



Sailing in Patagonia

Note:

The following remarks are result of our individual experience. According to the yacht, its size and its characteristics, age and number of the crew, equipment, weather conditions and season the experience of other crews will be different to ours. But we hope that our reports will give some helpful device.

How to anchor or tie up your boat

Most of the anchorages are more or less tiny bays, so-called *caletas*, and often not more than little coves. Normally you will set the (bow-) anchor and sneak with the stern to the shore as close as possible. As close as possible really means as close as possible. The distance stern – shore may be 20 m, but it can be 10 m if the depths is sufficient (what usually is the case).

Advantages: best shelter against the prevailing winds, easy handling of the shorelines because of the short distances, and low risk that the boat will drift away during the manouvre. Look for a place where you can position the stern to the expected wind. The shorelines should get the main load.

In *caletas* and coves mostly we had no or weak winds though it was blowing strongly outside. Only two times during our travels we had to struggle with winds and currents which caused some troubles while fixing the shorelines.

The local fishermen make it different. They first drop the stern anchor and place the bow towards the wind. For this reason they look for exposed rocky points (noses). There mostly you will have deep water until the shore. Then they close up to the rocks until the bow touches them. One man steps or climbs from the bow to the rocks (!) and fixes the one shoreline to a rock or a tree. They allways prepare the line to be slipped easily without stepping ashore when leaving. Then they go backwards 5 to 10 m, all is done.

Advantage: Easy manouvre, place to swing to the sides because of the exposed position of the point.

Disadvantage: the place can be exposed to the wind.

At many places you will find prepared fishermen´s lines which you can use to tie up. But you have to accept that this are their lines. So if they show up and there exits only one prepared line you should accept that they go alongside to your boat. Or you change your place. Normally they never will insist that you have to go because they are used to raft up several boats together. Allways keep in mind, in Patagonia the fishermen are very poor people and most of them have to struggle for their existence.

Nearly all anchorages which allow free swinging using one anchor offer less shelter than these small *caletas* where you have to use shorelines.

Shorelines

Two shorelines á 100 m are enough. Normally you will use only a part of their length because you will keep a short distance to the shore.

Don´t buy too thick lines. We used 16 mm ropes. Our boat is 39 feet one and the weight is roundabout 11 tons. 14 mm ropes would have been sufficient and would have saved some space.

We recommend floating lines (Polypropylen) though they are more expensive. It is easier to pull them with the dinghi and there is no danger to catch them with your prop.



There is no real need to furl the shorelines on some kind of furling drums. A huge bag ("mash bag") prepared with some wire to keep it open does a good job. The drum has the advantage that you can pull the line easily if you are rowing your dinghi to the shore. Using a bag you will throw the necessary line into the dinghi before leaving your boat and so that it will be pulled out of the dinghi whilst rowing. So think about how to keep all lines clear before you start your manouvre (Shoreline, may be an anchorline of the dinghi, line to tie up the dinghi).

Leaving the anchorage you often will pull in the line hand by hand and throw it in the cockpit, specially if the conditions are bad. Furl them on the drums or stow them in the bags later.

Chains

In our opinion chains to protect the shorelines are no need. We had two chains of 8 mm with 6 m length each, but except of Caleta Horno (far away on the Atlantic coast) we never used them. Normally the lines, fixed at trees or rocks, have no big strain and do not move. If there should be a problem with your shoreline and some scratchy rock it will be somewhere between fixing point and boat, i.e. due to the tide. Then you have to think about how to find an improvisation (i.e. with a fender). We never had to do this.

Need of fuel

Travelling from the South to the North you have to calculate an extraordinary fuelconsumption, specially with smaller, less powerfull boats. Our results: from Puerto Williams to Puerto Natales the engine used 20 % Diesel more per running hour than usual, but our average progress per running hour sank to 50 % of the usual average. Or we can say: instead of 3,4 l/h we used 4,0 l/h and instead of 6 kn/h we reached 3 kn/h over ground. These numbers are the result of the following reasons: wind and currents are going against you and you have to calculate that you have to stop your trip and return some miles to a sheltered place. So you go some distances three times! The time for anchoring and shoreline manouvres cause some engine running hours too. From Puerto Natales to Golfo de Penas our average improved to 4,5 kn/h and after crossing Bahia Anna Pink it improved again. Our engine consumed from Puerto Williams to Puerto Natales some 500 liters (1 US-gallon = 3,78 l, 1 Imperial gallon = 4,54 l).

Who is travelling from the North to the South walks on the sunny side of life.

Dinghi

A solid dinghi is the better choice. Rocks and mussels will not harm it. Who fears for his inflatable should buy fishermens waders (cheap to get in Ushuaia). So you can jump into the water and keep the dinghi drifting with a long line.

Fishermens waders

Friends of us bought such kind of waders to avoid damage to their inflatable caused by the sharp mussels and rocks. The tough guy always jumped to the (shallow) water before landing ashore. So we bought one too. But our Banana-Boot is imune against all sharp things so we never had the need to use it. Except when fishing (haha).

A better help is a thick neopren suit (may be a dry suit works too). If you have to free the propeller from some kelp you will thank god for this stuff.



Wheather

It is nervewrecking on the route from South to North. The wind in the channels mostly blows from the north. If you have time you can or should wait for good wheather conditions. Often it is a good choice to travel at night or in the second half of the night. Often the winds are calming down then. But we always had bad luck. Leaving early in the night always meant early return to the place of our start. ☹

The williwaws – called rachas by the Chilean wheather channels – are not to feel in most of the coves and caletas. Open anchorages where you can swing free are more open to rachas.

Kelp

It is a smaller problem than we expected. Have a good lookout for drifting kelp during your trip. Most of our anchorages had only little kelp. We used our prepared sickle mounted to on a long stick about 5 times. The kelp we had to struggle with mostly slides down the chain or was destroyed by the pressure of the chain on the bow roll and felt back to the water. But kelp is an important mark for shoals.

Travelling to the South (Atlantic):

All guides recommend the route closer to the shore, but I (Martin) think the best route from Mar del Plata to the South is by touching the Malvinas/Falklands. Why? Nearly all prevailing wind directions are useable for the trip to Malvinas. SE-winds normally don't show up (in the "good" months). If they do heave too for some hours and continue when they end. They normally don't last long periods. If you can't keep the course for some time, be patient and point to the wind as good (and comfortable) as you can. The wind direction will change and you can continue.

From the Falkland Islands to Strait of LeMaire it is easier than it seems. Wait for the right wind and then go directly. The distance is not too big and the winds are changing often. You will find your wheather-window. If you have no patience, go W with southerly winds and then enter the route which you would have used starting from Caleta Horno.

In 2006 all yachts which sailed via Falkland made an uncomplicated, fast travel.

Spare parts, fuel, lubrications etc. (sailing from the Atlantic side)

There is no need to stock up with everything in huge quantities leaving Buenos Aires. Lubrifications, fuel, filters e.g. you can get in Mar del Plata and in Ushuaia the things are cheaper (low tax zone). Jerry cans you will find in Ushuaia too. Standard industrial parts (ball bearings, filter ...) are to get in Ushuaia easily. And think about, this is the last place to eat (and buy packed) the wonderful argentine meat!

The range and quality of foods in Ushuaia is excellent. In Mar del Plata you find excellent canned fish and seafood.

Stock up with boxed wine in Ushuaia. You can change fish and seafood (centollas) for the wine. (Some friends have reported that the fishermen are strongly interested in literatur too. So look if you can miss some of your literatur. Not the one with a lot of words, good pictures are favorite.☺)

In Chile excellent Diesel fuel!