



RCC PILOTAGE FOUNDATION

www.rccpf.org.uk

[Home](#)>[Passage Planning Guides](#)>[Pacific](#)>[Route P2](#)

Published by the RCC Pilotage Foundation, whose [Terms and Conditions of Use](#) apply
© RCC Pilotage Foundation 2008

Route p2

CHILE TO TAHITI

David Mitchell

Edited by Jane Russell.

David Mitchell cruised the Tuamotos in 2001 and from Chile to Tahiti in 2007. His boat is a Bowman 48DS 'Shandon' which he sails mostly singlehanded. The Pacific Ocean Map also provides links to 'The Pacific Crossing Guide' and the other RCC Pilotage Foundation publications and web guides available to help plan a voyage in the Pacific Ocean.

For text version, see below

For interactive Google Map version,



click on pin. To return to text version, press 'back' button on your browser.

CONTRIBUTORS

The Pilotage Foundation is extremely grateful to David Mitchell for providing this information which is now available for the benefit of others;

Yachts heading north in Chile have two alternatives: to head north up the coast to explore anywhere up to Baja California and then join the classic route across the Pacific, or to head NW ultimately for Australia or New Zealand. This guide deals with the latter. The route offers: Isla Robinson Crusoe, Easter Island, Pitcairn, the Gambiers and finally the Australes or Tuamotus to Tahiti.

When to leave. The Society Islands and Tuamotus suffer from cyclones, occasionally. In June 1998, a major *el niño* year, a small cyclone hit Raiatea knocking over some yachts in the boatyards. Yachts leaving Puerto Montt in February 2007 had no cyclones and enjoyed a calm sixteen days anchored around Easter Island. I left on 8 May 2007.

Many yachts leave from Puerto Montt, some from Valdivia. Those leaving from Puerto Montt will probably spend time in an anchorage, either between Punta Tique and Isla Abtaco or in the channel on the north side of Isla Calbuco, to wait for a favourable tide through Canal Chabulco (see RCC Chile Guide for details). The north-going Humboldt **current** runs off shore for about 100M so expect a gentle northerly push of around ½ knot until you cross it and the temperature rises. **Isla Robinson Crusoe** (33°S 079°W) is a pleasant stop and an excellent place to clear out of Chile, as just one person can do it. However, be ready to supply five waypoints for your next passage. If

planning a stop, do not clear out when leaving the mainland as you may be required to check in again when arriving

Anchorage. The island may look bleak and unfriendly, but it has a fun, Mediterranean feel, there are good walks and a few restaurants. The only anchorage is in Bahia Cumberland. The bay is open to the north and the ground drops away steeply so it is possible for the yacht to be blown out of the bay by a williwaw from the SW. However, the *armada* have three red buoys that may be used, with permission, and there are two smallish buoys (good for 25 tons), the last in the SE corner of the bay, that belong to a mainland yacht club and may be available. The only other mooring is in the SW corner of the island, in Bahia Terra Blanca. This is a great big metal buoy belonging to the *armada*. In settled conditions, it is possible to tie up to it for lunch and to watch the sea colony. It is very exposed and would be horrible in any other conditions.

Transport. There are two weekly flights from Santiago, for spares or a crew change. There is a fortnightly visit by the freighter, which takes two days, looked pretty ropey and a passenger ticket sounded expensive. A report on www.lonelyplanet.com in July 2007 indicated that Navarino, who ran the service, has stopped the service. The *armada* runs a service about three times in the summer linked to the school terms, which is cheaper (www.armada.cl).

Repairs. The chance of repairing anything major is slim. Yachts in trouble would head for Valdivia or Vina del Mar (Valparaiso).

Supplies. There is water but do not expect fuel or supplies.

Place in a storm/repairs. Valdivia is the nearest. There is a yacht club, the oldest in Chile, with two marinas. The clubhouse marina has a railway but no other haul out facility. Better place may be the Higuierillas Yacht Club at Vina del Mar (32° 55' 41" S 071° 32' 32" W), just north of Valparaiso. It is mainly a racing club and social club but has a marina with haul out facilities, although I am uncertain as to the maximum weight. www.higuerillas.cl with English translation.

Local contact. Wolfgang Kirsten runs the Patagonian Cruisers net, so you may have already met him. He lives with Gabby and three yellow Labradors about 45 minutes east of Valdivia. He is unfailingly helpful and a useful contact for specialist advice, providing he is not sailing.

The route to the Gambiers relies on the SE Trades. Avoid the 'variables', which can exist south of 20°S (in May, the Pacific Routing chart, clearly shows them below 20°S. (e.g. if you drop down to investigate **Henderson Island** 24°S 148°W, you will hit the variables). Also, if visiting **Easter Island** (27°S 109°W), you must be prepared for 'variable' conditions, including headwinds and calms. Quite simply, your experience of Easter Island may vary from eight days motoring around the island trying, unsuccessfully, to find shelter so they could go ashore to sixteen days in settled weather. Supplies, including fuel, are limited. Henderson is a curious sail-by, as it was here that three whalers off the *Essex* (the whaler sunk by the sperm whale that became the basis for Moby Dick) came ashore rather than stay in the boats. There is nowhere to anchor – and not much to see.

There is no mooring buoy at **Pitcairn**. Anchoring is chancy. Call Dave on Ch 16 VHF for advice. No supplies.

When approaching the **Gambiers Islands** (23°S 135°W) watch out for **Portland Bank** (11m, 23° 39S 134° 21W) and especially **Timo Atoll** (23° 20S 134° 28W), if dropping down from further north. In June 2007, the **current** accelerated to around 1½ knots, approaching south of the bank and through the SE pass. There are three passes into the islands: NW, SW and SE. There is around 9m

in the SE pass which is risky in a high swell. The others are deeper and safer in an easterly swell. The channel in the final approach to the anchorage on the east side of Mangareva Island is well-buoyed and lit – assuming all the buoys are there, which was not the case in 2007. The most recent CMap chart is incredibly accurate, allowing a night approach.

There are a variety of **anchorages** amongst the islands, but after rainfall, the run-off discolours the water in the lagoon making coral-spotting impossible.

Air Tahiti has three flights a week from Papeete in the summer, two in the winter. There is a ferry service to Pitcairn. Supplies are simple.

If travelling via the Tuamotus, the former French atomic testing atoll, Mururoa remains firmly off limits. It is guarded and guard boats patrol the sea. The **Duke of Cumberland Islands** are not shown on the Cmap93 charts and are on the direct route to **Tahiti**.

Three islands form the **Australs**. The eastern most, **Raivavae** (23°S 147°W) has the best anchorage and the approach is well marked with leading marks and posts. The chart shows depths around 5m and I would not approach in a northerly swell. The anchorage is open from NNW to SW and, as there are unseen bommies, if a northerly gale threatens, move rather than risk becoming snagged and so unable to leave. Air Tahiti has two flights a week. Supplies are minimal and fuel non-existent.

Tubai (23° 21'S 149° 29'W) has one anchorage on the north coast but offers no shelter except from the south.

The route to **Tahiti** is free of dangers.

Alternatively, head towards Tahiti via the Tuamotus.

21/1/2009