



After a lively three day crossing, we were ready for a rest. With another four days to go before reaching our destination we decided to make a brief stop at a small motu that looked like it would be calm and safe. It was only about 2 miles long and according to the chart, the anchorage just off the village on the west side looked good, especially with the strong east winds we were experiencing. The water was a little murky from several rivers flowing off the mainland, twenty miles away, but when we set the anchor it dug in and felt like we'd found a nice, soft, sand bottom. There were no other sailboats and only a few local fishing boats in the bay.

We'd only planned to spend the night but it was still early and so calm we pumped up the dingy and rowed to shore. There was a cement quay, convenient for landing and we were soon tied up and heading towards the small village. We spied a friendly local who waved at us and walked our way. "Hello. My name is Joe. Welcome to Butata."

How surprising to meet someone who could speak such perfect English on this remote motu. After introducing ourselves, Joe invited us to join him and we all three strolled down the beach to the Butata Beach Bar. With cold drinks in hand, we sat on the small wooden patio built out over the water enjoying a beautiful view of the bay with the Raconteur lying safely at anchor. We soon learned that Joe's real name was Hiatamenjo but he uses Joe to make it easier for us. He'd been born and raised on the small motu and picked up his excellent English while in the army and serving in peacekeeping troops around the world.

"That's a very beautiful boat you have." Joe smiled. "But maybe not such a good place to anchor." He could see the surprised look on our faces and went on to explain. "There are some pieces of an old wreck lying just under the surface of the sandy bottom. A few boats have had trouble pulling their anchors but you'll probably be okay." After sharing a few drinks and a simple meal of rice and fish we said our goodbyes, rowed back out and broke down the dingy. The water was smooth as glass and it wasn't long before we had settled in for a good nights sleep.

During the night, sure enough, we were awakened a few times by the sound of our anchor chain grinding on something down below. Not much we could do in the dark, but planning to leave early the next day, we'd deal with it in the morning.

At first light, we started up the old Yanmar. Jim went forward to bring up the anchor while I manned the tiller. The chain came right up just as expected. What we hadn't expected, was to find

the anchor missing! We couldn't believe it but there it was, or I mean there it *wasn't*. After quickly deploying our small Danforth, Jim put on his fins and mask and dove down to see if he could spot the Bruce. No luck, the water was too murky.

Not wanting to take off without the anchor, we delayed our departure. Pumping up the dingy we went back into the village to see if we could find some scuba gear or a diver. Unfortunately, we found neither, but Joe came out to the boat with us to see what he could do. We could see he felt bad that we'd come to this problem as a result of anchoring off his village. He dove and dove, exhausting himself before he finally had to give up.

Sitting on the boat, catching his breath Joe had a thought. "My Uncle Zeta, who's kind of a pack rat, might have an old anchor kicking around." It sounded like a long shot but sure enough after digging through piles of odds and ends he pulled out a 35 lb CQR! Because of our new friendship with Joe, he sold it to us for only \$50. That seemed way too generous. We felt like we were taking advantage, but Zeta wouldn't take a penny more, so we threw in a couple of bottles of rum.

As we sailed away, waving from the deck of the Raconteur, we vowed to each other to come back and visit Joe and Zeta one day. Thankfully this would be one of our sailing stories with a happy ending.

Waving goodbye from the beach, Joe turned and smiled at his uncle. "Works like a charm, every time!" Zeta took a long swig of rum before replying "Let's just hope the next boat can use a 44lb Bruce."

Aboard their 31' Southern Cross, the Spanish Stroll, Jim and Barb logged over 37,000 miles and visited 22 countries during their 5 year circumnavigation. They sailed back into their home port, Redondo Beach, on February 14, 2009.

Visit their website at www.spanishstroll.com

