

**SOM 21:
More Chile**

Thanks to the incompetence of FedEx-Chile nine weeks were passing by until we had our nautical charts in hands. You could write a whole book about this drama. Meanwhile we lost so much time that we would have to rush trough Polynesia to be in save waters again before the hurricane saeson starts. So we decided to say good-bye to the polynesian islands for this year and to stuck to the coast of southamerica. A brief look at the chilean atlas of charts an we picked out *Coquimbo* as our next stop. The perfectly round shaped bay looks too



hospitable to skip it. We had a good sailing apart from the fact that the winds could have been a little stronger, the toilet valve were leaking (finally to be fixed in one second) and that we got a visit from a little finch. Sadly he was too tired and died during the night so that we had to lead him to the finchs-heaven - with a traditional sailors ceremony of course. After arriving in the night – the german and european authorities should really take the perfect lighting in this bay as an example – we were curious about the first impressions of the next day. *Coquimbo* and *La Herradura* at the part of the bay where we dropped the anchor in front of the little yacht club, are full of mediterranean flair and friendly people (despite some pickpockets in closeby *La Serena*). Instead of the 2-3 days that we planned to stay here finally we stayed 4 weeks... Shortly after our arrival we became friends with Christian, the *contraestre* of the club. He really is an allrounder. Apart of his job he works as a sailing teacher, he is an ace in windsurfing – at times he was chilean champion -, did underwater hunting (a sport we never heard about before) which however almost cost his life, sings jazz, welds arts skulptures and also he had put on an act. Sometimes you see people and feel very modest about your own abilities.... *Coquimbo* enchants with a dry charme. On one hand you see that this town is not much more than a



fishermens village. But until nowadays it does not deny it's roots and it's leaders worked carefully and succesfully on it's development. Meanwhile *Coquimbo* became a notable center of cultural activities and may outstrip the closeby, much bigger and more fashionable *La Serena*. Who knows? Obviously the last mayor wanted to develope the city as a center for religious dialogs. On a conspicuous hill above the city rises almost threatening the concrete "cross of the third milenium" with it's almost 100 m height into the sky. With the blessing of the pope the former *alcalde* managed to conjure it up extremely fast and on time to the turn of the milenium – despite everybodys doubts. Actually it should be covered with colored tiles but obviously money run out. But he did not rest and came up with another project. With the help of the Marroccan king he built an impressing mosk at a prominent place in town on another hill, according to the islamic traditions. This time money did not run out and you now can admire all the artistical skills and craftsmanship of the Marroccan craftsmen. Julian, the british professor who follows the course of Darwin, is really shocked. First about the seemingly contrary demonstration of the

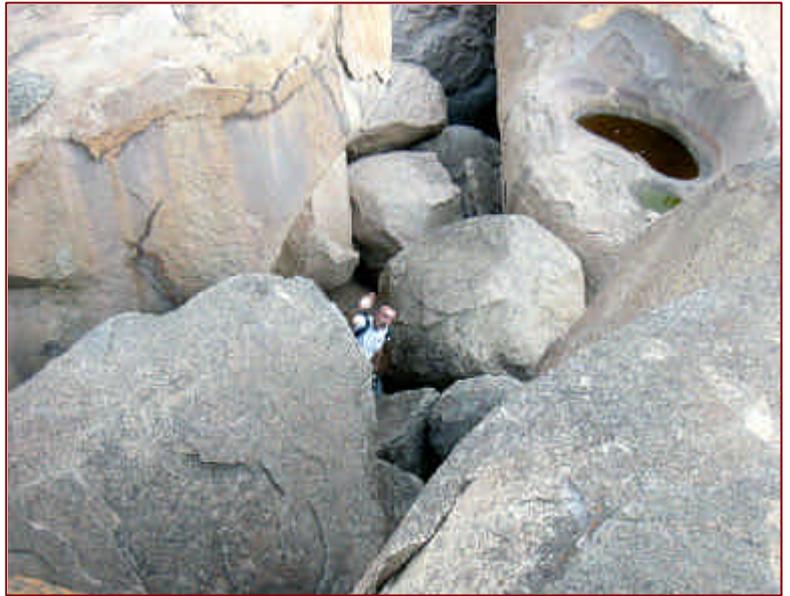
power of Catholicism and Islam, and later – after we had explained some things – about the stupidity to invite the “cultural enemy” in their own house. But we have let us been convinced that this is a really laudable and apparently successful try to encourage the dialog of the cultures and to fight against the stupid theory of a coming war of the civilizations.

But besides of this outstanding architecture there is more to discover. *Coquimbo* enchants with hidden plazas, a really charming British quarter, English teahouses and the so-called zigzags which lead in zigzag from downtown to the higher parts of the town. Above all the sun is shining and the people seem to be happy too. That *Coquimbo* also is a center of fishing activities cannot be overlooked. Especially in *La Herradura* you will find popular fishrestaurants.

Now we are anchoring here in this nice bay having time we take our chance and visit the surroundings. First destination is the *Fray Jorge National Park*. Already when we arrive we were surprisingly friendly greeted by some foxes. We bring our stuff in the rented cabin and shortly after we are strolling around. Too bad that the main attractions of the park cannot be seen entirely. Main aim of the park is the protection of the last Pacific forests which live on fog. But accessible and visible are the mainly dry steppes. We are disappointed that we only can walk around a few hundred meters in the foggy wood. No thrilling walks in misty dark woods. Okay... But adventurous will turn out our night in the cabin. We met some household surprises. The „gas heater”, a movable fan heater run by gas, does not work. The gas bottle is empty. We tell the rangers. Okay, they will bring another one. Yes, the night will be very cold here, you really will need a heating, we learn by the way. Time goes by and nobody shows up. Meanwhile we try the gas bottle of the gas lamp, later the one which is for the cooker. But the heater does not work. It seems to be a technical problem of the bi-metal.



We sum up: no warm water (for a shower?), no heating, no light because since 5 month there is no electricity because of a broken generator. And you should not use the gas lamp because of a leaking sealing. We are happy that we brought our own kerosine lamps and a headlamp. After we have cooked and had our dinner Anke becomes restless. The promised gas bottle did no come along and there is no light in the rangers house any more. Who knows Anke, knows also that in certain circumstances she can be furious. So she goes over to the other house and I, Martin, am waiting peacefully what will happen. Some time I don't hear anything. But then strong thumps. Then footsteps. The door opens and Anke enters the cabin. She is without any harms and announces that they promised us warmth. Shortly after it knocks on the door and two rangers are showing up, they too without any visible wounds (?). The bring a brand new heater plus full gas bottle, which they took out of a locked storage. This room seemed to be totally barricaded so that they had to break the lock. That was the reason for the thumps. However, we have a heater now. We hope. They also brought a second gas bottle for the lamp, but the sealing still does not work. We love our lifes and so we do without gas light.



A short step outside let us see a starlit sky. A bright milkyway, Jupiter with two clearly (with the binocular) visible moons, stars in blue, red and yellow colors, a stars mist, may be a galaxy, a shooting star. In a few days we may know more about all that. But all this nice things mean, it is a pretty cold night. You know, this year is one of the coldest in Chile since years. However, we hit the jackpot. Not everybody can say that he survives one of the coldest winter ever in chile, right? Last year people sat in front of their houses with only t-shirts on enjoying the evening. Poor them. You guessed it, the gas heater quits his job again two hours later, we were just tired laying in bed. We notice that because of the smell of gas. Okay, let's get up again. The gas bottle is empty. Fortunately we have the other one of the gas lamp which does not work. After a quick change it is warm again. A short look outdoors, it does not seem to be very cold. Hmmh. A few hours later the heater turns off again. It doesn't bother us much any more.

After we still are alive for having breakfast Martin starts the time bomb again. On this occasion he notices a sticker with some warnings and learns that we did everything wrong. You should not use this heater – in no circumstance – in bathrooms and dorms and never in rooms under 15 m³. And it is not supposed to be used longer than 2 hours at a time. Well, but what for is it then?? We quickly drop the idea to stay here another night.





The next days are going by with more excursions. We discover the *Valle del Encanto* with its huge boulders, watch places where they found old bones of dinosaurs and where we could admire pre-columbian petroglyphs. Some of them are only visible if you are there at the right moment, e.g. with the right sunlight and if you look from the right direction. We visit a few observatories too. In the Chilean Andes there are ideal conditions: dry air, only few air pollution and few disturbing lights. That's the reason because all big sky observation projects are meeting here. We only visit the touristic observatories where we can look through the oculars by ourselves. From one of these lookout hills – still in daylight – we are observing down in a valley that preparations are taking place for a horse race. Because we had enough time there was nothing to hesitate. We drove down quick because here they have offered us the chance to watch a real Chilean horse race, a *Carrera a la Chilena*. They race goes over a track of about 250 or 300 meters, only two horses at a time. There are no specific rules. The one who reaches the finish line first wins. How you are riding and what you are wearing is up to you. Everything is allowed, if with jacket or only with t-shirt, with riding boots or simply in socks.

By the way we are interested in the local way of mining and put our noses in little *pirques*. These are mines which are run by one man only. In Germany the fashionable expression now would be "Ich-AG" (means: „one-man- company“). But no employee and no self-employed man in Germany would work under these risky conditions the people here are taking into account. They are prospecting for copper, silver and gold. Often these mines are not more than a hole in the earth which you enter with the help of a selfmade ladder. Here we hesitate and do without gold and any other heavy substances and turn our



head to more volatile ones but easier to get: liquid gold. It is not far to the famous *Valle del Elqui* where they create a special type of liquid from the Muskateller grapes: the *Pisco*. Here we are visiting the last distillery which is only in families hand and cannot withstand – no surprise – the fragrance of this stuff. Liquid weight to trim the boat goes into the trunk of our rental car.



Turned up back in *Coquimbo* we enjoy our life with new friends. As luck would have it we learn to know Uta Stang, an artist who makes etching, and her partner Hans Black, a oceans biologist who are living in an old fishermen's quarter in *Coquimbo*. Looks that we get along with each other, so it took place what has to. First we enjoy the artistic work and afterwards - in flowing progress - an excellent *Pisco*. Now we really and urgently need another stuff which is richer in substance. Hans recommends a small restaurant at the sea front and there we explore intensive the local fauna

of the sea, especially the simpler species such as snails and mussels. Only for the final and may be as an alibi we accept a representative of the vertebrates (fish) and probably had another *Pisco* as a digestive. But there are no more exact memories....

Well, this weeks were are not eventless. We could tell much more but this would be too much in this short report. More pictures etc. – you know where to find (www.justdoit.de.ki).

Take care, love
Que les vayan muy bien, besos y abrazos

Martin + Anke



The pictures in it's order:

The steep hills in *Coquimbo* are climbed by using zigzags – Guanacos preferably are enjoying the fruits of a parasite sitting on cacti – In the steppe at *Fray Jorge* – The *Valle del Elcanto* provides hiking and climbing between huge boulders with integrated swimming pool – Martin, unsuccessful competitor throwing the dinosaur – Observatory *Colowarra* – *Carrera a la Chilena* – The way it goes in the one-man-company (a *pirques* descent into the underground) – *Machas*, delicious burrowing feet of a sea snail

The SOM-introduction-text from 27.10.2007:

Hello friends at home or travelling, queridos amigos, after a long time you hear from us, sorry but we were so busy that the translation took it's time. In this SOM you will still find us in Chile though we are already in Peru since a month or so.... We found a very good place to stay in Callao (port of Lima) and took the chance to visit Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca (will be in SOM 23...). In the moment Martin is in Germany visiting his dad and friends (some of them we met on our travel and now they are back home) and I, Anke, am in Callao taking care of the boat, visiting this big city and enjoying the delicious cebiche.

We hope everything is fine with you and we will hear from you again.

*Take care
Cuidate*

Anke and Martin