and by paying a modest fee were able to use them all, which was very welcome.

A further downside to the whole site is the dust that blows across from the ore port at Tubarão, which was almost as bad as the Harmattan at Dakar, Senegal at times.

We were told that a more sheltered alternative anchorage area is behind the Ilha do Frade that lies just to the south. Apparently it's possible to tuck in and anchor behind some small islets there (the Andorinhas) although there are a few moorings in the area and there is some traffic noise from the causeway to the island. We were given the following position to anchor in around 5m at 20°18.280S 40°16.393W which we scouted out and looked about right.

Vitória is a very different city from Salvador, very modern, smart and prosperous. There are good shops within walking distance, especially a really excellent supermarket a short walk from the Marina. Despite the rather uncomfortable conditions at anchor it's a pleasant stop, but do be aware that the Customs and Immigration are miles way in the port area, which is far less salubrious!

We had intended to split the next leg south to Rio de Janeiro with a stop at either Buzios or Cabo Frio but in the event we had far too much wind for either. As Balette suggests we stayed well offshore (25 miles) of Cabo Sao Tome and inside the busy oil platform area. We rounded Cabo Frio in a strong north easterly wind and big seas with spectacular thunderstorms over the Cape that whacked us a few times with some impressive gusts - we were glad to get round into sheltered waters.

Whereupon the wind died completely within 15 miles of rounding the Cape, leaving us to motor through the night all the way up to Rio. I think we were lucky in one respect, though, that conditions were too rough off Cabo Frio for the fishing fleet to be out and about as we had heard that there are normally plenty of them and they can be a real trial.



Entrance to Rio

Approaching Rio early on a bright sunlit morning must rank highly on the list of dream arrivals. It really is a spectacular sight. As, sadly, is the rubbish in the alarmingly brown water in the Baía de Guanabara. But the backdrop of the Sugarloaf mountain and the giant statue of Christ the Redeemer are amazing.

As we wanted to spend a few days exploring the city, we checked in to the Marina da Glória adjacent to the central part of the city. This was an expensive option, but as we were to find later around Ilha Grande, by no means the most costly. We were found a good berth stern to with a lazy line forward right up next to the wall of the park that surrounds the marina. Unfortunately this was also in the leeward corner of the marina where the prevailing wind had gathered an extraordinary amount of rubbish – you wouldn't want to fall in.....



Marina da Gloria + Pao de Azucar,
Rio

There were no facilities to speak of in the Marina apart from one eye-wateringly expensive restaurant. Security here is a major issue, as the park outside is alive with vagrants and junkies by night and we were told in no uncertain terms that between 9 am and 6 pm we were NOT to leave the compound except inside a taxi. Stationed all the way around the marina were small huts for the watchmen, who were in some cases armed with Uzi's. We took this to imply that their recommendations should be taken seriously and so had no problems at all.

One thing that visiting yachts should be aware of is that the thunderstorms here can be really brutal, with ferocious and prolonged squalls from all around the compass. A yacht left unattended at anchor in (say) the very open anchorages off Urca or Enseada de Botafogo (Balette p. 145) while the crew were ashore could be at risk if there are thunderstorms around.

Once we had seen the sights it was time to head on to the 'sailing capital of Brazil' (as some claim), the Baía da Ilha Grande. Light winds are to be expected for most of the season around here, so 'motoring' capital might be a more appropriate description.

Scenically this is a beautiful area and the islands (over 250) themselves are lovely and in some cases very impressive with high peaks – more of which later.

The main island of Ilha Grande is sizeable, forested and without roads – cars are not allowed (as is the case elsewhere in the islands), so getting around the island is on foot or by boat. We anchored off the main town of Abraão (Balette p.165) to pick up some basic foodstuffs in the shops, dropping our hook off the Praia do Abraão Pequena, well away from any neighbouring boats. Just as well as during the night a terrific thunderstorm came through sending some spectacular katabatic gusts down off the hills and sending the boats in the anchorage reeling.

After such a welcome we were glad to move around to the lovely and very sheltered Saco De Ceu (p. 162 Wpt A3 & p.165) off the Pousada just inside the entrance (it's an excellent restaurant, too) in 10m in position 23°06.395S 44°12.104W. Once again our night was less tranquil than expected, as yet another thunderstorm crashed through. The following day we moved across the bay and found good holding and plenty of swinging room in 6m at 23°06.535S 44°12.820W.

Over the next few days we visited several lovely anchorages including Ilha de Macacos (p. 162 Wpt A4 & p.166) where it's necessary to eyeball your way in close enough as there are a few isolated rocks around. We anchored in 10m at 23°05.272S 44°14.300W. We also anchored overnight at Enseada De Sítio Forte (p.162 Wpt A5 & p.166) as we made our way to our eventual destination at Paraty. In the generally light winds of this area all of them were fine by day, but you'd need to be sure that there were no thunderstorms around before picking one for the night. Apart from Saco de Ceu they are all wide open to at least one direction.

As we had to return to the UK for work we had arranged to leave Pèlerin at the Marina Do Engenho at Paraty in the southwestern arm of the Baía. We picked this marina for a number of reasons. The first was because it is one of the few marinas that caters for foreign sailors, being owned by Brazil's most famous cruising sailor Amyr Klink. He and his fantastic assistant Luis have created a marina that is simple and geared up for yachts from other countries. This one of the only (if not THE only) marina we saw in Brazil where there were more sailing boats than motor boats and quite a number of them have foreign flags. Luis knows his way around the legal niceties that have to be carried out in order to leave a boat legally in Brazil while the owner is abroad and could not be more helpful. Facilities are simple but fine, and costs are (for Brazil) very modest. The only drawback is that it's quite a way out of town, but there are plenty of taxis and it's not too expensive to arrange a ride in.

Paraty is a well-preserved, ancient town and we thoroughly enjoyed our time there. Luis gave me a lift into Angra Dos Reis to sort out the formalities – without his help I'd have been lost. It also saved us having to anchor off Angra to sort which has a bad reputation for boardings. We left Pèlerin well and truly tied up while we were away and he and his helpers looked after her very well.

In general:

Pilot books:

We used Michel Balette's cruising guide and found it a little dated but generally very useful. We also had notes from Marcel Ceccon's guide which were also helpful but in some cases very out of date. Neither is what I would call a pilot book, though. We used C-Map charts, but these lacked detail, especially up the rivers. We carried Open CPN as a backup on a laptop.

Cost of berthing:

Brazil, at the time we visited was no longer a cheap place for foreigners. In the Ilha Grande area (for example) one large company (BR marinas) had pretty much got a hold on ownership of the marinas throughout the area and had driven the price of berthing up to stratospheric levels. OK for one night maybe, but to leave the boat for any length of time would just about break the bank. The surge of prosperity that Brazil had enjoyed in the years before our visit had also undoubtedly played a part in this, as we were told that motorboat ownership had gone through the roof in recent years. Judging by the packed marinas and huge dry sailing sheds stacked with boats this was indeed the truth. If you're planning to visit and need to leave your boat you must do your homework on availability of berths (much scarcer than you might think) and cost per night.

Spares and servicing:

The other factor is the need to be self-sufficient. There are very few chandlers at all, and those that have anything much for sailing vessels are rarer yet. Given the language difficulties, the prohibitive import tariffs and the challenge of dealing with Customs etc. any yacht planning to spend any time in Brazil must carry a more than adequate spares inventory. We met a French couple who had blown their engine up

during their Atlantic crossing and the cost of importing and installing the replacement engine was astonishing. Finding skilled labour is a matter of luck or having the good fortune to find someone who speaks English or knows the local tradesmen. Welding or engine repairs, basic stuff can usually be sorted out and we even managed to track down a rigger to repair our main halyard, but don't count on it – this is not a country geared up for yachts – yet.

Language:

If you're a reticent, shy sort you may struggle in Brazil, due to the language barrier. Brush up on your sign language and try to develop even some basic phrases and you'll get by, though. And Google Translate can come in handy.

Security:

Brazil had enjoyed significant economic growth in the period just before our visit and local people told us that the benefits were tangible. But it still remains a very poor country in many ways, with serious poverty in the *favelas* in the heart of the cities and in the rural areas. Both of us have travelled in poor areas around the world and take security matters seriously and took the usual precautions at all times.

We always asked around before visiting new places (after all, we had no personal knowledge) and received much good advice. We also received much paranoid advice which we sifted carefully and then used our own judgment upon. We were, for example, very careful in dockland areas that tended to be very run down and with no kind of Police presence. But we happily anchored in many remote spots, although we closed the boat up well at night.

Generally speaking, we felt very safe afloat at all times, especially away from the cities and the only time we felt in the least bit concerned was in the major cities (Salvador and Rio) where there are serious issues with crime. But, we didn't visit any of the northern cities – many of which have very bad reputations indeed, especially around the waterfront. Exposure to some of those places may have changed our views!

Bugs:

Nothing like as bad as we had expected, although there were plenty of 'biters' at night up the rivers. Dengue and Chikungunya bearing mosquitos (and now Zika) are around though, and current reports suggest that cases of all these diseases are increasing rapidly, so it is important not to take this less than seriously (I've had Dengue – you don't want to get it. And Chikungunya is far worse, apparently). So put on plenty of bug repellent in the evenings, at least, around all exposed skin (ankles etc.) . We also have a custom made mosquito net (made in Dakar) over our berth and it's a godsend that we'd thoroughly recommend and not just for comfort either.

Business:

When we were there (at least) a major bother was the almost total lack of internet connectivity. WiFi was rare, weak and unreliable, just about everywhere. Not that it mattered that much because we never got a response to any emails we sent to

marinas etc. with the exception of Pier Salvador and Marina do Engenho, despite using Google translate to convert our requests into Portuguese copied into the text. We were told blithely that no-one bothers with email, which was hard to believe but the evidence was hard to dispute. It must get better at some stage – hopefully by now.

Bureaucracy:

The bureaucracy is perhaps the thing that would put most people off visiting Brazil with a yacht. It is labyrinthine and seemingly capricious, depending on what state you're in and who you encounter on the day. We wasted whole days clearing in and out of each state, despite having prepared letters (checked by local Brazilian yacht people) for all of our needs. Offices of the various bureaus are all over the place, sometimes miles away in airports – never get in a taxi without you have the address of where you need to go and confirmation that the driver knows where it is. We got dropped off at tax offices (e.g.) that were for people to pay their domestic bills on two occasions, miles from where we needed to be down in the docks – bear in mind that the workings of the marine world are totally alien to most people in Brazil. And the fact that in some cases we knew far more about the needs of the various bureaus than their staff was alarming and painful at the same time. If Brazil wants to welcome more visiting yachts then they must address this issue and come up with a simpler, more universal requirement, otherwise this will remain a major disincentive to sail there.

But:

The people we found to be generally decent and kind hearted and we had no unpleasant experiences. It's a fascinating, beautiful, frustrating country and if you like getting away from the 'milk run' well worth considering a visit.

Colin Speedie

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