

# Cruising Guide for Colon, Panama

Welcome to the Caribbean side of the Panama Canal. This Guide is a collaborative effort by cruisers who visited Colon, Panama. The following notes are compiled from those published in the Seven Seas Cruising Association bulletin – July 2001- by s/v Fidelio of London (Anne and Ian Gatenby). Additions provided by s/v Blue Jacket (Geoff Schultz – May 2002); and s/v Limerence (Doug and Judy Decker – January 2002). There is a *Guide to Panama City* available on the website listed at the end of this document.

Colon is unattractive and is part of a large commercial harbor, however offers a useful center for cruisers and the Panama Canal Yacht Club (PCYC) is a good refuge. The place grows on you! The local people are friendly and helpful.

## **Anchoring**

The designated yacht anchorage at Colon, known as “The Flats,” is large and about a half a mile from the Panama Canal Yacht Club (PCYC). The breeze keeps the anchorage pleasant and largely bug free. Be sure to stay within the designated area. Many yachts have reported dragging, so beware! Views of ships transiting the Canal are great. The Panama Canal Yacht Club provides a dinghy dock.

## **Panama Canal Yacht Club**

Slips at the yacht club are limited and can be difficult to obtain. They are on a first serve basis with no reservations. Cash only. PCYC charges \$.45/foot/night or \$7/foot/month. PCYC is very secure. The office phone is 441-5882, bar 441-5883 and fax 441-7752. When off-loading line handlers from a Canal Transit, plan on anchoring rather than dropping them off at the Club.

At the PCYC dockside depths vary greatly. Watch out for submerged pilings. Many docks lack cleats and many of the dock rings that exist are of questionable reliability. Power is fairly reliable but connections are non-marine standard, typically being a 30 Amp. “standard” US plug. Water & power included in dockage fee. Number 1 and 2 diesel is available. Diesel is more expensive than what is available from the gas stations, but there’s a rule against using taxies to transport diesel. Water is available, but you need an extra long hose. Showers and laundry are available. There is internet access in the office.

The PCYC restaurant and air-conditioned bar has good quality food at reasonable prices. The Club will hold mail and receive faxes, and will send faxes to North America. Propane tanks can be left at the office for refilling.

There is a daily cruiser’s net at 0730 on VHF Channel 72, which at other times is used as a hailing channel. The Panama Connection Net on 8.107 kHz USB at 0830 is also useful.

## **Taxies:**

A taxi anywhere within Colon should be \$0.75 for the first person and an additional \$0.25 per person day or night. Sometimes when cruise ships are in the taxi drivers try to

charge a premium. Taxis are highly recommended, as crime is all too common. Most cruisers know someone who has been mugged walking the streets – day or night - near the PCYC. You can also hire the taxi drivers by the hour for about \$10/hr or less. Reputable drivers are located at the PCYC. Rudi and Carlos, Eddie and Ellington are recommended. They will not only act as taxi drivers, but for \$10 an hour they will help you to check in, find where to buy anything and act as interpreters.

### **Buses:**

The bus station is located next to the road that leads into the PCYC and container yard. Buses run to Panama City every 30 minutes on the half hour. You want to get onto one of the white buses that are air-conditioned and have TVs, not one of the colorful local buses. The trip takes about 1½ hours if you catch an express bus, otherwise it takes about 2 hours on a non-express bus.

### **International Telephone Calls:**

International telephone calls can readily be made from PCYC using prepaid telephone cards obtainable from the restaurant there - \$2.10 for the first minute to USA and \$1.10 for subsequent minutes. To reach AT&T dial 00-800-288-2872. You'll then have to dial the access number provided on your calling card. Sometimes when you're connected to this access number you won't be able to provide input to the prompts that will follow (i.e. Select 1 for English, 2 for Spanish...). If this is the case, or if you make it through the menus and the party that you're connected to can't hear you, don't enter anything when you get to the above prompt. The system will cycle through this 2 times and then you'll be connected to a voice recognition system, which will have you speak your answers to the prompts. For some reason this solves these problems. The country code for Panama is 507.

### **Provisioning and Grocery Stores:**

Most provisions can be obtained in Colon, and for other items, Panama City can be accessed for \$2.00 and two hours on an air-conditioned bus, \$10-15.00 and 20 minutes on a regular airline flight, or \$30.00 taxi ride. For bulk purchases, the **Colon Free Zone** has much to offer. Cruisers club together to share the delivery fee of beer, liquor and wine, from the Zone to the PCYC.

**Super 99** at the Colon 2000 shopping plaza has a large selection of US, international and local foods in a very modern, clean environment. Almost half of the store is dedicated to household items. They also have a good selection of alcohol and wine.

**El Reys:** There are multiple Reys located around the city. They vary in size and selection, but in general you can find just about anything that you want.

### **Restaurants**

**Grand Café** (cab drivers know it as the “Arab Restaurant”) on Panaderia Mediterranea. Has very good middle-eastern food in a very authentic setting. Highly recommended.

**Café Mediterranea** at Calle 11 & Ave. Bolivar. 433-3941. Large variety of good food, pleasant atmosphere & good service.

**Hotel Washington.** Has a good view of the harbor. Good for drinks but food is average.

**Restaurante Iguana** is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the Colon 2000 plaza. They clearly cater to the people coming off of the cruise ships with English language menus and food. The food was quite good although more pricey than most local restaurants.

**PCYC.** Good food at reasonable prices and great place to meet other cruisers.

**La Neuva Fortuna:** Calle 11 and Bolivar. Chinese. Above average ambiance.

**McDonald's:** For those of you needing a fix of Americana, this will fill your stomach and veins. The arches are clearly visible above the city.

**KFC and Pizza Hut** are located next to one another on Ave Central.

**Pizzeria Motch:** Calle 10 & un-named street between Ave Frute & Bolivar

**Galleon de Oro:** Calle 10 & Roosevelt. 625-8405. For dinner. Great food. Ask for Tapi.

#### **Electronic Parts and Repair:**

**Electronica Willy:** Ave Central between Calle 12 & 13, 443-2845

Others around town

**Electronica Eduardo Janif :** San Martin near Saluista & Panama City/Colon Road. 442-1762 Cell 630-9348 Charged \$40 to diagnose SSB transceiver, and \$40 to fix.

#### **Rigging**

James Laing – a New Zealander living in Panama City, 268-1147 or cell 681-6509. He charges \$25 per hour. There are other contractors available through Pedro Miguel Boat Club.

#### **Marine Mechanic**

Andy Anderson cell 639-4556, home 449-3231– Speaks excellent English, charges \$25.00 per hour. Able to do a variety of projects.

#### **Stainless/Aluminum Welding & Repair:**

**Donald King:** See Rudy or Carlos taxi Drivers. Address is hard to find. . . along Ninth Street and down an alley after the junction with Avenue Melendez. Speaks excellent English.

**S/v Genesis,** Ali and Gerta, at Jose Pobre Marina. English speaking German welder, charges \$30 per hour.

#### **Hardware Stores:**

In general if you can bring a sample of what you're looking for, you'll have a much better chance of finding it. If a store doesn't have it, they'll probably be able to tell you where to get it. Ask them to write down the name of the store & location. Hint: Stainless steel is "acero inoxidable" in Spanish.

**Casa Leon:** Calle 13 off Ave Bolivar

**Ferroteria Disquenta:** Calle 13 & Ave Central. See Jamie about info about anything in Colon (Speaks English)

**Ferroteria Colon:** Calle 11 & Av Gueorevo. Has lots of fishing equipment

**Ferroteria Asuncion:** Calle 13 & Bolivar (Just past bus station). 441-6040

**Materials Garcia:** (Just past Texaco) Lots of supplies & some speak English.

**Sewing:**

**Aematen El Sincerso:** Ave Bolivar between Calle 7 & 8

**Alternator Diodes:**

**Ser, Inc:** Calle 15 ½ & Ave Santa Isabel. Lots of auto electronic parts

**Sail makers & Flags**

**Manuel Pretelt:** Calle 8 ½ & Ave Santa Isabela, 4412389

**Women's Haircuts (English Speaking)**

**Little Things Boutique:** Calle 10 & Ave Bolivar & Balboa. 441-8255

**Shoe Repair:**

**Zapateria:** Ave Bolivar – 1 block from bus station.

*This guide has been provided for the benefit of cruisers by s/v Blue Jacket, Geoff Schultz, and s/v Fidelio of London, Ian and Anne Gatenby. Their notes were compiled by Doug and Judy Decker s/v Limerence, to assist those cruisers who stop in this port. To download this or our other cruising guides, please visit: <[www.deckersailing.com](http://www.deckersailing.com)>. The Deckers can be reached through email at: [cruise2000@deckersailing.com](mailto:cruise2000@deckersailing.com). Please make updates and additions to this guide as necessary to help others in your wake have an enjoyable stay.*

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