



Venezuela's Los Roques

Paradise—exponentially

by Louise Wollman, s/v *Lulu*

I am immoderate. Given to overkill. Extra sauce. Thicker steak. One more glass of wine. Rack of lamb for two, all for me.

Thus, my answer to “What’s your favorite anchorage?” is an entire archipelago: Venezuela’s Los Roques.

Why? Because I can have it all there, virtually on demand. Utter seclusion. One or two other boats. Or manic socializing, Venezuelan-style.

Spanning some 15 by 25 miles, geologically speaking, Los Roques seems to have poked out of the sea not very long ago. Forty-two islands, most unnamed and uninhabited, and some 300 other land masses, little more than low-lying banks and reefs—sweeping strips of pale white beach surrounded by large submerged expanses of themselves. Such shallow-to-very-deep underwater reefs fragment the water into a swatch card of blues, from the palest of aquamarines to the most vibrant of cobalts.

The CQR grabs easily, and anchorages—air-cooled by the trade winds—are virtually endless.

We cocoon in Caya de Agua, the prototypical scythe of beach,

walking until it melts away. In the middle of We-Know-Not-Where, the long ribbons and squat bumps of white beach around us are miles away, creating a contented feeling of isolation. Perfect staring, thinking, being conditions—plus only a dinghy ride away, snorkeling, bird watching and dolphin chasing.

Six friendly boats convene off Crasquis’ mile-long strip of beach. Someone finds an outpost restaurant. At sunset, beaded-fringe curtains welcome us inside, where we celebrate a birthday with owner-caught fish and grilled prawns.

But for the occasional fisherman camp, the main island—Gran Roque—is home to 1,500 Los Roques residents, to a tiny airport, a few cafés, two dive shops and the occasional buyable local bread. Along its soft-sand streets several cafés and some imaginatively painted, casual-elegant tourist *posadas* encircle inviting shaded courtyards.

On weekends, water taxis sweep moneyed Venezuelans to nearby Francisquis with its frothy surf and gay umbrellas lining a low-slung beach.

Anchoring mistakes do occur. We drop the hook in empty

Sarquis, a turquoise cove with a marshmallow beach. Mellifluous breaking waves create a soothing surf symphony as we await the night stars, plentiful and unattended by land light of any kind.

Instead, a 120-foot motor yacht chugs in, dragging ancillary watercraft: an 85-horsepower ski boat and a 20-foot skiff for longer-range outings. On deck, a hyper-enthusiastic family of, say, 20.

By morning, sister ships with similar guest lists arrive, boasting summer camps’ worth of water toys. Soon, parachute gliders soar overhead and waterborne skiers skim *our* water. Daddies amusing the kiddies blast about in jet skis, banana rafts and gargantuan rubber tires.

Oops. Forgot it is the weekend before Carnival, creating a six-day vacation opportunity for Venezuelans—revelers at heart, who savor downtime, big-time.

No sweat. Still smiling. With 341 other possibilities, I’m like most Venezuelan women: my cups runneth over. ≈

Do you have a favorite anchorage or harbor? Share it with BWS readers by sending a short description and a photograph to alice@bwsailing.com.