

Living on the Panama Canal

Episodes from 2020 to 2022

Jürgen Schlenzig

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This book was created from blog posts
by the author for German-speaking readers,
translated with DeepL.

www.besserpanama.com

Amador Causeway - the magnet of the capital city

If you fly to Panama City, Panama, you may have this impressive view right before turning to the final approach, but from a much lower altitude. Here are some details:



Source: Google Earth

What we see here in the center of the picture is the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal. It begins at the lower edge of the picture, then follows the bridge of the Americas, part of the Panamericana; immediately behind it in the direction of the upper left are the port facilities of Balboa and Rodman. Shortly thereafter, the ships enter the old Miraflores lock on the right, while on the left, one can see the huge water-saving basins of the new Cocoli locks.

In the broadest sense, the bridge takes you from North to South America, and the canal connects the Pacific to the Atlantic. What a geographically and strategically significant point.

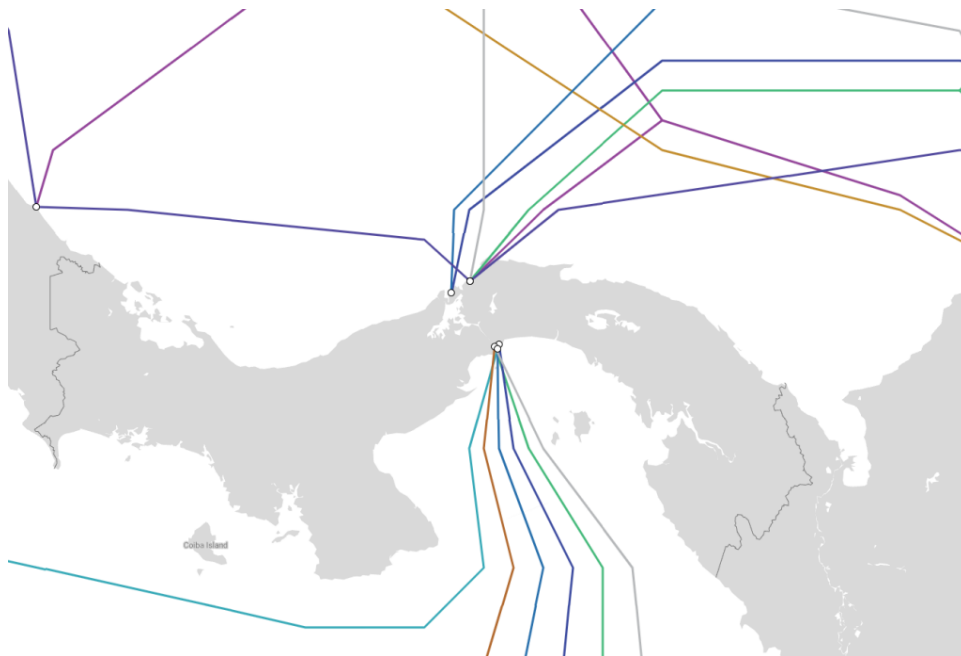
The strategic importance is underpinned by the airfields visible on both sides of the canal, Albrook and Howard, originally built to protect the canal, now in civilian use.

Howard Airbase on the western side of the canal became Panama Pacifico (MPPA), the core of a special economic zone.

On the east bank of the canal, Albrook AFB (Air Force Base) became Aeropuerto Marcos A Gelabert (MPMG), where most domestic and commercial air traffic is concentrated, as well as maintenance facilities and flight schools.

Those flying into the most-used Runway 01 will soar directly and at low altitude over the canal entrance, America's Bridge, container port and past the historic Canal Administration Building. It occasionally happens, while overflying the bridge, that a vessel passes underneath it simultaneously.

In the 21st century, there is another strategic component: underwater cables that cross both oceans and enable global Internet communication. Headends are located on both sides of the channel.



Source: submarinecablemap.com

The Albrook Mall, just to the right of the airfield, houses more than 700 stores, a hotel, many restaurants, snack bars, and entertainment facilities.

The upper right part of the picture shows the urban core of Panama City, with its impressive skyline, the historic old town, and the two artificial islands of Ocean Reef.

Things get historic again when we move from the entrance to the canal to the lower edge of the picture. There we find the small islands of Naos, Perico and Flamenco. They are connected to each other and the mainland by the Amador Causeway. A small part of the enormous excavated material from the construction of the canal was piled up there more than 100 years ago as a breakwater to protect the entrance to the canal. Not an easy task, with up to 6 meters of tidal range.



Today it is a 3 km long four-lane road, with mini traffic circles and pavements, as well as wide bike and walking paths along the canal entrance and overlooking the city. Countless gastronomic establishments, bikes and stand-up paddle rentals make the Amador a magnet for visitors to the capital and its guests, especially on weekends, of course.

Many yachts of all price ranges are anchored here, and ferries leave for Isla Taboga and the islands of the Las Perlas archipelago.

You can also live on these islands, though there are only a few quarters there. This one is on Isla Naos, and two others are on Isla Perico. Living in the city and yet not in the city, so to speak.



Source: unknown

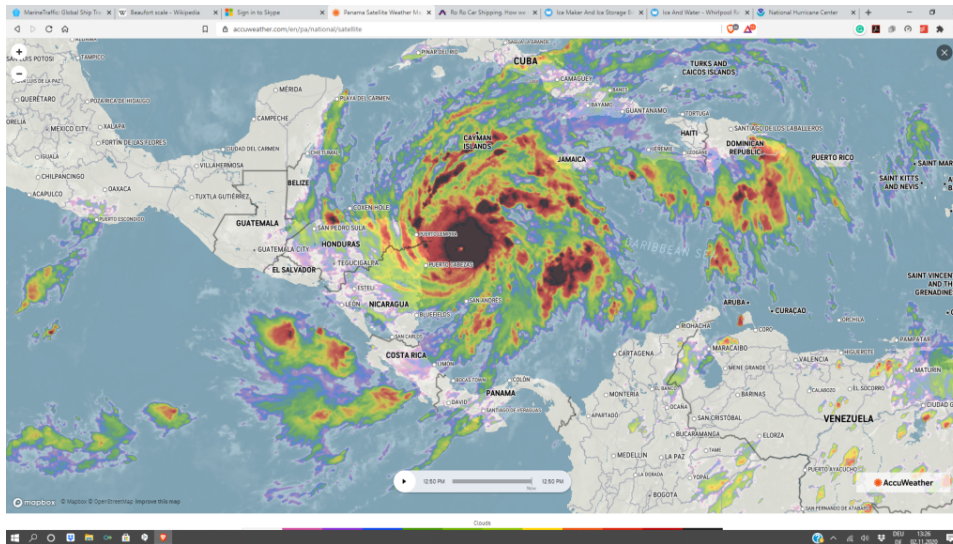
At the entrance to the Amador is the Biodiversity Museum, designed by Frank Gehry, and the architecturally rather unimaginative but huge new convention center.

As of tomorrow, October 12, 2020, Panama Tocumen, as the Hub of the Americas, will be open again for regular international air traffic; tourists are expected, although initially still with some inconveniences.

I guess you have to be a politician by profession to open a country to tourists but keep its beaches closed as the main attractions.

New start at the Panama Canal

Hurricane Eta is raging off the coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, sending its stormy and rainy foothills to Panama. And I am writing this post at my new workplace.



Whereby it is still the same desk and the same computer, only 120 km eastward, moved directly to the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal. It's no coincidence that I published a post about the Amador Causeway here a few days ago when the move there was already a done deal. Our beloved beach apartment remains fully furnished and awaiting its long-term tenants.

How can anyone be so crazy as to move from the beach to the big city? Legitimate question. After 12 years, a desire for a change of scenery arose in connection with a project, a longing for something new, and the default was: we want to live in the city, but not in the city.

That's exactly what we did. We live on one of the Amador islands, right at the entrance to the canal with 180° ocean views and less than 20 minutes by car from the city center, Avenida Balboa.

Day after day, approximately 40 ships of all shapes and sizes pass directly in front of our balcony on their way in or out of the Panama

Canal. The ferry channel is a few hundred meters away, the Bridge of the Americas 5 km, and the Pacific locks 10 km.



On the computer, the live map from marinetraffic.com runs in the background all day long so as not to miss the passage of the Post- or New Panamax class vessels.

I like to define a significant change in life circumstances as *new life*, and that's exactly what's beginning. Exciting.

Panama today - November 23, 2020

What a day. The foothills of the two Caribbean hurricanes have cleared, the sun is beaming from the blue sky, and only over the mountains are cauliflower clouds slowly building up, still white, later turning into black thunderclouds and providing cooling towards evening - the tropical thermostat.

The channel has already seen a few Panamax and post-Panamax transits today. It's quiet now because the transit direction is always reversed around noon. From the Pacific Locks up to Lake Gatun, it goes through the Culebra Cut, the narrowest part of the transit, and vessels can only fit through there in one direction. In the morning, the traffic, therefore, goes from the Pacific to the Caribbean; in the afternoon it is reversed.

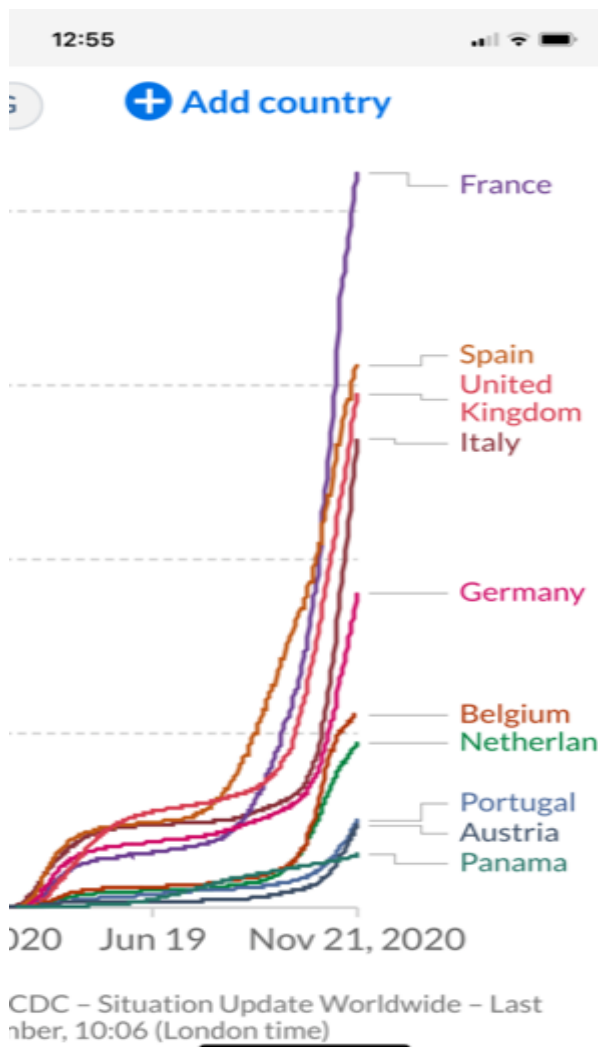
Virtually on our doorstep, the Grace is anchored, an 81-meter yacht registered in Grand Cayman, waiting for passage. She was built in Germany in 2014, and the cost of such a gem is more than 100 million USD. For those who want to know more, [here](#).



Source: superyachttimes.com

On marinetraffic.com I can already see what tonnage will pass by here this afternoon.

Another topic: During our regular walks on the Amador Causeway we meet more and more people who wear their masks in their hands instead of in their faces. Athletes anyway, but also car drivers increasingly dare to do so, and we have registered that the police hardly notice it anymore. A current survey shows that Panama is now better off than the European model boys.



Source: CDC

From Jamaica to Tahiti ...

the *Seatrade Blue* is underway and is scheduled to arrive in this South Seas paradise on January 18.



What kind of ship is this?

SEATRADE BLUE (IMO: 9756107) is a container ship built in 2017 (4 years ago) and sailing under the flag of Liberia. It has a deadweight capacity of 1580 TEU and its current draft is reported at 10.8 meters. Its length overall (LOA) is 185 meters and its width is 30 meters.

"Budapest Express" from Busan, Korea ...

has completed the Pacific crossing, now entering the Panama Canal.



What kind of ship is this?

BUDAPEST EXPRESS (IMO: 9450430) is a container ship built in 2010 (11 years ago) and sails under German flag. It can carry 8600 TEU and its current draft is given as 13.4 meters. Her length overall (LOA) is 335.47 meters and her breadth is 42.94 meters.

Wikipedia: Hapag-Lloyd deployed 151 containerships at the end of 2013, of which 57 were owned, 7 leased and 87 chartered. The total capacity of the ships was 729,000 TEU.

"Marvel Crane" en route to Japan ...

where she is scheduled to arrive on January 27, after 4 weeks of travel. She picked up her ice-cold cargo (-162°C) in Lake Charles on the Louisiana Gulf Coast.



What kind of ship is it?

MARVEL CRANE (IMO: 9770438) is an LNG carrier built in 2019 (2 years ago) and sailing under the flag of Singapore. Its deadweight tonnage is 97794 t DWT and its current draft is given as 11.5 meters. Her length overall (LOA) is 297.5 meters and her breadth is 49 meters.

"Sapphira" on the way to Galveston

One of the internships I did during my studies was at the Warnow shipyard in Warnemünde. We were employed there as unskilled workers during the construction of a 10,000-ton freighter. This had nothing to do with the subject we were studying, but it was a welcome change. The barge seemed huge to us at the time.

The Sapphira, a crude oil tanker, is not 10,000 tons GRT, but 149,876 tons DWT, which can certainly be roughly compared to the gross tons used at the time. What a leap!



I don't see in marinetraffic.com where the ship is coming from, but where it is going: Galveston, Texas, on the Gulf of Mexico. An hour's drive south of Houston, the center of the energy industry in the U.S., or rather the world.

Galveston is a popular seaside resort for big city dwellers that was largely destroyed by a hurricane and 17 ft high tidal surge in 1900.

Since then, the Seawall has been designed to protect the city, precisely 17 ft high.

Beach houses stand mostly on impressively tall, sturdy stilts to withstand even a century flood and it was there, in Galveston, that I first enjoyed bacon-wrapped King Prawn.

Texas, that's what it is.



Source: [homeaway.com](https://www.homeaway.com)



Sourcee:

tomorrowsfisch.com.au

On the way from Houston to Galveston, you pass the [Johnson Space Center](#), famous for the call for help from the Apollo capsule.

"Houston, we have a problem."

Driving west past Houston from Galveston, one passes Texas City and an endless array of petroleum-processing industry facilities.



Source:

petroglobalnews.com

And that brings us back to the Sapphira, whose cargo will land at one of the Texas refineries on January 22, processed into gasoline, diesel, fertilizer, plastics, etc.

The 1913 earthquake - the first test for the Panama Canal

Author: Monica Guardia, La Estrella de Panama, translated with www.DeepL.com/translator

The success of the canal built by the Americans seemed assured, but many wondered what would happen if Panama fell victim to an earthquake.

It began in October 1913, and after almost ten years of construction of the Panama Canal, the success of the work seemed assured. The thousands of workers under the Isthmian Canal Commission's technical team had managed to remove more than 200 million cubic meters of earth and rock, build dams and fills and the world's largest artificial lake, lay the Panama Railroad, and reroute the course of the Chagres River. A total of more than \$300 million was invested, and construction was now in its final stages, with the line scheduled to open the following year.



The professionals of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had succeeded, but there was only one but ... Colonel George Goethals, the project's chief engineer, asserted that no earthquake would be enough to seriously affect the canal. Goethals argued that the knowledge of Army engineers and advances in the manufacture of reinforced concrete provided great strength.

Prehistory

In 1901, after the Universal Isthmian Canal Company, founded by Viscount Ferdinand de Lesseps, abandoned the project to build the canal through the Isthmus of Panama after 12 years, the Americans wanted to take over the great challenge from the French.

Theodore Roosevelt's administration had worked closely with the Congressional legislature and determined that the waterway should be built through Nicaragua. This route, some experts said, was superior to the Panamanian route because it required less work. The two great lakes, Nicaragua and Managua, would serve as water sources and save millions of dollars.

The decision seemed final when French engineer Philip Bunau Varilla intervened in June 1902. Many will remember the story of how he convinced U.S. congressmen by distributing stamps issued by the Nicaraguan government. The stamps, printed in 1900, depicted the erupting Momotombo volcano and caused great astonishment among the congressmen who had to decide on the future of the canal, especially since in the days before the Mont Pelee volcano had erupted on the island of Martinique, destroying the city of Saint Pierre and killing more than 25,000 people. The Momotombo volcano, located near the shore of Lake Managua and erupting continuously since 1883, was very close to the route on which the canal was to be built. The entire country of Nicaragua, Philip Bunau Varilla told the Americans, was in an unbroken line of no less than 25 active volcanoes from Costa Rica to Guatemala. Given the danger posed by Nicaragua, Bunau Varilla had convinced the Americans that Panama was a safer country, showing as proof photographs of the old Panama Tower, the Flat Arch, and other masonry buildings from colonial times that had withstood the centuries.



Despite all the reasoning of Bunau Varilla, the reality was that Panama could also be shaken by an earthquake. Historical records recorded strong movements in 1882 - calculated at 7.2 on the Richter scale - and 1621 - 6.9 on the same scale - according to engineer PW. Chamberlain, of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Panama posed more risk to the safety of the canal than Nicaragua. "The absence of volcanic craters in the vicinity of the Panama route," Chamberlain's 1902 report said, "is a constant source of danger to a canal built on the Panamanian route." In support of his theory, Chamberlain noted, "In 1759 there was no active volcano in Portugal, and yet in that year a severe earthquake completely destroyed the city of Lisbon. On the island of Jamaica there was no volcano, and yet in 1680 an earthquake shook Port Royal near Kingston. On the east coast of the United States, there is no volcano, and yet Charleston, South Carolina, was recently hit by an earthquake. These places are known to have been affected by the absence of those safety valves of nature, volcanic craters."

Other experts

Chamberlain's theory, however, did not meet with the approval of all experts, particularly Professor Angelo Heilprin, a defender of the Panamanian route, who argued that only "a certain type of earthquake" could be mitigated by the immediate presence of

volcanoes. Chapter VII of the Isthmian Commission on the Canal report of November 30, 1911, acknowledged the fact that Panama could fall victim to an earthquake: "It is possible and even probable that some parts of the canal, such as the lock gates, might be affected by an earthquake. This circumstance may be exacerbated by the accidental collision of ships with the gates. It is necessary to take this problem into account and request copies of the lock gates to be available in case of need. Otherwise, it is possible that a crack will remain open and water will drain from the channel. If it remains open, the canal could be destroyed. This is a possibility, but should not be considered a threat. If we were guided by a fearful imagination, no major engineering work would be undertaken anywhere in the world," the report concluded, "It is the opinion of this commission that the threat of an earthquake exists and is essentially the same for the Nicaraguan and Panamanian routes, and in neither case is it sufficient to prevent the construction of the canal."

The Earthquake

On October 2, 1913, at about 11:15 p.m., the residents of Panama City sensed that something was wrong. The earth shook, in a slow and oscillating motion that gradually grew stronger.

"The houses moved, the clocks stopped and the objects placed on the furniture fell to the ground. In panic, women ran to get their children," reported *La Estrella de Panamá* in its daily edition of October 3 of that year. The quake, later calculated to have a magnitude of 6.9 on the Richter scale, lasted between 20 and 25 seconds with brief interruptions. An aftershock occurred almost an hour later and was felt throughout the country, although with greater intensity in Los Santos province, where the churches of Macaracas and Las Tablas collapsed and many buildings were destroyed. In Penonome, a woman died of fright. All eyes were on the canal works. Had they suffered any damage?

"There was no damage whatsoever to the canal," the chief engineer reported to his superiors, and this was confirmed by President Belisario Porras, who went to see the condition of the works that same day.

It was later reported that some concrete buildings in the city and the canal zone had suffered cracks, but no serious damage had occurred

to the canal. "No earthquake of the magnitude historically reported on the continent would have caused damage to the canal," Goethals said. Many more quakes occurred during the month of October. On Oct. 23, the strongest aftershock occurred. The next day, it was the turn of canal dredger No. 85 to make a complete test run through all the locks. It was the first time this had been done. The test was a complete success.

Life at buoy 8 - March 5, 2021

It's Friday afternoon, just before 5 p.m., and a spacious yacht passes us by. It is the NAIA registered in Great Britain. She is 74 m long and 13 m wide, built in 2011.



Canal blocked - not in Panama

A gust of wind, they say, is the cause of a momentous accident that occurred in the Suez Canal on March 23. The Ever Given, one of the world's largest container ships on its way from Asia to Rotterdam has broken down in the middle of the canal, blocking all passage.

This means that one of the most important shipping routes, between Asia and Europe, is paralyzed for days or even weeks and the 15-day longer route around Cape Horn has to be taken.



With a length of 400 meters, the damaged ship is considerably longer than the Berlin TV tower is high (368 meters) and about as wide as a soccer field, according to FIFA rules. Unimaginable, such a block in this picture, next to the Berlin TV tower.



Source: berlin.de

More than 150 ships are already stuck in traffic as a result of the blockade and another 150 are already on their way there, a massive problem for the supply of producers with Asian suppliers.

According to Reuters, 10 tankers are also affected, with a total of 13,000,000 barrels of crude oil on board.

The Suez Canal is about twice as long as the Panama Canal and is continuous, with no locks.

At 400 meters long, the Ever Given is one of the longest ships in the Suez Canal, and with a width of 59 meters, it even exceeds the Suezmax definition. For comparison, the NewPanamax class goes up to 366 meters or 49 meters.

In front of our loggia today, a Canadian submarine passed out of the canal into the Pacific Ocean and dived shortly after. Really.

Life at Buoy 8 - March 30, 2021 (Buccoo Reef)

In 2019, an express ferry for Trinidad & Tobago was keel laid at the Incat shipyard in Hobart, Tasmania. Almost 2 years later, the 100-meter monster is now on the long journey to its home port.



Quelle:

Incat Tasmania

From Hobart we went to Brisbane, on to Papeete, French Polynesia ([video](#)), and from there in only 10 days to the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal. Here she has been anchored since March 27, just 3 km from our quarters. Now the passage through the canal is coming up and then it is not far to the destination.

What a tour.



cnc3.co.tt

Buccoo Reef is the largest and most popular coral reef in Trinidad & Tobago, hence the ship's name.

Arriving in Port-of-Spain, she will operate daily as an express ferry between Port-of-Spain in Trinidad and Scarborough in Tobago. She will take about 2.5 hours to cover this 170 km distance, and can carry up to 1,000 passengers in three lounges and up to 239 passenger cars, as well as heavy vehicles, of course.

I think our next destination is already defined.

Island world

Whenever I set foot on one of the islands in the Las Perlas archipelago, coming from the mainland, an inner calm sets in that I don't know in everyday life. Immediately, a different atmosphere surrounds you, you virtually dive into another world. Sounds exaggerated? It is not.

A few days ago it was that time again and instead of going to Isla Contadora, the closest island to the capital and located in the north of the archipelago, we went to the south, 120 km away instead of only 60 km.

It was a good day: the sky was delicately veiled so that the sun did not beat down on us with full force. The sea lived up to its name, the Silent Ocean. And our boat was running consistently at 27.5 knots, which is 50 km/h.



Passing Isla Pedro Gonzalez with the Pearl Island Resort and a Ritz Carlton Reserve under construction, passing Isla San Jose we reached the largest island of the archipelago, the south of Isla del Rey. From here to the equator is only a little more than 900 km. 90 km further south the continental shelf drops from 100 meters to 3,000 meters in water depth within only 25 km.

The more than two-hour walk over the gentle waves of the Pacific leaves one almost reverent. And if I had to describe my ideas of paradise, I wouldn't come up with much more than the current state: gliding over the tropical sea, enjoying the long-familiar cuisine with good-humored friends, and talking about real life. Being there, where things are going.

Our boat lands on the west side of the peninsula, less than 2 km wide here, in a natural bay.



Source:

Frank Jänisch

On the right edge of the bay, a currently dry riverbed emerges from the thicket, old gnarled trees everywhere.



Coconuts are taken from the tree (not this one), cracked open, and drunk, just like Robinson Crusoe. After we have explored the area in detail, we go to the other side, to the east coast. We meet the fishermen of the settlement La Esmeralda, a short chat and adios.

After leaving at 7 am that morning, we arrive back at the Marina Isla Flamenco in the capital around 5pm, just 5 minutes from home. What a day.

"Green" sailing

For two days, the Game Changer has been anchored a few hundred meters in front of us. Looks like a luxury yacht but is classified as a supply ship. Seaworthy, and spacious, with a speedboat on deck, an inflatable boat below deck, and of course a helicopter. Can be booked seasonally from €450,000 for up to 11 guests, and there is then a crew of 15. Not bad.



But the term supply ship somehow still kept me busy until yesterday. Then I read something about Jeff Bezos' new superyacht, powered only by sails, without an engine. The reporter could hardly contain his awe at how "climate-conscious" one of the richest men in the world will be.

Then he qualified the praise a bit and pointed out that such super sailing yachts regularly include a supply ship that sails alongside and has the indispensable motorized toys on board: Helicopter, dive boat, speed boat, jet ski, and whatever else goes with it. And the fuel for it.

Saving the world, yes, but please, without sacrificing anything.

Even such a billionaire's life is not easy if you want to follow the climate cult on the one hand but still have fun. Just as is the case with the economic leaders in Germany. They know that the so-called climate policy is hara-kiri for their business and society, but they don't dare to contradict the left-green zeitgeist.

Elon Musk is also such an example. In his case, however, the entire business concept is based on climate alarmism and indulgence. A few weeks ago, he announced that he also takes Bitcoin in payment for his cars. Think that didn't work so well because those are rather held due to the current price development.

So Elon is changing course: the energy consumption in Bitcoin mining is bad for the climate, which is why he is withdrawing the offer to pay in BTC for the time being. And in his inimitable business acumen, he combines it with the plan to use Tesla Solar to convert Bitcoin mining to clean energy.

I recently commented on the climate impact of crypto mining [here](#). Soon I will also trace the topic of climate change & CO2 back to the root. It will be exciting.

From Panama to Germany (July 2021)

Everything changed not least the travel regulations in Corona times.

We left on 5. 7. with KLM from Panama City to Frankfurt. Conditions were negative PCR test maximum 72 hours before or antigen test which must be only 48 hours old.

We opted for the PCR spit test, so without the hassle of picking our noses. Appointments booked online and completed one hour earlier via drive-through as the only customers.

This test was required at check-in in Panama City, then not again.

For entry into Germany, it needs a Digital Entry Registration. This works fine.

We did this entry registration only when the test results were also available and submitted this together. During our stay in Amsterdam, we received a message from the responsible health office informing us that our "quarantine" was over.

Entry into Amsterdam and Frankfurt is completely uncomplicated, without any demand. In retrospect, one can say that the entry registration was superfluous. Anyone arriving in Frankfurt from the Schengen area has no control to pass.

After the summer of 2020, this was our second trip under Corona conditions. If one is thoroughly informed and acts accordingly, everything is relatively simple.

Avoiding quarantine seemed problematic to me at first. Test for flight, arrival, quarantine start, and then free-test - that's how it looked. It wasn't until I read through the conditions that it became apparent that, with careful timing, the test required for check-in could still be used to avoid any quarantine.

The KLM service on board a Boeing 787 was better than the previous year; they have learned to deal with the issue. Mask obligation during

the flight one relieves oneself by always having a drink or something to nibble on ready, pulling the blanket over one's head when sleeping.

Back to Panama (July 2021)

Our almost three weeks of family visit are over, and on 22.7. We booked the flight home with KLM from Frankfurt via Amsterdam to Panama. We are curious about what procedures are announced this time:

KLM first sends us to the website of the Dutch Ministry of Health. There we learn that for the transit from Germany via Amsterdam, no tests or similar should be required.

For entry into Panama, online registration and PCR (72 hours) or antigen test (48 hours) is required. A PCR spit test does not seem to exist in Germany. Therefore, the antigen test at the airport in Amsterdam is probably the best choice.

Shortly before departure, we learn that the Free State of Thuringia runs a test center at Erfurt's main train station, where you can take the antigen test for free and wait for the result immediately.

The young woman in the container asks whether the swab should be taken in the throat or the nose. "Throat, please," and that goes quite quickly. When I ask whether a PCR spit test could also be done, she looks at me questioningly. She has never heard of this before and is amazed that it can even be done in Panama while driving by.

Not taking the test in Amsterdam turns out to be a good idea because it is required at the KLM check-in in Frankfurt. And that gives us more time to lounge in the lounge at Schiphol and buy cheese.

Online registration for Panama is also done ... and not required. The negative test is sufficient to enter unmolested. Everything goes like clockwork; the suitcase is on the belt with the first pieces of luggage and our friend Maria is in front of the terminal for pickup.

The long haul in the 787 Dreamliner was relaxed, food and service were excellent. Time flew by.

Over the past 18 months, KLM has been the most reliable airline between Europe and Panama, transporting hundreds of thousands.

Air France and Iberia have also been back in business for a long time, and now so has Air Europa. Even Turkish Airlines flies the IST BOG PTY IST route several times a week. Only Lufthansa is taking a 2-year break and accepting the loss of market share. We have achieved Gold status with a few KLM flights and will certainly remain loyal to KLM.

So much for the trip. The situation in Germany is ambivalent. On the one hand more relaxed than Panama, where people still wear masks on the street. On the other hand, unspeakable corona panic and vaccination pressure.

"Are you vaccinated?" was regularly the first question among family and friends. Our brief explanation of why not was accepted with amazement but without further discussion.

I could talk in more detail with a doctor who works with Covid patients and found my skepticism confirmed. However, I will not go into more detail here.

Our prophylaxis consisted, as it has for over a year, of this cocktail.
([german pdf](#))

Quintessence: Despite Corona and the associated "measures", traveling with thorough preparation is quite uncomplicated. For example, if you currently want to enter Panama, do so with the mandatory test and do better not disclose your vaccination status. It means only additional expenditure, without more use.

But beware: this statement is only valid until the rules are changed again.

Through the canal, in the luxury yacht

We left Panama City early Friday morning at 9 am and arrived at Flamenco Marina early Saturday morning around 3 am after complete passage through the canal. But one thing at a time.

Every now and then, as we sit comfortably eating breakfast and watching the traffic at the Pacific entrance to the canal, one of us gets the idea, "let's have lunch on the Caribbean coast again today."

And so it came to pass that last Wednesday, we dined exquisitely, as always, at the Shelter Bay Marina restaurant. In addition to the many ordinary boats, there were also a few respectable yachts at anchor, because the hurricane season has begun in the Caribbean and the Panamanian Caribbean coast is outside the hurricane belt.

On the quay sits a tanned sailor in work clothes, with whom we talk. Looking at the 48-meter-long and spotlessly maintained E.Motion, we agree that this is a very comfortable and costly ship. Home port Georgetown, Cayman Islands. And then it turns out the "only" 32-meter JC lying next to it was his yacht.



JC und E.Motion

2 weeks ago, Rod had bought this 30-year-old ship in Mississippi and was now on his way home to Seattle in the northwest of the USA with a small crew. The way to Panama had already been eventful: Engine failure due to misfuelling, minor collision with a tow truck as well as with the Colombian Navy. Now the plan was to cross the channel into the Pacific and then relax north.

The ship is overall unkempt but technically in good shape. Rod got the boat in this condition for a good price. With proper refurbishment, it could have been much more expensive. As if made for him because he does such work himself and will thus increase the value significantly.

The ship will then be used for excursions of small groups in the Nordic summer and move to warmer climates in the winter. We agree to meet in Panama City in 1 or 2 days and talk about a possible operation in Panama. Rod says it's not about profit; it's about having fun and recouping maintenance costs. A likable guy.

On the way home, we had the idea to accompany him on the canal passage, because we had not done it at full length in all the years here. So immediately inquired, "Couldn't we go through the canal with you?"

Answer: "Of course." Next question, "Could we bring a few more friends? If so, how many and how much does it cost?" Answer: "Maximum 6. Bring a few cans of Coca-Cola for the crew and canal workers."

Then Friday arrived, and we were supposed to be at Shelter Bay Marina around 11 am. Six of us left Panama City at 9 am on Friday morning in rainy weather. A comfortable minibus with chauffeur of course. And Coca-Cola.

Shortly before Colon, the rain stops, and it also stays dry. The ship is not yet ready, so breakfast is on the restaurant terrace first. Against my habit, I start the day with burritos and Bloody Mary, matching the motto of the restaurant: "It's 5 o'clock somewhere".

[Here's](#) the music.

Around 2 p.m., the captain picks us up at the restaurant and gives us an introductory tour of the ship. It's amazing what space is available. The master suite with king size bed is fully mirrored, and our Captain makes it clear that this was not his idea. In addition, there are other bedrooms with showers and toilets, as well as less comfortable crew quarters. In all, bedrooms for up to 12 guests. And enough space to seat and entertain up to 50 passengers.

At the time of its commissioning 30 years ago, this must have been one of the most luxurious yachts on the water. A lot has changed in all these years, of course, and the E.Motion lying next to us is just one example.

The sky is overcast, no rain, so the upper deck becomes our abode, rather than the air-conditioned interiors. Departure at 3 pm, and the Gatun locks are not far away. On the way there, we pass the mighty Atlantic Bridge, which we already crossed on our way to Shelter Bay. The E.Motion left Shelter Bay 15 minutes before us and our captain, a former amateur racer, somehow set the goal to overtake her on the way to the Pacific.



The beginning

Then we rock a few kilometers in front of the Gatun lock and wait for permission to enter. On the left, the very large pots come out of the Agua Clara lock. On the right the somewhat smaller ones out of the old Gatun lock. The pilot comes on board, and when it finally goes on, it is already 5 pm. With us, the *E.Motion*, a fast motor boat, and the freighter *Coherence* run into the lock. These four ships will then stay together in one lock chamber until the exit of the Pacific lock.



Atlantic locks

When we leave the Gatun locks around 18:40 and enter Lago Gatun, darkness is already gathering, and a little later, it is pitch black. I had imagined we would experience a large part of the route in daylight, but the view of the now starry night sky makes me forget that. Under the glow of the stars, our yacht glides quietly, humming over the mirror-smooth water. Ahead and behind us, we see the illuminated navigation aids and the lights of other ships on the way. A peaceful and relaxing atmosphere - and a privilege to enjoy.



Lago Gatun

At the height of Gamboa there are already more lights, the pilot leaves the ship, and a new one comes on board for the last segment. Everything is relaxed. We all sit directly behind the upper bridge and experience the navigation and the conversations directly. After Gamboa comes to the narrowest passage of the whole route, it goes through the Gaillard Cut, which at that time was blasted out of the mountain with a lot of effort and where the slope slid, again and again, burying the work of weeks, as well as workers and equipment under itself. In the end, the Centenario Bridge, built around 2000, crosses the canal, and we find ourselves in front of the Pedro Miguel Locks. To the right, in the entrance to the new Cocoli locks, lies a post-Panamax container freighter, and ahead of us, a Panamax freighter is being threaded into the chamber intended for us. This takes time.





Transit through the Pedro Miguel and Miraflores facilities, and then we are in the Pacific. Our Capitan is happy, like a child, to have his home sea under his keel again.

And we have overtaken the E.Motion, somewhere on Lago Gatun.





Past the just Christmas-illuminated port facilities of Balboa and Rodman, under the Puentes de Las Americas through it goes to buoy 8, opposite our housing complex, and there the pilots always leave the ship.

This also takes forever today, and I am constantly in contact with our chauffeur, who has been waiting at the Flamenco Marina since 10 pm. When we then dock there, it is 3:30 in the morning.

Bottom line: an eventful day. Thanks to Rod, our captain.

The mystification of nature

A commentary on last week's catastrophic flooding in Germany wrote the following:

"This was a storm of the century. Let us think about what we are doing to the earth, and now it is fighting back."

In keeping with the spirit of the times, I once thought that was a deeply *racist* remark.

What, one must ask, are the inhabitants of the Caribbean doing to nature to be struck by terrible storms, hurricanes, every year since time immemorial?

And what have the inhabitants around the San Andreas Fault and along the Pacific Ring of Fire done to deserve nature's retaliation with violent volcanic eruptions and destructive earthquakes?

Even the peaceful inhabitants of Java and Bali seem to secretly pester nature terribly because there is no other explanation for the recurring disasters.

End of sarcasm.

No, nature out there, except perhaps on a Central European spring morning, is inherently anything but people-friendly. And fortunately, it does not have the all too human characteristic to retaliate for inflicted misfortune violently. Nature is the way it is, and whoever does not take this into account will pay a price for it.

The romantic talk and the bad conscience towards "Mother Nature" make it easy for manipulators of all colors to pull money out of people's pockets and train them at will. Or does anyone seriously believe that building large areas of solar panels, cutting down centuries-old forests for wind turbines, and sinking massive concrete blocks into the forest floor is good for nature or our environment?

This fits with inventions like Earth Overshoot Day, the day of the year on which WE, mankind, have supposedly used up the resources allotted to us and from which WE, mankind, now practice overexploitation of nature. From this view, it is not far anymore from the anti-human views of Thomas Malthus or Paul Ehrlich, the climate change activists or other doomsday promoters, whose worldview one can summarize with a statement:

The only thing that disturbs the perfect harmony of nature is mankind.

I prefer to stick with the Bible, where God the Creator clearly instructs in Genesis chapter 1, verse 28:

Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it.

This is what WE, mankind, have been doing for centuries, making the earth, for all its imperfections, an ever better place. However, we must be careful that WE, mankind, do not fall back from a period of thinkers and engineers to the dark times of superstition.

Suppose today it is argued that scientists agree, for example, climate and Covid-19. In that case, dissenting opinions are not discussed, but demonized and massively suppressed, then WE, mankind, will wake up tomorrow in a world that nobody wants to have like that.

Promise or threat?

PANAMAX is an annual multinational military maneuver to secure the Panama Canal in the event of a crisis. Put simply, if something like Venezuela were to happen here in the country, the U.S. would intervene militarily.

After the fall of Kabul and the mindless actions of the U.S. and some allies, one must now ask whether such a security guarantee is worth the paper it is written on.

This war has lasted 20 years and cost 2 trillion to date. Financed by credit, so those interest payments will have to be made for decades to come. Was it worth it? Of course, for the military-industrial complex.

And for the others? (Source [here](#))

- US military personnel 2,248 dead
- US service members 3,846 dead
- Afghan military and police 66,000 dead
- NATO and other allies 1,144 dead
- Afghan civilians 47,245 killed
- Taliban and other enemy combatants 51,191 dead
- Aid workers 444 dead
- Journalists 52 dead

For history, the war began under President Bush in the fall of 2001 as a consequence of the attack on the World Trade Center to eliminate Al Qaeda as the suspected mastermind.

From 2008 to 2016, President Barack Obama and vice president Joseph Biden were at the helm, enough time to seek an end.

It wasn't until President Donald Trump agreed to concrete steps with the Doha Accord in February 2020. Those who had characterized this at the time as an upgrading of the Taliban had to be proven wrong in the last few weeks. Let's hope that this adventure ends without further victims and that Panama will never need the umbrella.

"Germany advises against doing business with Panama because ...

the country is on the list of tax havens."

This is a headline in today's edition of La Prensa. It continues, *"A law passed by Germany last June provides for stricter tax measures in relations between Germany and countries on the European Union's blacklist of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions, which includes Panama, starting in 2022.*

These measures would make Panama more expensive and, therefore, less competitive as a recipient of German investment and an exporter to the European country. According to Propanama, German investments in 2019 amounted to \$767.2 million in automotive, finance, hospitality, marketing, and hotels.

Dani Kuzniecky, secretary of the National Anti-Money Laundering Commission, said that two problems could arise regarding investments: German companies that have already established themselves might decide to leave the country, and those interested in setting up shop might not. Progress assessing the exchange of tax information would be key to avoiding action."

It looks like a separate blog is worthwhile on the subject of blacklisting:

- December 7, 2017 "Blacklisting Again" [here](#).
- Jan. 20, 2018 "Blacklisting without Panama" [here](#)
- March 2, 2019 "Breaking news: blacklist rejected" [here](#).

Yes, exactly, the people who looked the other way during Cum-Ex and thus are responsible for more than 50 billion EUR tax losses in the EU, more than 31 billion of it in Germany, are now playing the strong man vis-à-vis Panama.

A country that, according to the OECD, has just worked its way out of the circle of needy recipient countries for development aid by its own efforts and, in 2019, was able to attract about as much in direct

investment from German companies as German policy transfers to the communist PRC annually as "development aid."

A country just setting out to overcome the disastrous consequences of the Covid-19 crisis - and right now, they think in Brussels and Berlin that this would be a good time to exert economic pressure after all.

What kind of inhumane policy is that?

A paradise for sport fishermen and Zero-G in Las Perlas

Apart from eating, I can do nothing with fish. But there is still the category of sport fishermen, and for them, Panama's Pacific is the true paradise.

Whether in the south of the Las Perlas Archipelago, around Isla Coiba, or directly in front of the wild Azuero south coast, everywhere where the seabed drops steeply, the territory of Marlin & Co. begins. However, I could never imagine these monsters so close to land as in this impressive [video](#).



Source:

[youtube.com](#)

In a kayak for sport fishing, that's what the people of Los Buzos, on the south coast of the Azuero Peninsula, do. And these are the [fish](#) that you can find there on your doorstep, so to speak.

I don't know anything about fishing, but I really enjoyed the video above. And I was wondering how these guys can fish and move forward at the same time.

That's accomplished with [hobie.com](#)'s kayaks, whose pedals provide propulsion and steering. Impressive technology - and yet I'd rather not

be out at sea myself in such a nutshell. So hats off to those who dare to do so.

Finally Las Perlas again! For a few weeks now, you don't need a test to visit the islands out there - zero-G is probably what they call it in Germany. So we booked a short trip from Monday to Wednesday to the small Isla Bolanos, to the [Sonny Island](#) Eco-Resort. Just under 2 hours by express ferry, three days time for swimming, snorkeling, and it is still whale season.



Source: [sonnyislandresort](#)

Three days in island paradise

As already announced, from Monday to Wednesday, we took a short trip to the Las Perlas archipelago. The Sonny Island Eco-Resort on Isla Bolaño had attractive special offers for trips outside the weekend, just right to try it out.

Monday at 7:30, the express ferry departs from Flamenco Marina on Amador, just 5 minutes from our home. The weather is good; we sit outside in the breeze and enjoy it. It goes directly to the island before the ferry again leaves in the direction of Isla Contadora.

We are received friendly, familiarized with the rules, nothing with Corona. Our bungalow is #1; what else. The approx. 16 bungalows are assembled from prefabricated wooden components in good quality, and made in Taiwan. The living area of about 40 m² is divided into a bedroom, shower, wash corner, and toilet, as well as a covered terrace and is quite sufficient. Not far away is a pavilion with tables and seating for more than 10 people.

First, we go to the beach, which is directly in front of our front door. White coral sand and clear water, which shimmers in different turquoise shades. A dream.

Isla Bolaños, like all the islands in the archipelago, has rocky subsoil, and this continues into the water. At low tide, it looks in some places like a stone desert; at high tide, most of the rocks have disappeared. The sun's position, the tides, the swell, and the cloud cover thus make for a constantly changing landscape.

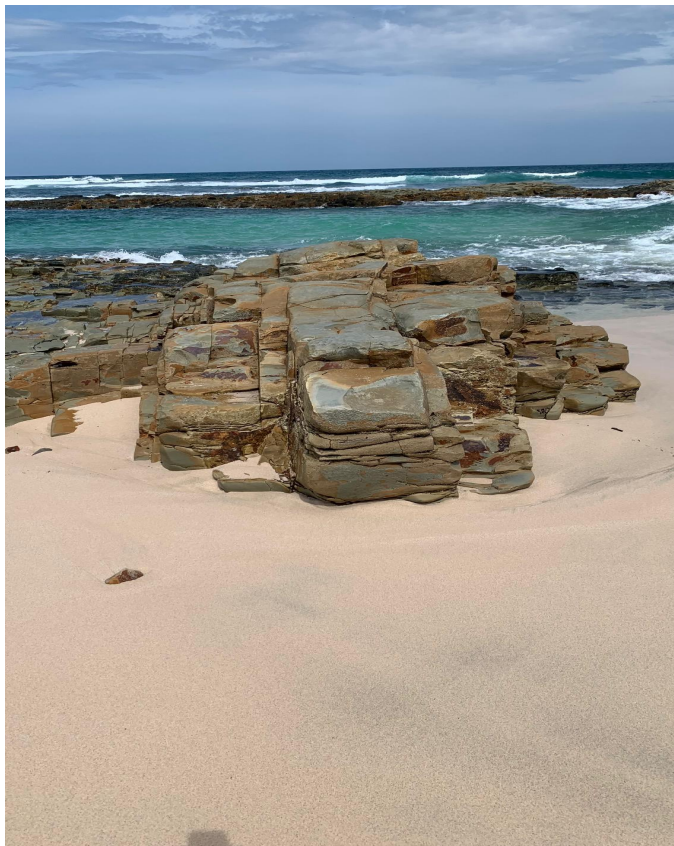
The beach on the west of the island offers about 320 meters of space for the four guests who are currently staying at the resort. We stay in the water for hours, are washed over by the waves, make ourselves comfortable on the rock formations battered by the water, and admire strangely shaped stones, colorful shells, and corals of various types. And simply let the pistachio shells fall to the ground. The mighty Pacific does the cleaning up for us. Thank you.

Chef Rolando is working in the open island restaurant, and his grilled shrimp are an evening must. On Tuesday at noon, he offers us a self-caught grouper, baked in foil. Way too much for the two of us, but miraculously nothing is left over.

The roofs of the bungalows collect rainwater, and a lot of solar panels are inconspicuously distributed in the area, which ensures the basic supply of the resort.

Time passes quickly, and Wednesday afternoon, around 3 pm the ferry picks us up again. With 25 knots, it goes home. It was fun.









Tax havens are rogue states

La Prensa writes on its front page today.

"The European Union removed Anguilla, Dominica, and Seychelles from its blacklist of tax havens on Tuesday, October 5, 2021, just two days after the release of the Pandora Papers on tax avoidance practices.

The EU blacklist is currently limited to American Samoa, Fiji, Guam, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Vanuatu.

The decision was made by EU finance ministers in Luxembourg on Tuesday.

Not present was Dutch Minister Wopke Hoekstra, named in Pandora papers as an investor in a company based in the British Virgin Islands.

This European instrument to combat tax evasion by multinational companies and large fortunes was created in December 2017 following numerous scandals, such as the Panama Papers and LuxLeaks.

Sanctions against the countries in question can lead to European funds being frozen.

The list "was supposed to punish tax havens. Instead, they get away with it," Chiara Putaturo, a European tax expert at Oxfam, said in a statement. "The decision to remove Anguilla, the last country with a 0% tax rate, and Seychelles, which are at the center of the latest tax scandal, makes the EU blacklist a joke," she added.

Pandora's Papers, an investigation published Sunday that involved 600 international journalists, found links between companies in tax havens and 336 high-profile politicians.

Of the nearly 1,000 companies uncovered, two-thirds were in the British Virgin Islands, but they were also discovered in Seychelles.

In contrast, Turkey, accused of not complying with international rules on the automatic exchange of tax information, has not been blacklisted despite threats from Brussels in recent months.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) has already commented on the matter in advance:

The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), through the National Commission for Combating Money Laundering (CNBC) and the Directorate of International Financial and Tax Strategy, said yesterday that the Panamanian tax system is not harmful to other countries in the world.

Next week, the finance ministers of the European Union (EU) will update the list of non-cooperative territories in tax matters. In the absence of formalization, Panama will remain on that list.

This is after the government has not committed to changing the foreign income exemption regime that the European Union considers harmful.

The country was already on this blacklist because it was rated "partially compliant" in the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes assessment.

Dani Kuzniecky, technical secretary of CNBC, explained that in addition to the assessment criteria for the exchange of information, consideration of the tax regime was added to the list.

MEF explained that since June 2021, the EU had notified the Republic that it considers its territorial tax system harmful, taking into account several criteria, such as the low level of taxation, the different treatment of income depending on its origin, the requirements of "substance" related to the degree of presence of a company in a given territory, among others.

Considering these criteria, Panama is disadvantaged by its status as a territorial tax system, since it does not tax income earned abroad.

Jorge Luis Castellero, the lawyer in the Directorate of Financial and International Tax Strategy, said that "the Panamanian territorial tax system only considers income from Panamanian sources and by its nature does not include income from foreign sources; therefore we do not consider our territorial tax system harmful. There is no exception for a type of income depending on its origin since in a territorial tax system income from foreign sources is not part of the tax base."

The MEF pointed out that Panama has had mechanisms in place for years to mitigate the risks that may arise from the relationship between two different tax systems.

Among the measures adopted are the implementation of standards for automatic and demand-based tax information exchange; the implementation of international standards for the application of transfer pricing rules; compliance with and implementation of the minimum standards of the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) project, an initiative to combat the shifting of profits to low-tax jurisdictions; and significant changes to special regimes, such as those for multinational enterprise headquarters.

These measures "demonstrate Panama's willingness to align with international tax standards to avoid non-taxation or double taxation being the result of the interaction between its territorial tax system and other tax systems," the MEF said.

The EU would have asked the Panamanian authorities to commit to making the necessary changes by Dec. 31, 2022, and to implement them by Jan. 1, 2023.

The MEF clarified that "the commitment request only identified the elements that classify our system as harmful, but there was no comprehensive and detailed analysis to understand exactly what the identified deficiencies are, and therefore prevented a proper analysis by the government."

According to MEF representatives, there was no explicit request to change the territorial tax regime to a global income tax regime.

When asked what specific changes needed to be made, MEF representatives responded that there was no clarity at this stage and that an in-depth analysis was needed.

The company pointed out that it had not agreed to the compromise with the EU "as any change to the territorial tax regime must be the result of a comprehensive study that takes into account the implications for the country."

What does it all mean?

The European Central Bank ECB is increasing the money supply in the euro area almost indefinitely, driving up the debt of fellow member states and creating a highly inflationary environment.

At the same time, the competitiveness of companies in the EU is being dramatically worsened by virtually blind climate, energy, corona and migration policies. This can be understood from a multitude of statistics.

No company and no entrepreneur can stand idly by and watch this development. That is why for years companies have been relocating, entrepreneurs have been migrating, or simply giving up their businesses.

A vicious circle: more and more spending and fewer and fewer taxpayers. Of course, the politicians and their bureaucrats know this. And that is precisely why they are trying to save the situation on all fronts:

- anyone who wants to emigrate as an entrepreneur will be asked to pay immediately as of 1.1.2022 as if they had sold their shares in the company. No deferral.
- Countries with halfway reasonable tax regulations, like Panama, will be blacklisted and threatened with disadvantages. Panama has territorial taxation, which means that only domestic income is taxed. The EU is now massively interfering in the sovereignty of this country and demanding the abolition of this and other regulations. Sounds like blackmail.



Let's take another look at the countries added to the list: American Samoa, Fiji, Guam, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, the US Virgin Islands, and Vanuatu.

First, it must be soberly stated that offshore company constructs are used for all kinds of legal purposes. For example, 8,200 ships of the world merchant fleet with a capacity of 81 million tons alone are registered in a Panama Corporation, in addition to real estate, financial instruments, and of course, commercial transactions. Global corporations, as well as the UN and soon the IMF, have established their Latin American headquarters here for good reason. And just as Swiss banks have been a place to store assets, even of dubious origin, for centuries until today, Panama Corporations, among others, are also used for illegal purposes. Not different from German GmbHs.

Possibly even fraudulently obtained revenues from VAT carousels, Wirecard manipulation, and Cum-Ex transactions have landed here and elsewhere.

But it would be better to avoid this at the source, wouldn't it?

But because this does not work in the best-organized Germany, we now have to apply the hold-the-thief method and pillory such designated rogue states as American Samoa, Fiji, Guam, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, the US Virgin Islands and Vanuatu.

How cheap is that?

However, don't the names of the above island states and Panama read like a list of recommendations if you want to run your business in a business-friendly environment with acceptable tax rates?

Saboga, the forgotten pearl of the Pacific, in the middle of the drug route

This is an article that I have taken directly from La Estrella, translated with DeepL and only slightly edited. It conveys a picture of Panama that the tourist or ex-pat hardly ever gets to see.

The island in the archipelago of Las Perlas has great tourist potential but has been neglected by those in power. Its strategic location on the drug route endangers the population, which is known to feed partly on coca. Recently, a ship with a large capacity to transport drugs was discovered in the area.

The island of Saboga, located in the crystal clear waters of the paradisiacal archipelago of Las Perlas in the Gulf of Panama, is home to a population that is practically condemned to misery, exposed to organized crime, and abandoned by the state.

Saboga sits alongside the 200 islands and islets that make up the group, directly on the Pacific side of the maritime corridor through which drug traffickers pass in speedboats or Colombian ships loaded with cocaine on their way to the United States. In early October, one of these vessels appeared on El Encanto beach, located on the backside of the island. Since Colombia is the world's largest exporter of cocaine, 90% of its cargo is shipped by sea. They usually come from the jungles of the Chocó. The ship found in Saboga by a tourist walking on the beach bears a strong resemblance to other vessels seized by the Colombian Navy in recent years, which immediately alerted agents of the National Naval Air Service (Senan), who maintain a permanent base on the island, and local residents, some of whom were curious about the find. It was an empty hull without drugs, rudders, or engines. However, at the top of the ship, there were about 200 gallons of fuel, which were siphoned by the locals. It is no secret that part of the population of this island considers coca as a means of self-sufficiency and a means of income. Due to the absence of the state that prevails on the island, the locals have established their own rules, independent of

the respective government, which often go beyond the orders of the Senan agents, commanded by a lieutenant with seven members.



Source:

LaEstrella.com

The agents kept an eye out for the ship for a few days in case someone claimed it. But it wasn't. The ship is still on the sand where it was towed by the Sabogan people, although it is now much more damaged by the constant pounding of the rocks as the tide rises. Senan's daily job is to patrol the town and check the bags or suitcases of visitors who arrive by ferry, the only way to reach the island. They walk about 20 minutes from the base to the port and have no car to explore the island.

Some residents told La Estrella de Panamá that from time to time - three or four months - they observe the presence of strangers (who also don't look like tourists) mingling with the locals. It usually happens at night, when music is played at full volume in the village as if it were a fireworks festival celebrating "the delivery of the cargo, the whites," described a neighbor interviewed by this newspaper. They bring them themselves, they protect them," claimed a Senan member stationed on the island with whom this newspaper spoke. "When you do the

verification, they are no longer there. This is the moment when the installation of the official order poses a real challenge when it is overtaken by complicity, whether forced by those who are afraid to speak out or voluntarily by those who support this kind of action.

The situation worries residents who do not know why they come and who these people are, allegedly protected by a leader who "manages other youths," as denounced by a neighbor. Senan staff acknowledged to this newspaper that there are a "significant number" of young people who collaborate or cooperate with drug traffickers, without giving a number, as they consider this a "sensitive" issue. The context in which this is happening is part of a Saboga that feels isolated from the world and doubly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic that has crippled tourism in the archipelago.

It feels cut off from the nearest island, Contadora, which is only a few minutes away by boat and where tourism has developed. Here, many Sabogans find temporary work to make a living: the men as temporary workers in construction or shipping, the women as maids in hotels or as domestic servants in the luxurious houses that can be seen from the shores of Saboga, from where the handmade boats leave.

Precarious education

A steady income is extremely rare. This is closely related to the lack of skills, education, and opportunities for the islanders.

The only school in Saboga has three classrooms with three teachers, but they only go up to sixth grade. Yoguira Argüelles, president of the Mothers' Association, sounds frustrated. She spends much of her day keeping the school in good condition in an effort to provide a future for current and future generations. "The school is very neglected," she said, describing how one classroom is a breeding ground for bats, another is raining cats and dogs, the lights are broken, and the refrigerator in the dining room is damaged. A few years ago, Argüelles, along with other parents and young people who could not continue their education, attended the night school, which has since been disbanded. "I hope that Meduca will reopen the night school," Argüelles said hopefully, as a way to move on, while the dormitories for the teachers are still not ready. They did try to ask the representative of the Corregimiento, Ismael

Argüelles (Partido Revolucionario Democrático), for help, but it is futile because the annual budget he manages from the mayor's office does not allow it, and the representative explained that he receives a total of \$110,000 per year, and at the time of our visit to the island, on November 8, he had already used almost all of the money. "With this year's budget, I can build another 90 meters of road, which will cost me \$14,400," he said.

Argüelles provided \$34,000 to pay the salaries, and with the rest, he was able to pave 200 meters of the road on which golf carts and some cars travel to the village. However, the rest of the infrastructure repairs must be done by the relevant ministries, and it is a difficult task for the islanders to complete the first cycle of secondary school. There are 11 inhabited islands in the group, and none of them offer secondary education. Those who are interested have to go by boat to San Miguel, Isla del Rey, where they can continue until the third year, or migrate to the Panamanian capital (they usually ask for places in San Miguelito, central and northern Panama) and stay with a relative. They need scholarships or a job to support themselves while studying. Lack of education forces them to subsistence work or low-income jobs. Thus, resisting juicy offers from organized crime becomes a questionable temptation.

The Saboganos are not only disappointed by the candidates who visit the island every five years promising a better future. They are completely oblivious to whichever party or president happens to be in charge. The claim that any politician cared about them is a bad joke. Those in power "don't look beyond Contadora," they repeated, and the health center is empty, no one cares about them. Respondents said that before the pandemic there were two doctors, but since then they cannot even go to a physician's assistant. There is no one. If someone suffers an accident, is hit by a bullet, or falls ill, they need medical attention in Contadora or San Miguel, and depending on the situation, they are referred to the capital. The highest government official on the island is called the inspector (corregidor) of the mayor's office, Toribio Olivardía, who finds it difficult to define his job. "I look at the people and the houses," he said. "I am the authority because I administer the laws of the police," he said when asked who the population turns to in case of conflict. The mayor's office is located in San Miguel on Isla del Rey, one

to two hours away by boat depending on the strength of the engine, with alcohol, lottery sales, and cock betting. On the way from the dock to town, the golf cart needs a four-wheel drive to negotiate deep potholes and muddy slopes. Piles of beer cans and trash lay everywhere, abandoned junk. "It's clean now," said the guide who showed us around.

"You should have seen what this place looked like during the holidays, full of cans. "On Nov. 2, they didn't drink because it was forbidden, but since Nov. 3 until this morning, they haven't stopped," said a Senan representative. 475 voters live in Saboga, plus children, the representative counted. The population of young people between 14 and 17 years old is 25 to 30 people who hang around the island," said the Senan source. They do not work or study but see their parents with a can of beer in hand, and there is no sustainable rescue or study program to provide them with a livelihood afterward. This makes them extremely vulnerable to illegal activities, the proceeds of which can easily be mixed with legal money since everything on the island is done in cash. They have no idea about bills, let alone taxes.

The decline of the island is noticeable. Foreign investors have believed in the island and are trying to develop tourism, but are finding it difficult due to the culture of the people and the lack of attention from the state, which creates a vicious circle. The steep road to the village is surrounded by lush and picturesque vegetation that heralds the potential for tourism if an orderly tourism plan were planned and implemented.

On the one hand, the country attracts foreign direct investment, but on the other hand, the owners face inefficient public services such as garbage collection and a lack of skilled labor, which makes running a business a pain. The low skills of locals make it difficult for investors to create synergies with employees.

The few tourists that come to the island are the result of bad publicity inside and outside Panama: "Unfortunately, Panamanians prefer to go abroad and know their country less, despite the beauty of Panama, which is nothing to envy Costa Rica or Colombia. The beach should be full of guests," said Jean Lucca, an Italian businessman who looked out

over the completely deserted coast from his restaurant in Playa Grande. Saboga is a potential tourist attraction that could create permanent jobs and train the population in technical jobs related to the environment, giving young people the opportunity to change the bleak panorama the population faces.

The vessel could carry about a ton - low profile boat.

Last October 2, National Naval Air Service (Senan) personnel were alerted by residents of Saboga Island in the northern part of the Las Perlas archipelago to a vessel that could be transporting cocaine to the United States. The route to the north passes through Panama, a strategic point in the Pacific Ocean.

The vessel, which originated in Colombia and was en route to Central America off the Colombian coast of Chocó, according to international reports, is designated by security authorities as a Low Profile Vessel (LPV), which can carry one, two, or more tons of cocaine, depending on its size. This is the sixth vessel with these characteristics that authorities have seized in Panamanian Pacific waters since July 2019, in addition to the 45-foot hub-drive submersible seized in Bocas del Toro in 2020, which was crewed by four Colombian nationals.

Although a hand-built vessel, the 35- to 40-foot-long, 2-meter-wide, opaque, gray, and camouflaged in the sea requires marine technology, GPS devices for navigation, and powerful engines. It probably had three outboard engines of 300 horsepower each. It was made of fiberglass reinforced with wooden panels and consisted of two compartments connected by a narrower part simulating a kind of tunnel. It was considerably damaged by the tide and rocks and has two hatches on the top: one near the bow, the front part is used for loading cargo, and the other for the crew, which can consist of two or three people. In the cockpit, there are two rectangular armored windows on the front and one on each side, reinforced against water pressure.

The upper part has circular holes, which presumably serve to ventilate the ship. The forward part, the bow, is for the fuel system, which supplies the engines located at the other end through a pipe. The islanders removed about 200 gallons of fuel upon discovery.

Once the crew delivers the cargo to the Mexicans at a point offshore, it will be transferred to commercial vessels or speedboats. "That's when the LPV becomes a problem for the traffickers, so they abandon it," a Security Ministry source told this newspaper.

These structures can transport tons of cocaine to the main buyer market in the region: the United States. In the United States, a kilo of cocaine pays between \$30,000 and \$50,000. Assuming the ship was carrying 1.5 tons, the cargo would be worth \$75 million and would account for 75 to 80 percent of the goods that authorities were unable to stop. When the structure was first spotted, it was floating at sea. It was then pulled onto the beach by locals, near a rocky spot where the ship's stern hits at high tide. So far, no authority has been responsible for its removal.

When this newspaper visited Saboga on November 8, a Senan agent explained that until that day they had not received an order to take custody of the boat or remove it from the beach, as that task was beyond their authority. Instead, they attribute it to the environmental agency or the Panamanian Maritime Authority.

From Galati to Vancouver

After we could observe a few months ago the transfer of a new ferry from the manufacturer in Tasmania to the operation in Trinidad & Tobago, today there is a similar action:

The BC Ferries Island 6 is a hybrid ferry that was built in Galati, a Romanian Black Sea port.



Source: BC Ferries

During the 60-day transfer to its future location, Vancouver in British Columbia, it passed through the channel today bound for the Pacific. An informative article is [here](#).

And here it is crossing our front yard.



Winter in the northern hemisphere ...

and that's why 4 or 5 liquefied gas tankers glide past here day after day, heading for Asia. One of them has even been reordered shortly before the destination, comes back across the Pacific and changes through the Panama Canal in the direction of Europe, where the higher prices justify even this detour.




It's terrible that the world is still so dependent on fossil fuels ...

How nice it would be if a ship with sustainable energy would pass by. And no sooner have I thought that than the FORESTAL GAIA floats past in front of the loggia - a wood pellet freighter. I'm totally happy.

17:06

FORESTAL GAIA

Vessel Voyage Events Timeline Co



Wood Chips Carrier **JP**

SANTANA [BR] **BALBOA [PA]**

ATD:24/12/21 17:22 UTC-3 ETA: 7 Jan 17:00 UTC-5

Travelled: 14d 1h

Status: **Underway using Engine**

Received: **2' ago**

Speed: **4.9 kn**

Flag: **Japan**

Call sign	IMO	MMSI
7JZT	9773832	431076000
Length x breadth	Year built	
199.9m x 32.2m	2017	
Gross tonnage	Deadweight	
40350	49212 t	

It comes directly from Santana in Brazil, from the estuary of the Amazon. There, a small piece of forest has been cut down and chipped into about 40,000 tons of wood chips, which are currently being shipped to Japan, where it will be burned in an ecologically exemplary manner.

However, burning wood produces as much CO₂ as the same amount of lignite, and significantly more than diesel and natural gas. In addition, there are the emissions of the chain saws, the heavy back, and loading

equipment, the truck transport to the sawmill and the processing there itself. Not to forget the transport by ship over approx. 8,650 km.

"Experts" have calculated, however, that all this is highly environmentally and climate friendly because the trees have drawn just as much, if not more, CO₂ from the atmosphere in the course of their hundred-year growth.

Let's do the math:

Burning one ton of wood produces 1.83 tons of CO₂. With 40,000 tons of wood, that adds up to 73,200 tons of CO₂. And since, according to the green reading, this has already been removed from the atmosphere, and the trees are no longer there, another 73,200 tons of CO₂ will soon not be removed from the atmosphere and can fuel global warming. So the effect is as if 146,400 tons of CO₂ are newly emitted. Whew.

Then there are the emissions from shipping and trucking.

For simplicity's sake, we'll add another 200 tons for processing at the sawmill. Peanuts in the overall picture. Thus, this "sustainable" action produces a total of 158,800 tons of CO₂ emissions, comparable to the annual CO₂ emissions of 105,000 passenger cars.

Please don't think I'm worried about CO₂ emissions. This is a narrative built up since the Earth Summit in 1993 to finally tax hot air and destroy the capitalist market economy.

This headline, which was on Welt Online for weeks, clearly shows that the propagandists don't know what they are talking about at all, Baerbock-wise.

Unternehmen zeigen CO₂-Verbrauch in Echtzeit

Die Outfittery-Gründerin Anna Alex will mit ihrem Start-up Planetly Firmen dabei unterstützen, ihre CO₂-Emissionen zu messen, zu senken und auszugleichen – alles ganz einfach, alles mit digitalen Tools und alles in Echtzeit.

Companies therefore **consume** CO₂. That's good, because then the "problem" with the CO₂ increase in the atmosphere will soon be solved.

Motto: We don't know what we're doing, but we're doing it with all our might.

Climate dictatorship is the goal and we already know the procedure of politics and media from Covid-19. As soon as the Corona panic subsides, the climate panic is ramped up. Works also prima.

People in panic do what is prescribed.

Island paradise from the air

As with cars, airplanes need to be moved. And since my Light Sport Aircraft (LSA) was in the hangar for more than a year due to corona, it took several months, many hours and a few thousand dollars to get it airworthy again.



After a couple of trial trips over land, the day before yesterday I finally set off on an island course: the Las Perlas archipelago, whose closest island, Pedro Gonzalez, with its airfield (MPFE) is only 47 nautical miles, or 87 km, from my home airfield of Chame (MPCM).

Machine is fueled with 18 gallons of super gasoline 95 (82 liters), is prepared by checklist, then filed with Panama Radio a flight plan:

*Call sign HP1708L from MPCM to MPCM, via MPFE, BOMAK, MPRA.
Cruising altitude is 4,500 feet (1,370 meters), speed 90 knots (167 km/h), flight time 2 hours, range 3 hours.*

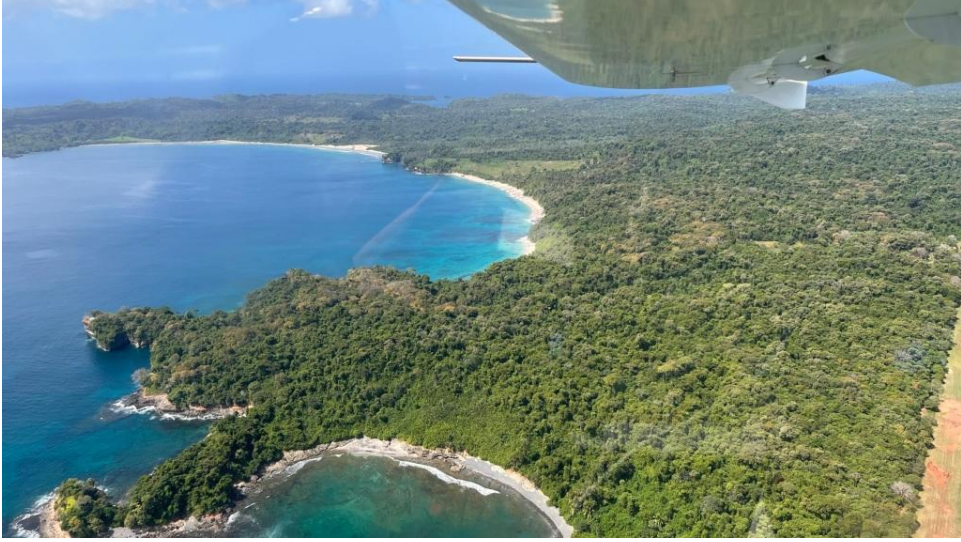
It's 10 a.m. local time, and off we go. Climbing over Coronado, and a stretch of ocean where 2 weeks ago a Piper had to make an emergency

landing with 5 people in the water. Three of the five got out of the plane, with 2 others it sank and is still not found, just a few kilometers from the coast. Among other things, because of such incidents as engine failure, a life jacket is always worn when flying over the ocean in single-engine planes.

After about 20 minutes the islands appear in the haze, before I have already flown over a container freighter and a cruise ship, which came via Panama Canal from the Atlantic.

And then I dive into the island world ...









You can fly over this archipelago as often as you like. The change of tide, which is up to 6 meters, the sunlight at different times of the day, always result in new fascinating pictures and dazzling colors.

Welcome to the sunny side.

Oligarch yacht in express transit

Exciting things are happening out there. And that's exactly why I'm sitting at my computer at midnight right now, producing this post.

As a result of Putin's invasion of Ukraine, there have been harsh sanctions imposed on individuals and entities by the U.S., the EU, and others. So too against a significant number of Russian oligarchs. It is believed that if you make life difficult for them, they might turn against Putin.

But how can you make billionaires angry, when they all no longer live in Russia?

The easiest way is obviously to take away or block their favorite toys: Private jets and luxury yachts.

Since the embargo began, and days before, there have been desperate efforts on both sides. Aircraft lose their registration and insurance, are grounded with them.

Yachts are confiscated and others try to escape. No small yachts.

The 140m SOLARIS belongs to Roman Abramovich, cost \$600m, and is currently on the run toward the Maldives.






Source: marinetraffic.com



Andrei Melnichenko's sailing yacht A is even 156m long, has 100m high masts, and is worth \$440m. Confiscated by the Italian authorities in Trieste.





Source: marinetraffic.com

This afternoon I read that Suleyman Kerimov, another of the oligarchs, has been added to the sanctions list and that his 106-meter yacht AMADEA is on its way to the Panama Canal.


23:44   

 **AMADEA** 

Vessel Voyage Events Timeline Co





© Marino Teobaldo
MarineTraffic.com

Yacht 

PANAMA CANAL [PA] **BALBOA [PA]**

ATA: 16 Mar 18:15 UTC-4 ETA: 17 Mar 00:30 UTC-5



Travelled: 4h 46'

Status: **Underway using Engine**

Received: **2' ago** ●

Speed: **4.7 kn**

Flag: **Cayman Is**

Call sign	IMO	MMSI
ZGFM7	1012531	319112900

Length x breadth	Year built
106.1m x 17.86m	2016
Gross tonnage	Deadweight
4202	559 t

Source: marinetraffic.com

Panama will not trouble her. On the contrary, she is completing, as I write this, one of the fastest canal passages I have observed. Meanwhile, she is already in the last chamber of the Miraflores Lock and will pass here shortly.

And here she is, at 01:15 under the full moon, in front of our living room:



I suspect that the phone lines between the State Department here and the State Department in Washington are running hot. It is highly probable that ships of the US Coast Guard are on their way somewhere to intercept drugs. I wonder if they would pass up the opportunity to let a yacht on the embargo list pass through the territorial waters of a friendly country.

I am curious.

Update: The Amadea has been detained in Fiji since April 12, and has since been seized by US authorities and transferred to San Diego.

Submarines pass through the channel

On the 3rd of this month, a UDO plowed through our "front yard", an unidentified diving object. When an apparently identical model passed by today, it was identified as USS Minnesota (SSN-783).



Wikipedia (en) tells us that this nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarine entered service in 2013, is 115 m long, can travel faster than 25 knots, has 4 torpedo tubes and 12 vertical missile launch tubes.

The English Wikipedia entry (here) on the Virginia class has very extensive technical/tactical details as well as costs. These are the US Navy's most advanced fast-attack boats, with 22 already in service, 6 under construction, another 2 on order, and 4 more announced.

Around the world - stop in Panama

A few days ago I had the pleasure to fly my favorite round not by myself, but aboard a fairly new DIAMOND DA50 RG, which however already has a very special history.



The aircraft left the production facility in Wiener-Neustadt as number 10 of a new series and the owner gave it to two experienced pilots for a round-the-world flight, also as a thank-you for the support in acquiring the license and purchasing the aircraft. The two, Matthias and Robin, then flew after thorough preparation on January 4 from Austria with the HB-RTT (call sign) among other things over Heraklion, Riyadh, Dubai, Karachi, Bangkok, Kuching, Guam, Honolulu, Santa Monica, Grand Canyon, Denver to Houston. This included 3 trips of 11 to 13 hours each over the Pacific, with the necessary range only being realized with extra fuel in the back seats. Brave.

What an undertaking. Here is the link.

When the plane, coming from San Jose (Costa Rica), approached Marco A. Gelabert Airport (MPMG) in Panama City, the weather gods gave it their all: black low-hanging clouds rolled in and heavy rain poured down on the runway. Only after the aircraft had been towed into a hangar could the occupants be welcomed.

For the next day, a sightseeing flight over the Pacific and Caribbean islands of Panama as well as the canal was planned, which I was fortunately allowed to design and accompany. Here is the planned and also flown route: MPMG MPFE BOMAK MPRA MPVR MPEJ MPMG.

Flight time 2 hours.

Departure was planned for 9 am, this time in bright sunshine. Compared to my Light Sport CTLS, the DIAMOND DA50 is a different category. The cockpit was like in an airliner and the two professional pilots acted accordingly. Robin flies helicopters for the Swiss Army and Matthias is in training to become a SWISS pilot. Fritz, the owner, had taken a seat next to me on the comfortable leather-covered rear seats.



From MPMG, we made a big loop over Panama City, left along the Amador Causeway, where the Norwegian Sun had just left its place at the cruise terminal pier. Out to the Pacific Ocean to the south, via Isla Pedro Gonzalez with a luxury resort and the upcoming Ritz Carlton Hotel & Reserve. Continuing towards the southern tip of Isla del Rey, along its west coast then north, over the beaches of Isla Viveros and Isla Bolanos, after flying over Isla Contadora back towards the mainland, east of Aeropuerto Internacional Tocumen. Along the Rio Bayano and over Lago Bayano, we then met the Caribbean coast at El Porvenir with islands, atolls, and a large number of sailing yachts whose occupants enjoy this wonderland.





Further along the coast to the west, over Colon to the channel entrance on the Atlantic side, parallel to the channel at low altitude to the Pacific locks, because in the meantime clouds had come up again. Finally, a worth seeing approach to MPMG. In between, there was the astonished question of the pilots, whether one can fly here always so undisturbed by instructions of the air traffic control over land.



Yes, you can. This is Panama.

Meanwhile, the HB-RTT is on its way through the Caribbean and will have completed its circumnavigation in April.

Thanks for letting me fly a small part of it. Have a good flight!

Here is the [video](#) of the final approach and landing.

Unvaccinated in Florida, right?

Time for vacation we thought a few weeks ago and that we have not been in the US for ages. Florida or Texas as favorites, because there the Covid restrictions appear to be relaxed.

The plan became concrete: fly to Miami, rent a Tesla, drive along the Gulf Coast to New Orleans and back via Cape Canaveral. All in just under 2 weeks. Anticipation was building.



Photo by Antonio Cuellar on [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

When we bought our ticket, the salesperson pointed out that we had to be vaccinated. Yes, sure, that's fine. The CDC website confirmed that every foreigner entering the US must be fully vaccinated and tested. And that there are exceptions.

What exceptions?

"... Persons with documented medical contraindications to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine".

So medical contraindications. Allergies, for example? The CDC helps further:

"Anyone who is allergic to any of the ingredients in the vaccines should not be vaccinated." That's a very sensible precaution. And I wouldn't want to find out by getting one of those shots.

Way out: at www.liberation-express.com you are asked if you can rule out being allergic in such a way. who can? I can't. Consequently, I get the recommendation to have this clarified by an allergist and until then an unfit-for-vaccination certificate limited to 6 months. Problem solved. During that time, one can comfortably get the opinion of the allergist.

Is everything good? Actually, yes. Nevertheless, I call the airline again. The employee takes the situation description and has to ask back. After a minute, he has the answer:

"No, we can't let them on board without vaccination confirmation. Exception must be actuated by US CDC, then gladly."

Back to the CDC website, and now I read everything it says. The result is that a formal doctor's letter is sufficient if it meets the usual requirements. And that is to be submitted to the airline that just sent me to the CDC. Quite simple. I wonder if I'll try Copa again.

Just before I reach for the phone, I come across another explanation at the CDC:

Whoever claims this exemption signs under penalty that he quarantines himself for five days after arrival and gets tested again during this period.

Unacceptable. Vacation was canceled, especially since we would have to argue with Copa Airline to get on board.

60 nautical miles from Miami lie the Bahamas. White beaches, crystal clear water. And no compulsory vaccinations.

The plan changed, and we flew to Nassau.



Quelle:

[pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

Addendum: Of course, it was immediately checked whether you could get from Nassau to Miami without problems and work through the original program. But you can't; vaccination is compulsory, no matter where you enter the USA.

Bahamas Mamas

No sooner had we rebooked the flight & hotel from Miami to Nassau, than we found on the website of the Bahamas Health Authority that one must apply for a health visa before entering the country, answer a mail from the Health Authority every day about personal well-being and that masks are mandatory throughout the island kingdom. We were on the verge of canceling this trip as well, but then decided to proceed according to the motto that things are not eaten as hot as they are cooked.

2.5 hours from Panama City, we landed in sunshine and immigration was straightforward. Our pickup greeted us, sans mask, and assured us that no one would stick to it anymore. After 2 years of lockdown and no tourists, people want their lives and income back. What a relief! In the afternoon we go to the Fish Fry food court to try the local cuisine. We meet a typical Bahamian family in the restaurant.



All super nice people.

Our hotel is located on Paradise Island, right next to the Atlantis Resort, whose facilities and beach we can use without restrictions. Here is the link.

The beach is clean, the water crystal clear turquoise. You swim above your own shadow. A dream. The sunbeds on the beach have sunscreens and all-day vendors unobtrusively pull their lanes. This is obviously worth it, because for 2 coconuts we pay \$20! In Panama, it is 2. The prices for food are more realistic and the shrimp is excellent.

Part of the hotel complex is a marina where some really handsome ships are moored. A bit away is the cruise ship dock. Tourism is back 95% of the time. Good thing.

For Mother's Day on Sunday, we have booked a ferry to Spanish Wells on North Eleuthera, a narrow island two hours from Nassau. We rent a golf cart and drive the only road north. A local resident notices we are looking and asks. It's coffee we look for and he sends us a few kilometers further to the Sand Bar. There we arrive just in time for Mother's Day brunch, having already jumped into the water on the way. Good food, good coffee.

In the late afternoon, when we arrive at our hotel, the daily query of the health department is already waiting for us:

- Have you had contact with infected people? NO
- Did you have symptoms in the last 24 hours? ... NO, NONE
- Will you continue to adhere to this regimen? YES

Kindergarten at its finest, but still better than masking.





After 7 days, the mini-vacation is over. We didn't see much of Nassau itself, but according to a local business partner, we didn't miss anything. What else? Left-hand traffic, good beer, overweight women. Balance: Must have seen, but once is enough.

Almost home again.



One hotel, two friends and 500 benches

We regularly visit the historic old town as a couple, with friends or visitors. A lot of buildings have been restored there over the years, beautiful apartments, restaurants, and rooftop bars have been built. Old churches, monuments, cobblestones, small stores as well as parks determine the character of the district. Beautiful.

I was all the more amazed that the opening of a new and extraordinary hotel had gone unnoticed by us.

Three different eras of Panama's history come to life at Hotel La Compañía, and the luxurious modern design makes the landmark blossom anew. Each of our three wings resurrects a piece of the old city (Casco Antiguo) in truly contemporary luxury. Choose a beautifully curated room in the French Colonial Wing, built by Jesuit priests in 1739, the Spanish Colonial Wing, dating back to 1688, or one of the Beaux-Arts rooms in the American Wing, built in 1905 as an exclusive department store.

Our five in-house restaurants draw on the same historical inspiration - explaining El Santuario's Spanish church-style stone interior, as well as the American Bazaar's vintage wood and brass décor. Visit the rooftop pool and bar - an ideal base for the vibrant Casco Antiguo neighborhood, where nightlife, upscale restaurants, and world-famous archaeological sites converge.

When an important business partner announced his arrival and I wanted to put him up at the JW Marriott, as usual, I got a tip that a new historic-style hotel had opened in the old town.



Quelle: hyatt.com

That suited the guest and the website reinforced me. So I decided not to book by phone or online but on the spot. This was again one of those intuitions that you sometimes have and that lead to surprises.

At the reception, I met the owner directly and in the first conversation it turned out that he had started his hotel career in Hong Kong about 30 years ago as an assistant to the man who had registered. What a coincidence, or predestination!

In the South China Morning Post of October 3, 2020, there is an interesting article about the hotel and its owner. About Panama City, he says there "It was safe, had good international schools, and seemed like a Central American version of Hong Kong or Singapore."

So much for the introduction. Actually, I wanted to write about banks or banks. About the probably more than 500 (!) benches that were put up 5 years ago along the then completely renovated Amador Causeway. Half with a view of the canal entrance, half with a view over the bay, to the impressive skyline of the capital.



Skyline from Amador Causeway, canal entrance Bridge of the Americas

What is so special about these benches? Well, not a single (!) bench is defective, carved, or smeared after these 5 years. Not one.

And that's where the comparison with Singapore fits.

Air traffic chaos - even in Panama

In the 90 minutes between 4:15 and 5:45 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, Panama City's Tocumen International Airport is scheduled for 33 arrivals, or one landing every 3 minutes. This is already tight, even though the airport has two parallel runways, but they have to share the approach corridor.

16:50

Panama City Tocumen Int'l Airport
PTY/MPTO
16:50 EST | 03. Juli | Höhe 135 ft
Zu Siri hinzufügen

WETTERLAGE
Overcast

TEMPERATUR
27°C

WIND
20° 10 kts

Mehr Wetter und METAR

Luftdruck 1.009 hPa
Taupunkt 23°C
Feuchtigkeit 79%

Sonnenaufgang 06:02
Sonnenuntergang 18:40

Neuestes METAR vor 50 Min.
MPTO 032100Z 02010KT 1800 +TSRA SCT006
SCT013CB OVC60 27/23 Q1009 RWY WATER
PACHES TEMPO 1000

METAR ist ein Format, in dem Flughäfen
Wetterinformationen an Piloten weitergeben.

GEPLANTE FLÜGE — NÄCHSTE 7 TAGE

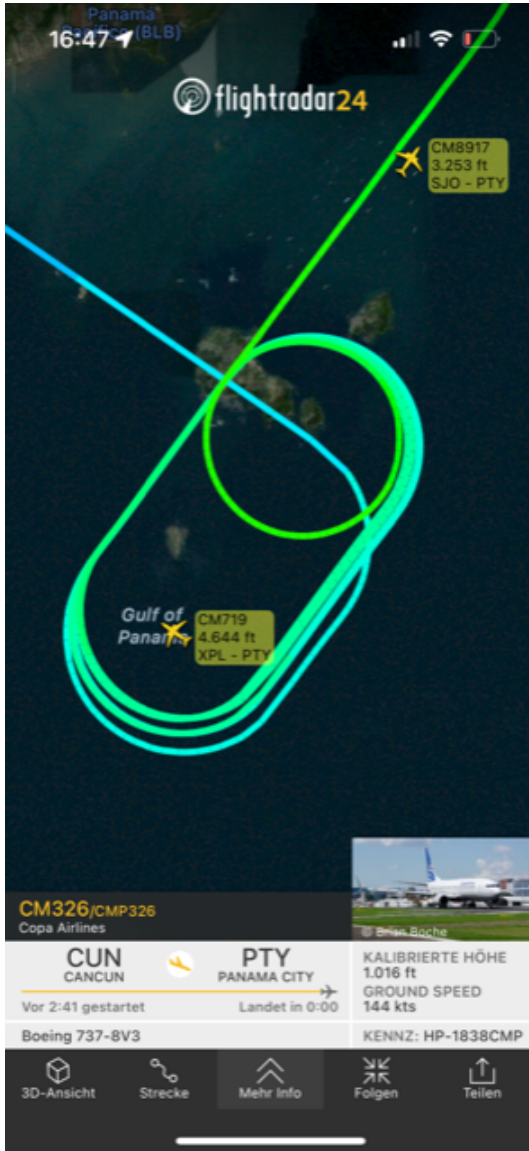
ABFLÜGE 1.184
ANGEFLOGENE FLUGHÄFEN

MEISTGENUTZTE ROUTE
PTY-BOG 72 Flüge
ANGEFLOGENE LÄNDER

Allgemeines Ankünfte Abflüge Am Boden

Bad weather in Tocumen

Today, right at rush hour, a heavy thunderstorm hit Panama City and it was interesting to see that almost all approaching aircraft had to fly one or more holding patterns somewhere.



Copa from Cancun, waiting

The Copa plane from Cancun had to fly three full holding patterns, the Copa plane from Rio de Janeiro was diverted to Rio Hato (MPSM), 100 km away, and Eurowings from Frankfurt got it worst: holding pattern already before the Caribbean coast, then it was sent west and finally diverted to Cartagena in Colombia. After a flight time of 12:10 hours in the wrong country.

Lucky is the KLM, which left Amsterdam with 1:45 hours delay and now after the mess here with us past into the final approach, without detour or holding patterns, but on the last kilometers again a thunderstorm must avoid.



KL757 in final approach

We will be on our way to Germany via Amsterdam in a few days. Without test, without mask, like before the "war". The hope is that the current chaos at some German airports will not hit us and that we will have better weather than today when we fly back to Panama.

Simply emigrate

Everyone knows people who have been talking about emigrating for years and will never do it.

And there are YouTube videos with selection tables for the optimal destination country, with per capita gross national product, human development, and GINI index as important criteria.

So it seems that it is not so easy to find the right country, even though it took us less than three months to do so ourselves.

For fun, our criteria at the time were "Be able to drink red wine every day of the year, at midnight, outdoors, lightly clothed."

More seriously, most emigration candidates are probably concerned about

- Comfortable climate
- personal freedom
- happy people
- positive perspective

Countries and boundary conditions change:

In the Covid crisis, Canada and Australia, two of the formerly most popular destination countries, have sidelined themselves.

The Ukraine war shows that former Soviet republics can fall victim to newly awakened great power aspirations.

Nearby destinations such as Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, as well as Serbia and Kosovo, have long-simmering disputes that could lead to open conflict at any time.

So what's wrong with staying home and riding out all adversity?

A worst-case scenario might look like this: Russia decides to establish land access to Kaliningrad, at the expense of Poland and Lithuania, triggering the so-called defense case for NATO.

This means mobilization, whereby you yourself and your sons can be called up for military service at any time. Unthinkable in Europe? One can hope, but it is by no means certain.



Source: mytripolog.com

Defending the homeland may once have been a noble goal. Is it still? Everyone must answer that question for themselves.

Those who plan to emigrate have usually already resigned inwardly and just haven't packed their bags yet for a variety of reasons. If in the case of emergency then thousands set out and invade foreign countries, it becomes difficult.

Those who have identified their destination long beforehand, without pressure, and have obtained permanent residency, have a clear advantage. Just as during the Covid lockdown, only residents were allowed into Panama in addition to citizens.

This is called Plan B, and the B stands for BEFORE the emergency occurs. And it is true that emigration should not be escape, but optimization.

If you limit your search for a new home to the above criteria, you will reach your destination faster. So I will look at these in more detail in the next post.

So come back and spread the word.

Simply emigrate: Feel-good climate

As promised here, in this post and three others, I will discuss what I consider to be the most important criteria when emigrating.

Today: Feel-good climate

"Living where others vacation" is a slogan that describes it quite well. And where do most people go on vacation? Where the sun shines, more or less.

I can still remember very well the Baltic Sea's early summer vacation days, where one lay, covered with a bath towel, behind the windbreak and longed for the moments when the sun showed itself through a hole in the clouds.

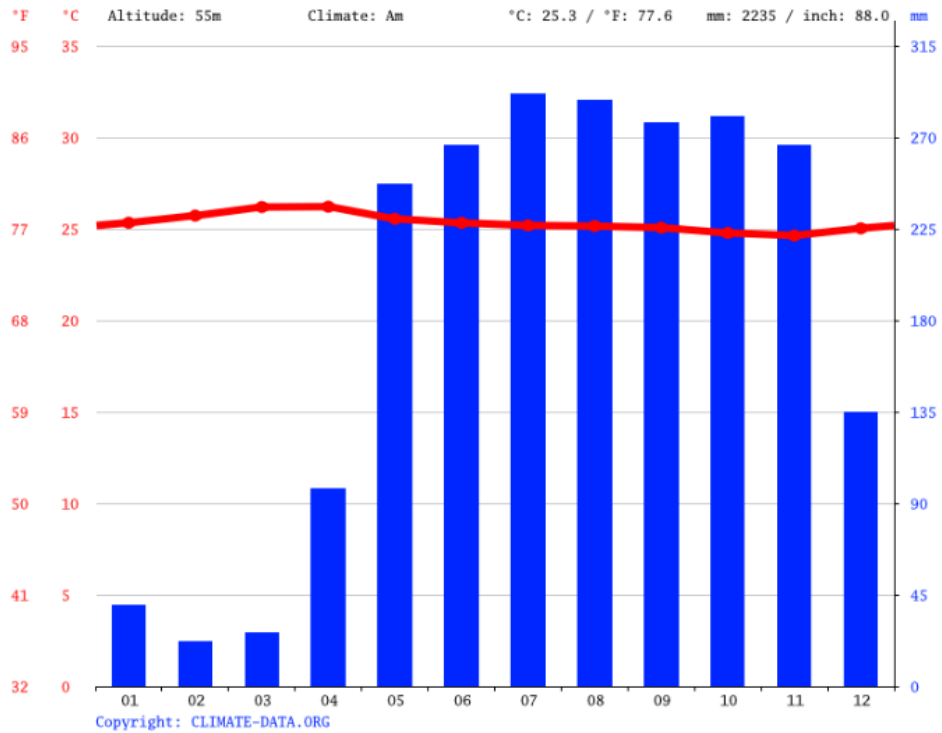
The battle cry "Sun!" was the signal to fire every covering into the corner, so that the warmth of the sun's rays could create that incredible feeling of well-being, because of which you lay in the sand all day instead of drinking a beer or two in the beach bar.

Is that why everyone wants to live on a tropical beach? Of course not. Everyone has his personal preference, his feel-good climate.

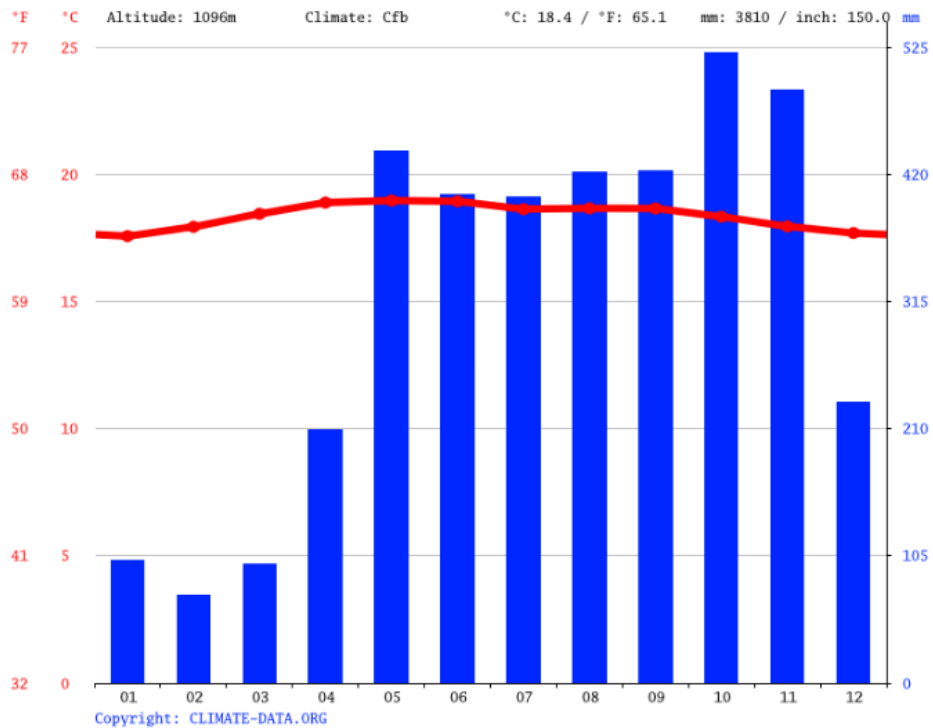
Let me explain using Panama as an example. Everybody can derive it for his country of choice.

Here are the climate data for Gamboa, located at the edge of the capital Panama City, and for Boquete, a small town at the volcano Baru, at about 2000 m above sea level.

KLIMADIAGRAMM FÜR GAMBOA



KLIMADIAGRAMM FÜR BOQUETE



The average annual temperature for Boquete is like Berlin in summer, 18 to 19°C. Strolling and licking ice cream all year round? You could say, except that in Boquete, you should have your umbrella ready between May and November. There is five times as much precipitation as the annual average in Berlin.

But the comparison should rather be made with the regions within Panama. Therefore, a look at Gamboa, which is representative of the capital: the average annual temperature of 25°C is 6°C higher than in Boquete. Precipitation in summer is 270 mm instead of around 420 mm in Boquete.

The situation is similar along the central Pacific coast, west of Panama City to Rio Hato, and further to Penonome and Aguadulce.

Between Boquete and Gamboa there are various low mountain regions, where everybody can find his comfortable climate: in the mountains around Santa Fe or around Penonome, in El Valle de Anton or in the National Park Altos de Campaña.

A warning at the end:

If the power goes out for three days in Dubai, the city is a graveyard. If that happens in Panama, even after weeks and months, there will still be water, fruits, vegetables, chicken, and fish in abundance. Only the capital, with its skyscrapers and cramped residential neighborhoods, will be empty.

What is your feel-good climate?

Simply emigrate: Personal freedom ...

has many facets and everyone sets their own priorities.

If you don't want to live as an illegal in a foreign country, it makes sense to look for a permanent residence first. The requirements vary from country to country, the simpler, the better.

Panama, as an example, had made this super simple with its Friendly Nation visa for many years, attracting many foreigners. Since then, the financial requirements have been tightened, but are still easy to meet if you are serious about settling. Details [here](#).

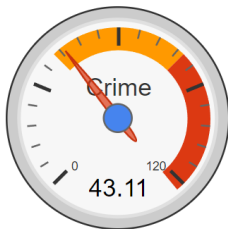
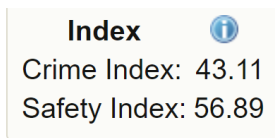
Freedom of movement in and out of the country. Those who have Panama residency are only required to enter the country at least once every two years. There is no minimum length of stay. On the other hand, Panama is the perfect springboard to reach all of South America, the Caribbean, and many destinations in North America. More than 70 destinations are currently served by the national airline Copa.

Once immigrated, I personally want to be largely left alone by the government and bureaucracy. The Covid crisis in Panama was a good touchstone for that.

Yes, the "measures" at the beginning were drastic. And yes, residents anxiously followed all instructions, waiting in long lines for Pfizer & Co. without obligation. We and other expats could have easily participated, but there was no prompting or pressure.

Financial freedom is another important point. If you earn your money as a resident outside Panama, you have nothing to declare and nothing to do with the financial administration. With a Panamanian company, which generates exclusively foreign income, one deposits every year a simple statement of his income with the lawyer, who has already accompanied the company formation and manages the documents.

Panama is located on the drug route, on which mainly cocaine is transferred from Colombia to the north and the income from the USA to the south. This also fosters organized crime here in the country, resulting in a murder rate more than 10 times that of Germany and nearly double that of the United States. In 2020, there were 11.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. The main focus is the port city of Colon, which is not very inviting in other respects either. Outside of this "industry" and this location, you don't notice much of it.



Crime rates in Panama

Source: numbeo.com

In just under 15 years of being here, I've heard about robberies from time to time, but I've never experienced anything like it myself. I rather think of the Uber driver who brings me my iPhone to the hotel after he has found it in the car, or the saleswoman who returns the \$50 bill that one has given her by mistake instead of a twenty.

And, of course, there are opportunistic crooks everywhere, but in my experience much rarer than on the islands of the Caribbean, for example. And if I leave my iPhone in the car here, I don't have to expect junkies to smash the windows as they do in German and US cities.

The biggest problem seems to me to be corruption, which is clumsier here and not as institutionalized as in Europe.

Living where it goes forward

If you live in the suburbs of Arraijan or La Chorrera, it is not easy to get into the city in the morning and back home in the afternoon. Both the route over the Bridge of the Americas and the Centenario Bridge are completely congested during rush hour.

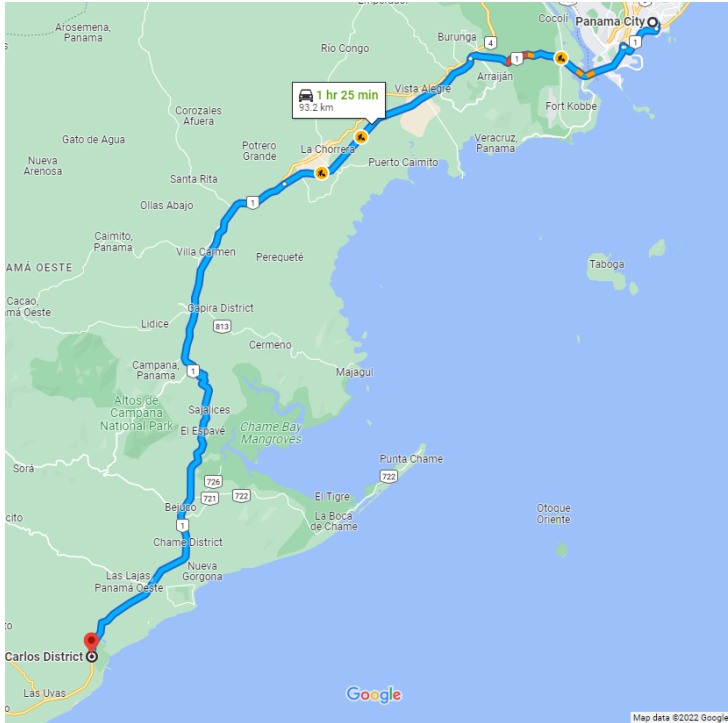
To ease that, there is the 4th Canal Bridge project. Within sight of the Bridge of the Americas, work is already underway on a new multi-lane bridge over the canal, directly over the two ports to the right and left of the canal, Puerto Balboa and Puerto Rodman.



The original plan was to also run the new Metro Line 3 over it, which has since been abandoned in favor of crossing under the canal. On the west side of the canal, the metro then comes out into the open again and runs along the road to La Chorrera, in the expectation of attracting as many commuters as possible from the same to relieve the route as a connection to the interior.



The road will then be widened to six lanes over 90 km to San Carlos, which will also make the trip from the capital to the central Pacific beaches around Coronado much more pleasant.



Quelle: google.com

For quite some time, you can already observe the work on the road and metro on the route between the capital and Arraijan and for a few days,

a first section of the road is used. We had to try it out today and capture it in a video. In a few years, no one will be able to imagine what this looked like before.

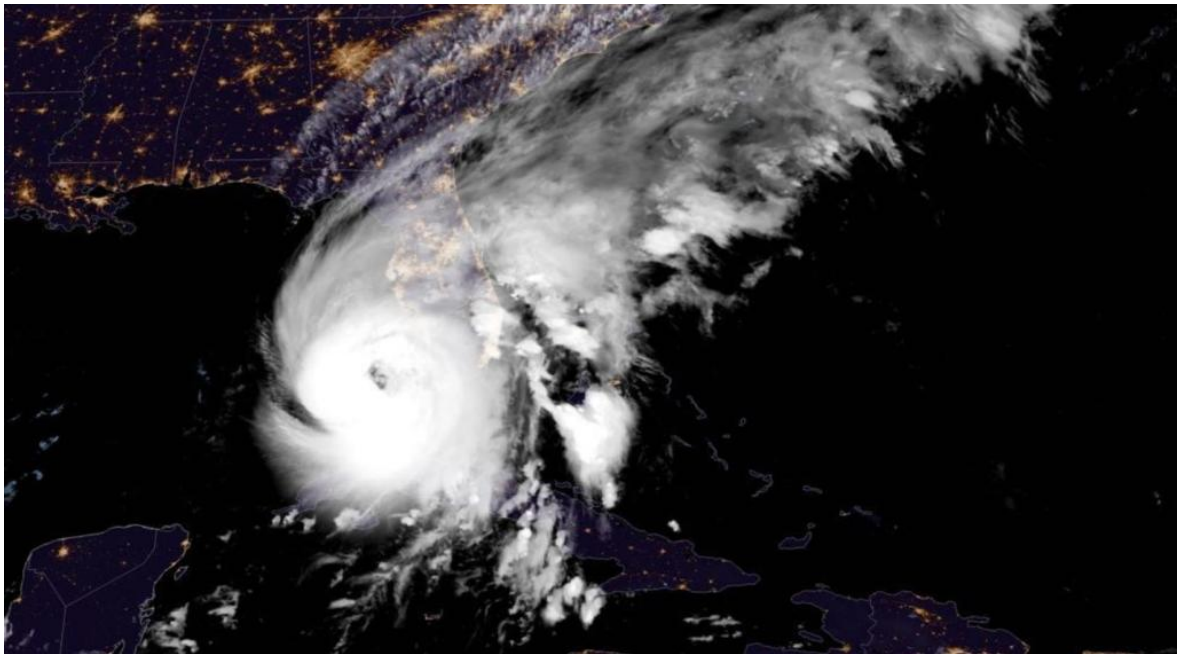
The film starts out of town, 3 km behind the America Bridge in the direction of Arraijan. On the right, road construction has been progressing rapidly for some time, while on the left the route of the metro is being painstakingly wrested from the terrain and the first piers of the metro stations are rising into the air.

A few kilometers further on, the route is being diverted from the previous alignment to the new four-lane route, currently only for a few kilometers. But once again we have a new piece of infrastructure up and running for us. Things are moving forward.

Arriving at the height of Arraijan, we turn around and head back to the capital. Another change of route, then over the America Bridge to the Amador Causeway and we are home.

Florida, Texas, or Panama?

2 days ago, on Wednesday afternoon, Hurricane Ian stormed over the until then the picturesque island of North Captiva with winds of up to 250 km/h, moved with great destructive force over the nearby region of Fort Myers, further towards Tampa, on the Gulf Coast of Florida.



In July 2008, Dolly hit South Padre Island on the Texas-Mexico border with a force of 140 mph only. Enough, however, to modify our already advanced emigration plans at that time and choose Panama as the destination instead.

Even though such natural disasters claim fewer lives nowadays thanks to satellite imagery and stable building fabric, we didn't want to have to face having to live in a disaster area for weeks on end every year.

No hurricanes and no severe earthquakes had been decisive criteria for our choice of location and Panama is a paradise in this respect as well.

"Panazuela" or safest haven?

Flashback: Panama fully embraced the measures promulgated by WHO at the start of the Covid plandemie. Expats left the country in droves and a well-known emigration consultant wrote it off as *Panazuela*.

Back to the present: under the headline "Where to flee if a Third World War breaks out?" the same consultant now recommends Panama as the safest option, number 1 among 6 countries.

How times do change. I could not have written the current paean to Panama much better, but without a "forced discount of 25-50% on everything in the country", which is not the case.

Panama, ein kleines Land in Mittelamerika, **verfügt über keine eigene Armee**, würde aber im Falle eines Konflikts unter dem Schutz der Amerikaner stehen, die ihre eigenen Interessen verteidigen wollen. Der Grund dafür ist, dass das Land eine sehr wichtige strategische Lage für den Welthandel hat. Um eine Vorstellung davon zu bekommen: Jedes Jahr fahren **durchschnittlich 14 Tausend Schiffe** durch den weltberühmten Panama Kanal, der dem kleinen Land damit mehrere Milliarden an Einkünften beschert.

Trotz der Nähe zu Amerika ist Panama weitestgehend blockfrei und sanktioniert weder Russen noch Chinesen. Panama hat ein extremst offenes, auf Dienstleistungen ausgerichtetes Wirtschaftssystem und ist das einzige Land der Welt ohne Zentralbank. Geld kann nicht auf Knopfdruck gedruckt werden, sondern muss durch gute Angebote ins Land fließen.

Dank seines günstigen Klimas und seiner guten wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung ist Panama auch in Bezug auf Nahrungsmittel und Energie autark. Hurrikanes und Erdbeben gibt es hier nicht. Ein weiterer Vorteil Panamas ist sein Steuersystem: **Territorialbesteuerung**. Panama rangiert im Weltfriedensindex auf Platz 61 als sicheres Land, in dem es sich gut leben lässt, und ist außerdem eines der wirtschaftlich freiesten Länder Lateinamerikas. Leider führt dies aktuell zu einem Platz auf der Schwarzen Liste der EU, weshalb du deinen Panama-Wohnsitz nicht zur Banking-KYC nutzen solltest.

Eine hohe Anschlussfähigkeit ist ebenfalls ein wichtiger Faktor. Wenn ein Krieg ausbricht und Du Dich irgendwo auf dem amerikanischen Kontinent befindest, ist Panama einer der nächstgelegenen Orte, an den man am schnellsten fliehen kann, ohne Konfliktgebiete durchqueren zu müssen. Ozeananbindungen an Pazifik und Karibik mit direkter Verbindung durch den Kanal macht es zu einem idealen Land für **Bootsbesitzer**.

Alles zusammengenommen wäre Panama ein großartiger Ort, um im Falle eines Dritten Weltkriegs zu fliehen und ein neues Leben zu beginnen. Staatenlos besitzt seit Jahren die dauerhafte Aufenthaltsgenehmigung und ist gerade im Prozess eine Selbstversorgerfarm im Land zu erwerben. Interessierte können sich bei christoph@staatenlos.ch melden sofern sie mindestens 200.000 USD aufbringen können (was dann ebenfalls zur Permanent Residency führt nach neuen Regeln). Neben 200.000 USD Immobilien-Investment für Friendly Nations wie DACH gibt es auch günstigere Möglichkeiten über ein Landwirtschafts-Investment (100.000 USD), Tropenholz-Investment (40.000 und 80.000 USD), Anstellung und mehr. Und Rentner bekommen ab einer Pension von 1000 USD im Monat weiterhin nicht nur die Aufenthaltserlaubnis, sondern einen staatlich durchgesetzten Zwangsrabatt von 25-50% auf alles im Land.

Short trip

Nonstop from Panama City to Playa Venao - that only works on a Sunday, with little traffic and hardly any speed cameras.

350 km in just under 5 hours and shortly before the destination it starts to rain. But no matter, the destination is Villa Marina Lodge & Condos at Playa Venao, in the southeast of Azuero.



Drink wine, eat a whole fish and then watch the Formula 1 race in Austin in a deck chair under palm trees.

Life is good.

The first class of cruise ships live

The First Crusade, towards Jerusalem, began in 1096 and was extremely strenuous for the crusaders of that time. Today's crusaders have it much easier.

Our almost daily power-walking takes us in the late afternoon mostly along the entrance to the canal, where at this time some ships finish their transit and head out to the Pacific. Every now and then, the uniformity of container and bulk freighters, oil and gas tankers, and car carriers is interrupted by exotic types of ships: Luxury yachts and catamarans, fast destroyers, and even nuclear submarines.

And since the cruise terminal on Isla Flamenco, just 2 km from us, has been in operation, increasingly so have cruise ships.

Last week it was the huge Norwegian Encore, with 333 m length and space for almost 4,000 passengers on 16 decks.



Today, two representatives of the first class in the cruise business arrived one after the other:

The Seabourn Quest has 229 suites, all with ocean views, and is classified in the ultra-luxury class. Here is already a travel proposal for 2024:

The image shows a travel proposal for the Seabourn Quest cruise. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a phone icon, the Seabourn logo, and a menu icon. Below this is a filter bar with a 'Filter' dropdown and '1 Recent Searched' with a right arrow. The main content features a map of the cruise route, starting in Miami, Florida, and ending in Miami. The route includes stops in the Caribbean (St. Kitts, Antigua, Martinique, Barbados) and the Amazon region (Parintins, Manaus, Boca dos Botos, Alter do Chão, Guajara, Santarém, Natal, Recife). It also includes stops in Brazil (Armação dos Búzios, Rio de Janeiro, Abraão) and ends in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The map shows the Amazon River, the Equator, and the Pacific Ocean. Below the map, the title is '33-Day Brazilian Beaches, The Amazon & Caribbean'. The ship is 'Seabourn Quest'. It departs from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and arrives in Miami, Florida, US. The dates are 'FEB 20, 2024 — MAR 24, 2024'. There is a link for 'MORE DATES & FARES'. Two buttons are present: 'LEARN MORE' and 'REQUEST A QUOTE'. The pricing is 'Ocean View Suite From \$14,449*'. There is also a heart icon on the map.

MIAMI

St. Kitts
Antigua
Martinique
Barbados

San Juan

Parintins
Amazon River

Manaus
Boca dos Botos
Alter do Chão

Guajara
Santarém

Natal
Recife

Equator

Pacific Ocean

Armação dos Búzios
Rio de Janeiro
Abraão

Punta del Este

BUENOS AIRES

33-Day Brazilian Beaches, The Amazon & Caribbean

SHIP: **Seabourn Quest**

DEPARTS Buenos Aires, Argentina
ARRIVES Miami, Florida, US

FEB 20, 2024 — MAR 24, 2024

MORE DATES & FARES

LEARN MORE **REQUEST A QUOTE**

Ocean View Suite From **\$14,449***



But that was not all. The Royal Clipper, a 5-master sailing ship for up to 227 passengers and also luxury equipment. Unfortunately, it came out of the canal with the engine, instead of under sails, nevertheless an impressive picture. The Clipper comes from Barbados and the tour ends today here in Panama City.



Makes you long for faraway places, doesn't it?

The brand-new cruise terminal is a major asset for the tourism business and will open up more and more attractive routes over the next few years.

Alaska, Hawaii, Patagonia, Polynesia ... ?

Moving rocks

While browsing through my posts from past years, I came across the fact here that about 200 million cubic yards of soil and rock were excavated and removed during the construction of the canal. That's an impressive number, and a significant portion of it was, after all, used to build the Amador Causeway as a breakwater to protect the Pacific Channel entrance.



Quelle: cdn.britannica.com

Back to today: last week I had the pleasure of exchanging views with a representative of Franco-Nevada, a company that has invested a remarkable \$1.6 billion in the Cobre Panama copper mine.

In the process, I learned that the mine, located in the mountains of Coclé and Colón provinces, aims to soon produce 100 million metric tons (Mtpa) of rock per year, to be converted in three crushing steps into a copper concentrate that will be in demand on the world market.



Quelle: magazine.cim.org

Now let's compare the earth movements during the construction of the Panama Canal in the early 20th century with those during copper ore mining in 2022:

	Canal	Conversion	Copper mine
volume (m ³)	200,000,000	1 m ³ = 2,5t	
mass (t)	500,000,000		100,000,000
	Within 5 years		Per year

If one assumes that the massive earthworks on the canal lasted over 5 years, it results that comparable quantities of rock were broken up and removed per year as in the extraction of copper ore in Cobre Panama.

Both are outstanding technical achievements that deserve all respect. Both projects make significant contributions to the national budget of the Republic of Panama today and in the future; the canal since its acquisition in 2000 and expansion in 2016, and the mine only a few years ago, for a projected profitable life of 35 years.

Both projects are examples of how "old white men" laid the foundations for our modern industrial society.

It's hard to imagine the gender-fixated generations to come setting up anything comparable with wind, solar, and rainbows.

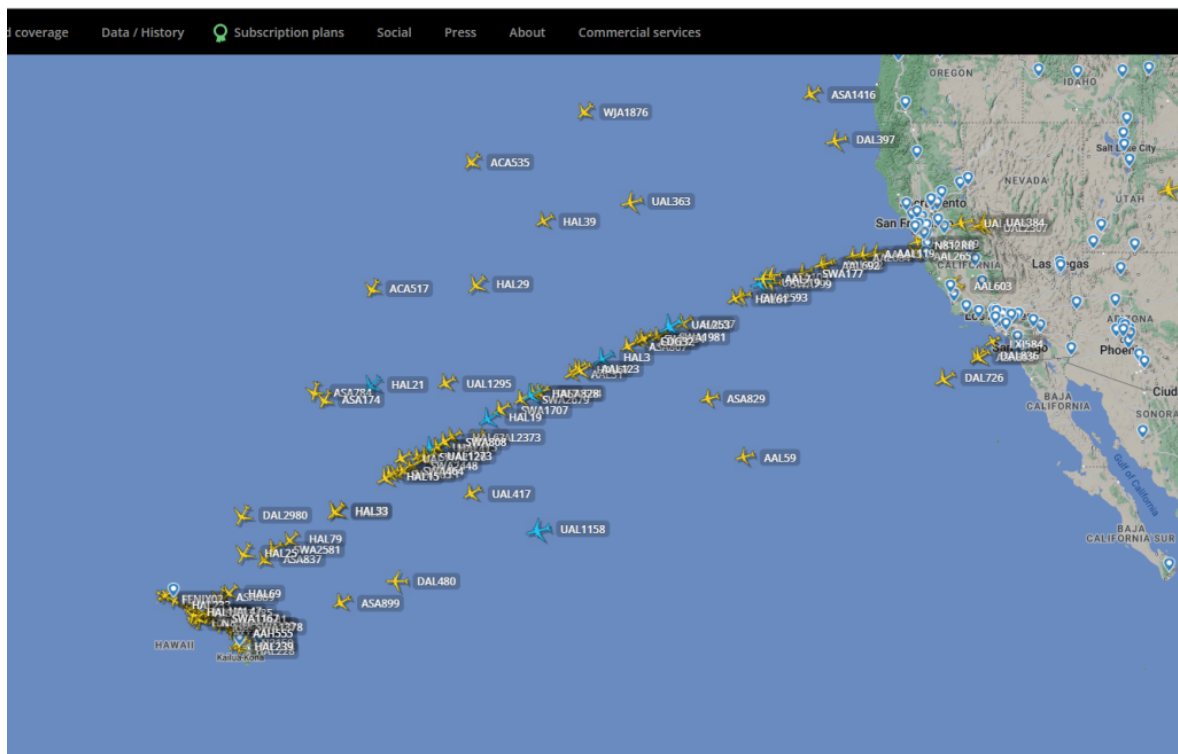
By the way, gold is a by-product of copper ore mining. This in turn explains Franco-Nevada's business concept.

Franco-Nevada Corporation is the leading gold-focused royalty and streaming company with the largest and most diversified portfolio of cash flow-producing assets. The company's business model provides investors with options related to gold price and exploration while limiting the risk of cost inflation. NYSE: FNV

No beer in Hawaii (an old German song title)

Besides the approach to Panama City, I always like to take a look at the traffic over the Pacific. Flightradar24 is the perfect tool for that.

The picture visualizes the current traffic from the US mainland to Hawaii. About 60 planes are lined up like on a string of pearls on an airway that starts south of San Francisco and collects everything that wants to fly toward the currently active Mauna Loa.



Those who want to go from Panama to Hawaii have a variety of domestic departure points to choose from, such as Miami, Houston, Dallas, etc.

The shortest route will be via Los Angeles (LAX), which is served daily by Copa. Price-wise, San Francisco is probably the better choice.

Switched off

Only a few clouds in the blue sky at 32°C and we decide to explore the state of energy supply in Panama as a precaution.

Not at the far away Fortuna Reservoir in the mountains of Chiriqui but at Madden Dam, only 40 minutes by car northeast of the capital. As you can see in the picture, everything is fine, the water is flowing and generating energy.

Good for Panama.



Elsewhere, in the old homeland, things don't look so good: In Ba-Wü, the population is asked to save electricity between 2 and 3 p.m., and that's before winter has even started.

A look at the history of the former 3 NPPs in the southwestern German state of Baden-Württemberg (source) shows why electricity is in short supply.

The Obrigheim nuclear power plant was finally shut down in May 2005 due to the 2002 decision to phase out nuclear power and has been dismantled since 2008. The nuclear power plants Neckarwestheim I (GKN I) and Philippsburg 1 (KKP 1) were shut down in March 2011 due to the moratorium.

The nuclear power plants in Neckarwestheim I (GKN I) and Philippsburg 1 (KKP 1) were shut down in March 2011 due to the moratorium and finally lost their right to operate on August 6, 2011. The Ministry for the Environment, Climate and Energy Management issued the decommissioning licenses for these two nuclear power plants in February (Neckarwestheim I) and April 2017 (Philippsburg 1), respectively. As a result, three nuclear power plants are currently being dismantled in Baden-Württemberg. The Ministry of the Environment presented EnBW with the decommissioning and dismantling permit for Philippsburg 2 on December 19, 2019, and the plant was finally shut down on December 31, 2019.

The Neckarwestheim II nuclear power plant may still be operated. The plant's operating life ends at the end of 2022 at the latest.

If only it were Ba-Wü. After all, the plan is to soon operate the energy supply of the former industrial country of Germany completely without nuclear power and fossil fuels. Only gas may be used for a while as a bridging technology. What gas?

The nuclear phase-out, the most important project of the Greens, was already decided in 2002 by a red-green government and has been implemented since then, first de- and then tightened under Merkel.

Manfred Haferburg is a nuclear power plant engineer who has worked in the industry for decades and still inspects nuclear power plants around the world on behalf of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In this exciting article, he describes how "technically clueless politicians" have turned this vital industry into a "plaything" over decades and wantonly destroyed it. An industry in which Germany was a technological and safety leader, which would have saved us a lot of problems today and tomorrow, including a possible blackout, as well as now exorbitant CO2 emissions.



It is a beautiful full-moon night in Panama. Germany is 9,000 km away, the German voters and the state-supporting corporations have overwhelmingly voted for exactly this energy policy.

So everything is fine over there. And here, too.

Three images in three minutes and bonus

No idea how many pictures of the canal and the skyline I have already shot, probably countless. And yet it always itches in the fingers when a view worth seeing opens up.

Today at 16:37 it was the view to the cruise terminal, where the huge Norwegian Bliss and the easily overlooked Viking Star moored next to it.



Then the view goes across the bay to the skyline of Panama City, illuminated by the afternoon sun. It is 4:38 pm.



And as arranged, just now, at 4:39 p.m., the 366-meter container freighter Kimberley of the CMA CGM shipping company comes out of the channel into the Pacific, heading for Asia. It bears the inscription LNG-POWERED, which means that it runs on natural gas instead of heavy oil, emitting significantly fewer pollutants.



Bonus: Already at lunchtime today I managed to take a snapshot, which I want to add here.

30 meters from the kitchen window, on a hill overgrown by greenery, we have been watching a full-grown iguana warming up there in the sun, eating a lot of leaves. The zoom of the iPhone is not enough, but with good luck, I caught him today through the telescope.

