

mit you to stay for a few days. Our meeting went like this (in rough Spanish);

Melissa; 'Hola, si queremos a pasar cinco dias aqui' **Official;** ' Buenas dias, solo tres dias es posible' **Melissa;** 'Quatro Dias?' **Official;** 'OK'

After two nights at the delightful anchorage of Puerto Real we wandered down to tranquil Balandra Bay. At dusk, with a few friends we scaled the sand dunes to Playa Gozman on the East side of Testigo Grande. A recent visit by another yacht mentioned the possibility of seeing either turtles laying eggs or young ones on the way to the water. To our amazement we found an endangered Leatherback turtle laying eggs. What a monster she was at some 2 metres long and, at a guess, over 200 kilos. Benjamin was mesmerized by all the activity and had to be dragged away as night approached.

For us, the only reason to visit Isla de Margarita was to clear into Venezuela and provision at the excellent supermarkets. The island is typical of development in the Caribbean when there is a background of relative poverty. Some malls and resorts are of a worldclass standard while next door are garbage dumps and slums with the associated threat of criminal activity. Isle Coche is

Picture perfect young shells.

a windsurfers and kitesurfers paradise – a delightful long beach on the west coast and normally boisterous trade winds (which generally fade during the summer months). On the southern end in the laid back town of San Pedro we had an excellent and cheap meal on the waterfront at El Bohio, both times we visited we were the only customers. One can understand why the pirogue's all have large outboard engines and go at full throttle – gasoline, at only a few cents a gallon, gives no reason to conserve.

With our friends on Tyger Tyger a mile or so behind we enjoyed a quiet overnight motor sail to La Blanquilla of some 80 miles



just a couple of other yachts, excellent diving from the anchorage and hot blazing beaches to beach comb for hours. Several large schools of sardines attracted numerous pelicans, terns

careen their ships (Laguna el Carenero on the south side of the island). We contentedly wandered along the north coast with good anchorages at Playa Caldera, Punta Ranchos, Los

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to the north. On the west coast to the North of Playa Yaque is an tranquil anchorage where we managed to happily spend two weeks. As we typically found amongst the islands there were

and boobies all diving within metres of us. Lurking below, as usual, were the ferocious looking barracuda and tarpons along with the multitude of bright reef fish. The only drawback is the large areas of dead coral, probably due to high water temperatures and subsequent bleaching.

An easy days sail to Tortuga was highlighted by small tuna who thought they were dolphins – this is the first time we have seen them swim several metres from the bow, perhaps on the look out for flying fish. Numerous Bonaparte's gulls with their distinctive black heads seemed to think there was good fishing also, and this along with the tuna made us disappointed to not even record a strike on the lures. Tortuga in the early days was a common hideout for pirates and a good place to

Palanuinos and Las Tortuguillas, missing out on Cayo Herradura where the anchorage was inundated with sport fishing boats from the mainland. Our favourite anchorage was on the far southern end of the western island of Las Tortuguillas – excellent diving with a completely protected lagoon and mangrove bay to spend days exploring. The highlight for Benjamin was the arrival of a 'day tripper' hell-

Sand bar between West Cay and Cayo de Agua, Los Rocques.



Preparing the evening meal with the day catch!

