

Port Vila

Wednesday July 28

In to town to pay the quarantine fee and have a look around. This place has grown a lot since I was here 25 years ago. The market is impressive. Yachting World services have a fuel dock and next door is the Waterfront Bar and Café...in front are YWs stern too med moor docks @ 2000 vatu / night.

Town is bustling. Well served with all kinds of shops; lots of traffic in the narrow streets. It's the 30th anniversary of independence this weekend and there's fireworks, marching bands, and generally a lot of noise all during the day and evening.

Thursday July 29

Brewing beer. At 0830 on Ch 68 there's a cruisers net. I ask about charts – there's a place called KYS, south of YW who are super yacht providers that have them. Moses told me yesterday that Dept of Lands in town have them too.

A French Navy ship "La Glorieuse" arrives and anchors out in the bay. A few hours later 2 Australian Navy ships #82, 87 – one called "Yarra" – pull in. The French sailors are being ferried a shore in high powered zodiacs.



We scoot in to town. Dept of Lands printer isn't working so they can't print them out – at least I have the numbers now – maybe I can get them on Monday. Walked past YW in search of KYS – couldn't find them, but did find a fabulous au bon marche supermarket – bought some French wine and marmalade – need to go back and explore it properly ! Came back to YW to ask about KYS...we passed the road to it on the way to the supermarket...but there's no sign...never mind..It will have to be Saturday morning.

Walked through town to the Vanuatu Cruising Yacht Club....had a beer in the bar overlooking the harbour..seems like a hangout for expats....and a few French sailors.

Friday July 30 – Vanuatu Anniversary Day

Making Bread



A freighter arrives and one of the Australian warships has to move to let him in.

We've dressed the boat with signal flags as we have a few others, as our contribution to the festivities. A few yachts do a sail past and four engage in an informal race round the navy ships.

After Breakfast and some chores, we head for the waterfront – previously made contact with yacht "Vivaci" – there's a Dutch girl, Carolien, crewing on it who was interested to come with me to Fiji, but we never caught up....we arrange to meet later at the Nambawan café...we do the internet thing but Vivaci never turn up.

Off for a walk to see what's happening with the celebrations. There's a big park on a hill above town, with a soundstage and hundreds of people there. The park is ringed with food stalls. The people are brightly dressed and mostly carrying Vanuatu flags. They seem to be proud to be celebrating – mostly in family groups. There's no police presence, no drunkenness, no violence...all very friendly and "Halo!" as we pass – why can't our society behave like this ?

Walk back through town...back to the boat. Chrissy gets a polishing urge !...she's polishing all the stainless steel rails and stanchions...I've seen this happen before on other people's boats ! Meanwhile I've cooked up some bacon bits and garlic croutons to add to a tuna salad I'm going to make for dinner.

Heard on the VHF La Glorieuse talking to Yarra, arranging a get together for 0815 tomorrow.

Saturday July 31

Moses is running around with the quarantine, immigration and customs guys depositing them on incoming yachts with yellow flags. VHF comes on with "this is the Australian warship Yarra, we have lost a 6m grey zodiac rib. If anyone has seen it, would they please...." ...what a laugh !....Its spotted and Moses zooms over to a nearby beach and picks it up for them !

Listening to Ch 68, the weather should be clearing by Monday – its been light rain on and off for the last few days and blowy outside.

Ashore, try to find KYS again...found em...but they're closed. Au bon marche survives another raid. Back to YW to ask about customs and immigration coming to YW this afternoon – I need to get a cruising permit and a visa extension. Its not happening, so it will have to wait until Monday. The YW girl will call me on Ch16 on Monday to let me know. Diesel is available at the fuel dock, pull up, fill up, pay up..they take Visa, so that's another rob for Monday.

Back to the boat to have baguette and tomatoes for lunch...yum !

Chrissy shouts dinner at the Waterfront Café...we both have steak and it is superb !

Sunday August 1

Its been raining most of the night and still raining this morning. The anniversary celebrations include music from the soundstage that goes on til 0600 in the morning ! Its not that loud inside the boat, but its still there.

The rain starts to ease...we go ashore to the café...but get soaked on the way !

Bit of a dull day all round.

Monday August 2

Sun is shining, water is flat calm..whew ! about time...Unfortunately for Chrissy, just in time for her to leave. Anyway should signal good weather for the trip north.

There's been a P&O cruise ship Pacific Dawn, in here for a few days. It left and was replaced by another one, Pacific Jewel. The holiday makers ashore stick out like sore thumbs and seem to spend all their time in the clothing and duty free shops !



Bottled beer @ 0800. Into town to do the cruising permit thing – sitting outside YW with the customs man discussing my permit application and an American bowls up and says “can I ask a question?” and without waiting for a reply, asks the customs man is he customs or immigration. He has customs on his epaulettes, Office of Inland revenue and customs on his shirt sleeve and his ID badge around his neck, so its pretty clear he’s from immigration !...idiot ...the yank then proceeds to ask this guy where his passport is and how does he get it back and.... I’m getting p....d off with this so I butt in and tell the yank that I’m dealing with something here, you can wait your turn...sorry he says..then a Brit turns up and does exactly the same thing ! the arrogance and rudeness of these guys is amazing.

Anyway, that all done, we head for town to immigration and see the yank and the brit in front of us on the way...I say to Chrissy, lets get past these guys so we get there first. Up the stairs to immigration and in the office talking to the nice woman behind the counter...and they do it again...the yank comes in behind me and shouts “I want my passport back” ...then the brit follows, elbowing Chrissy out of the way.....lets get out of here !

We a to the fishing shop we espied earlier and buy some new lures and line with beefy traces and swivels – maybe it will work this time !

Back to the café, Chrissy shouts lunch and Carolien turns up..she recognised Chrissy from her picture in the newsletter ! – I arrange to pick up Carolien to have a look at Diva when I go for diesel later on.

Time to go...we walk out to the street to find a taxi to take Chrissy to the airport – sad goodbyes...

Now I’m on my own again in the South Seas, ready to sally forth to the north tomorrow.

Motor over to Vivaci who is anchored in only 4m depth ! Dinghy over, meet Harry – he’s going to the marina to see if someone can fix his autopilot – Carolien comes to Diva for a look. She hasn’t much experience but has done Opuva-Suva-Lautoka-Port Vila on Vivaci now, so knows the ropes and what its like to be at sea. Nice young woman (30s?) been travelling the world for a year.

The fuel dock becomes vacant, so we go over and take on 50 litres of diesel, then back to anchor behind Vivaci. Harry has family coming in a week or so, Carolien isn't sure what to do – stay in Vila until I come back and then crew with me or fly home....anyway I'll be back in Vila about August 23, so we will keep in contact...and see what happens.

Tuesday August 3

Finishing this off.....need to go to the café to send it, then lands dept to see if they've managed to print off my chart. Then off north.....next letter will come from Luganville on the island of Espiritu Santo.

All the best

Alan