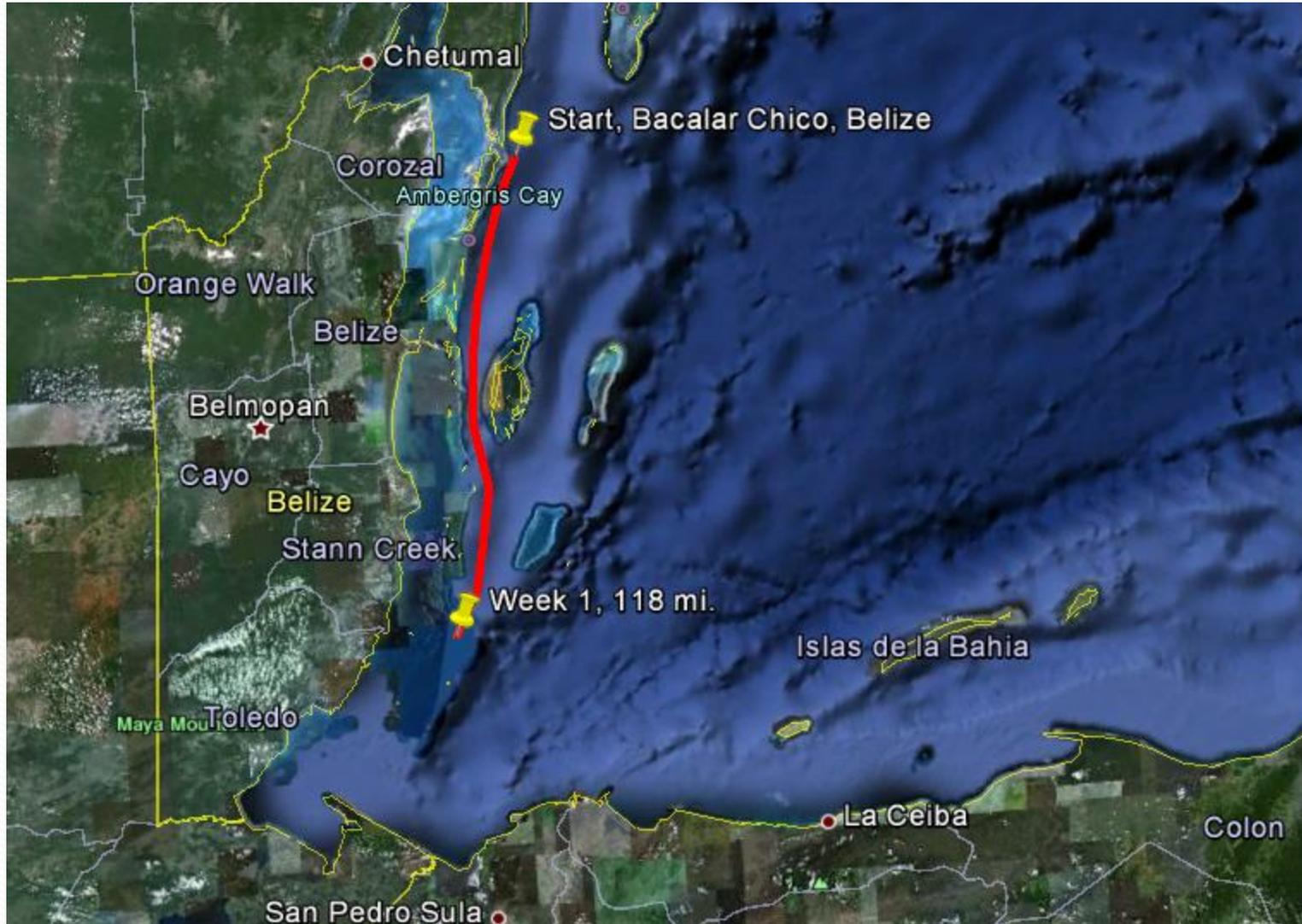


Virtual Swim 2012

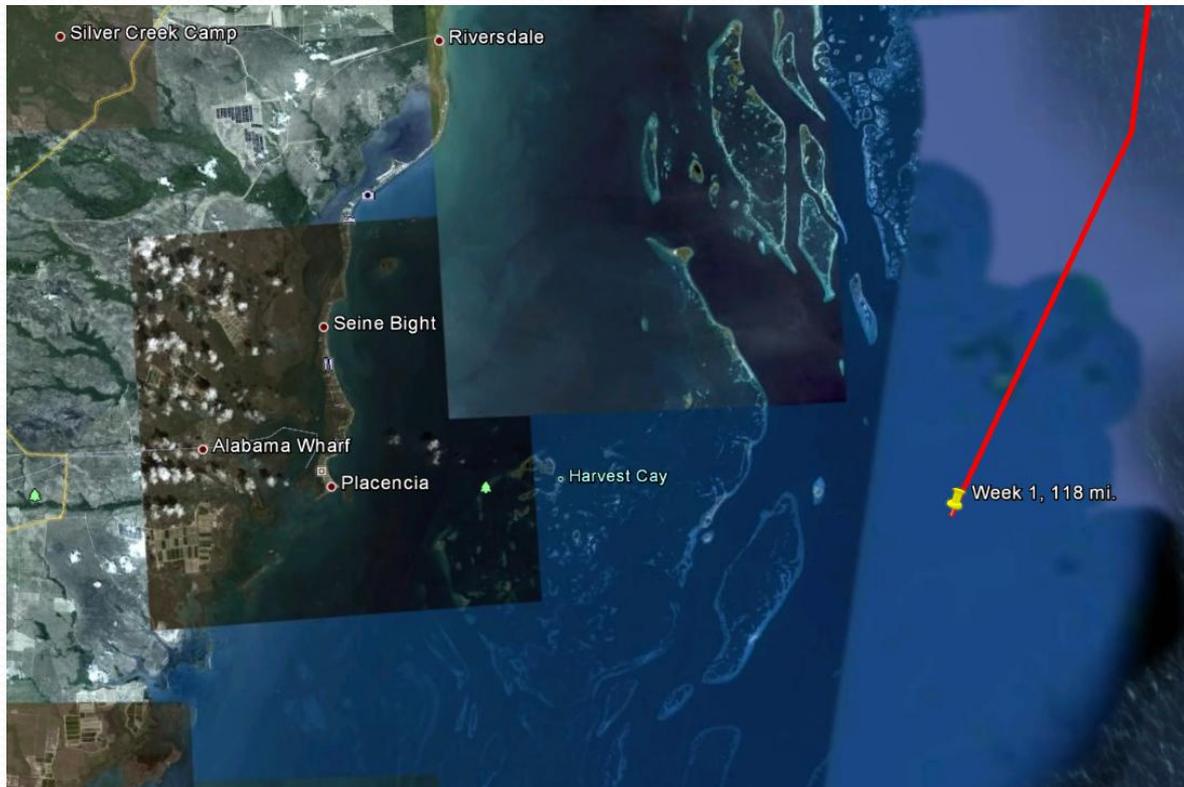
The quest for the Panama Canal

Week 1, 118 miles.

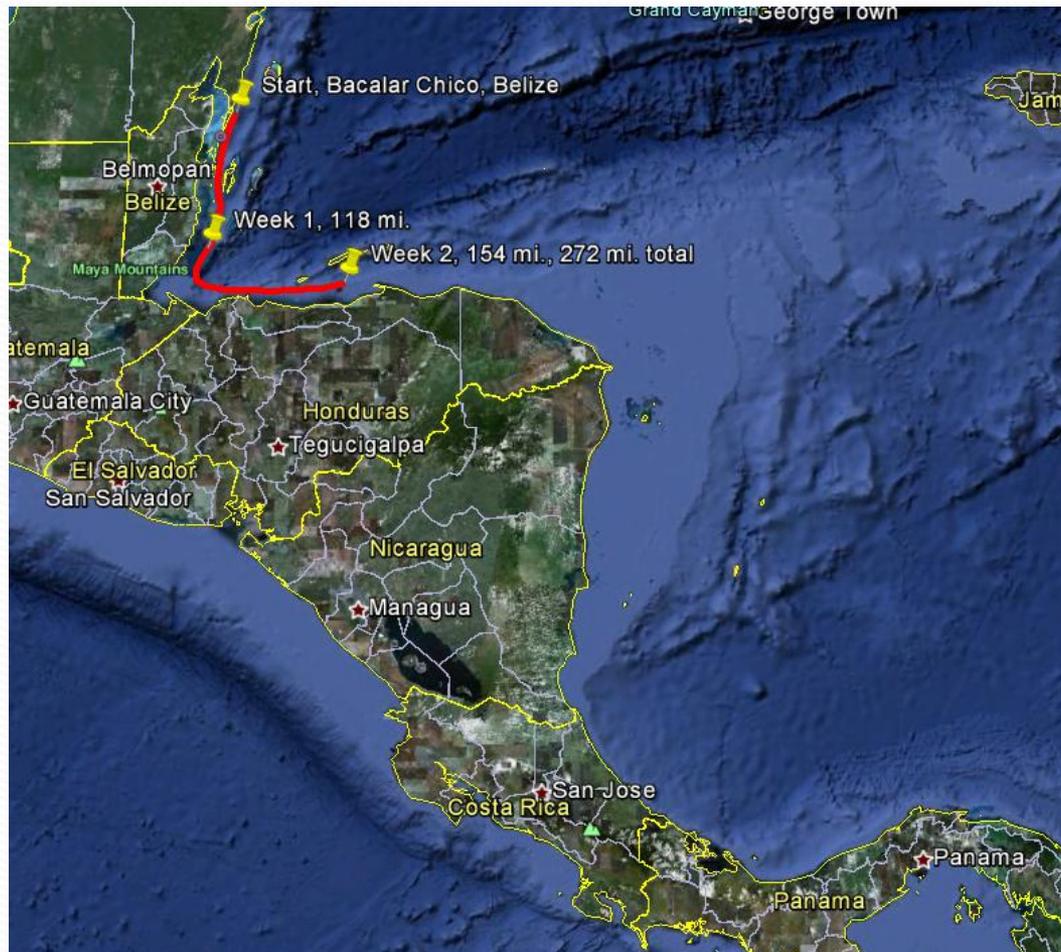


Week 1, 118 miles.

- We start at Bacalar Chico and swim past Belize City on the way to Placencia, Belize.



Week 2, 154 mi., 272 mi. Total



Week 2 takes us past Belize's barrier reef

Earthwatch

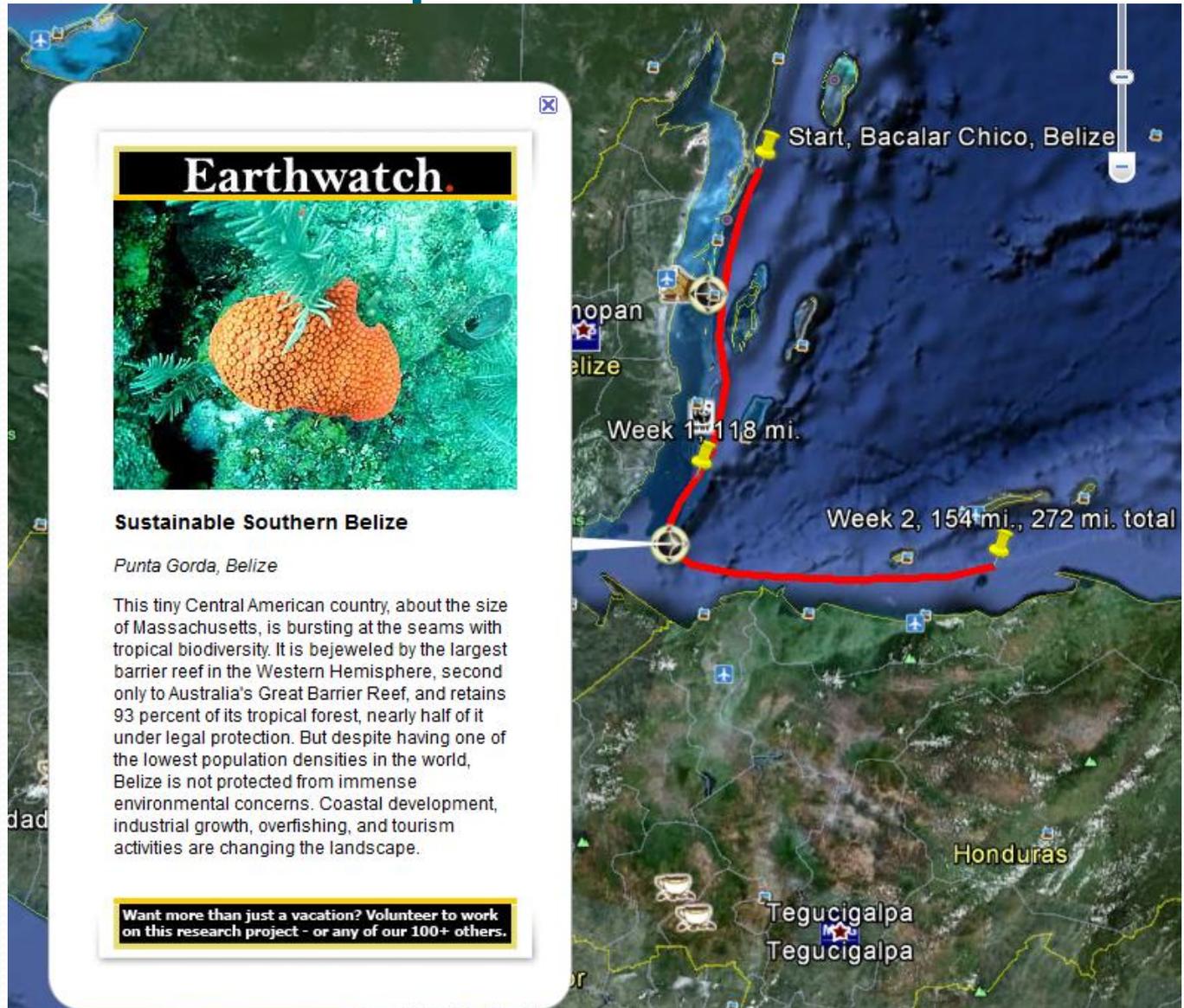


Sustainable Southern Belize

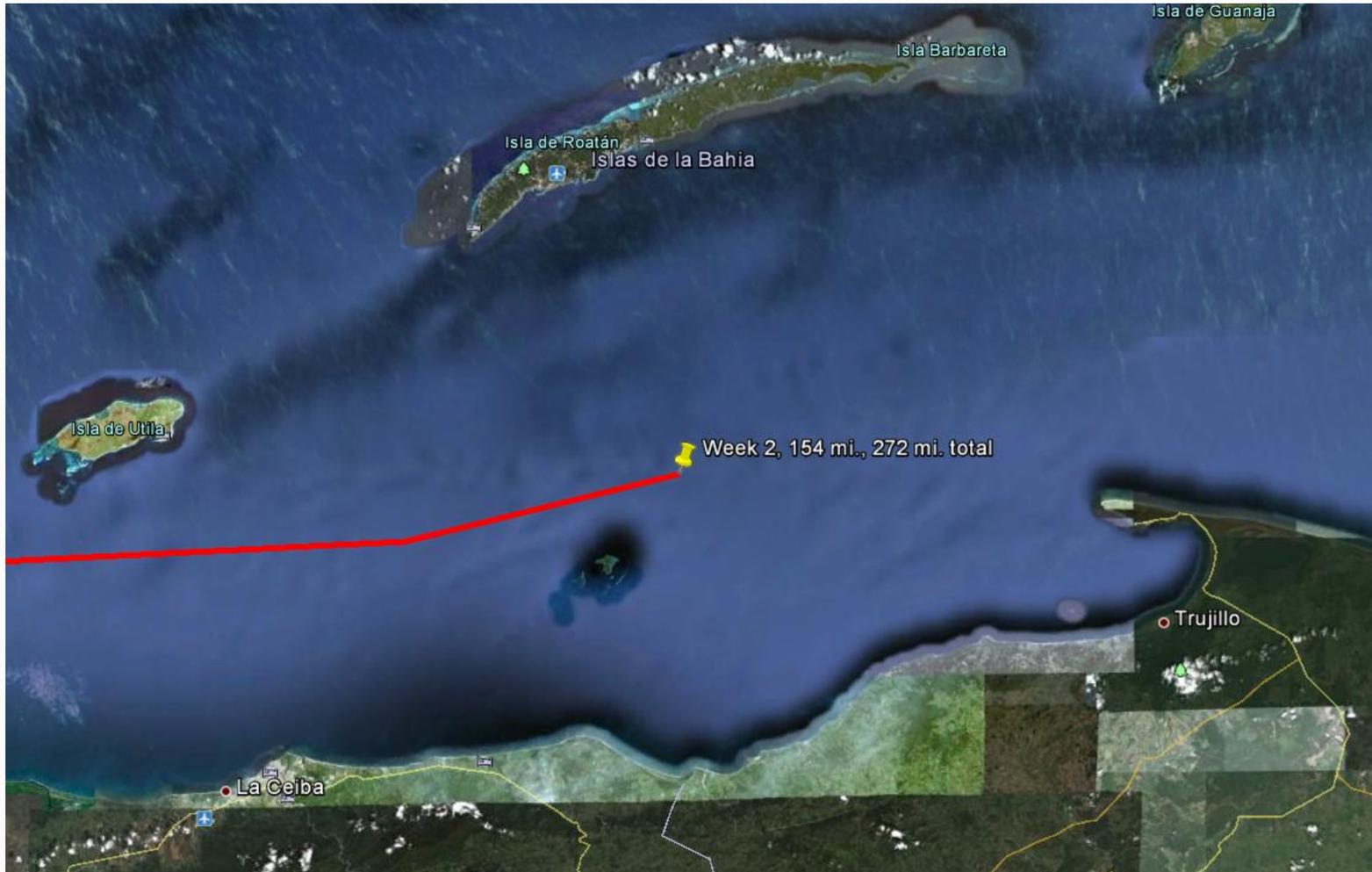
Punta Gorda, Belize

This tiny Central American country, about the size of Massachusetts, is bursting at the seams with tropical biodiversity. It is bejeweled by the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere, second only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, and retains 93 percent of its tropical forest, nearly half of it under legal protection. But despite having one of the lowest population densities in the world, Belize is not protected from immense environmental concerns. Coastal development, industrial growth, overfishing, and tourism activities are changing the landscape.

Want more than just a vacation? Volunteer to work on this research project - or any of our 100+ others.



Week 2 finishes near La Ceiba Honduras

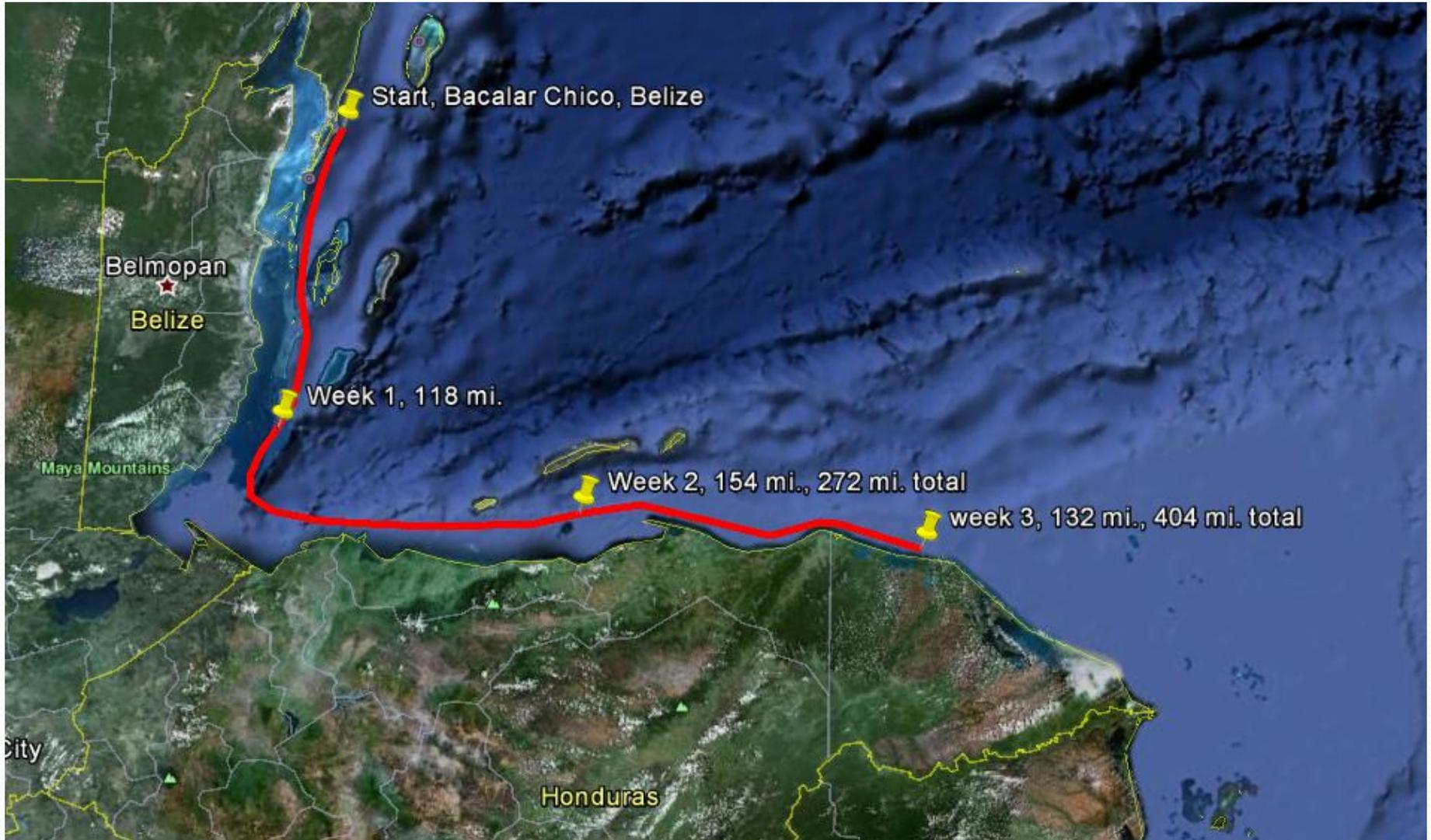


Week 2. Scenes from Roatan Island to the north

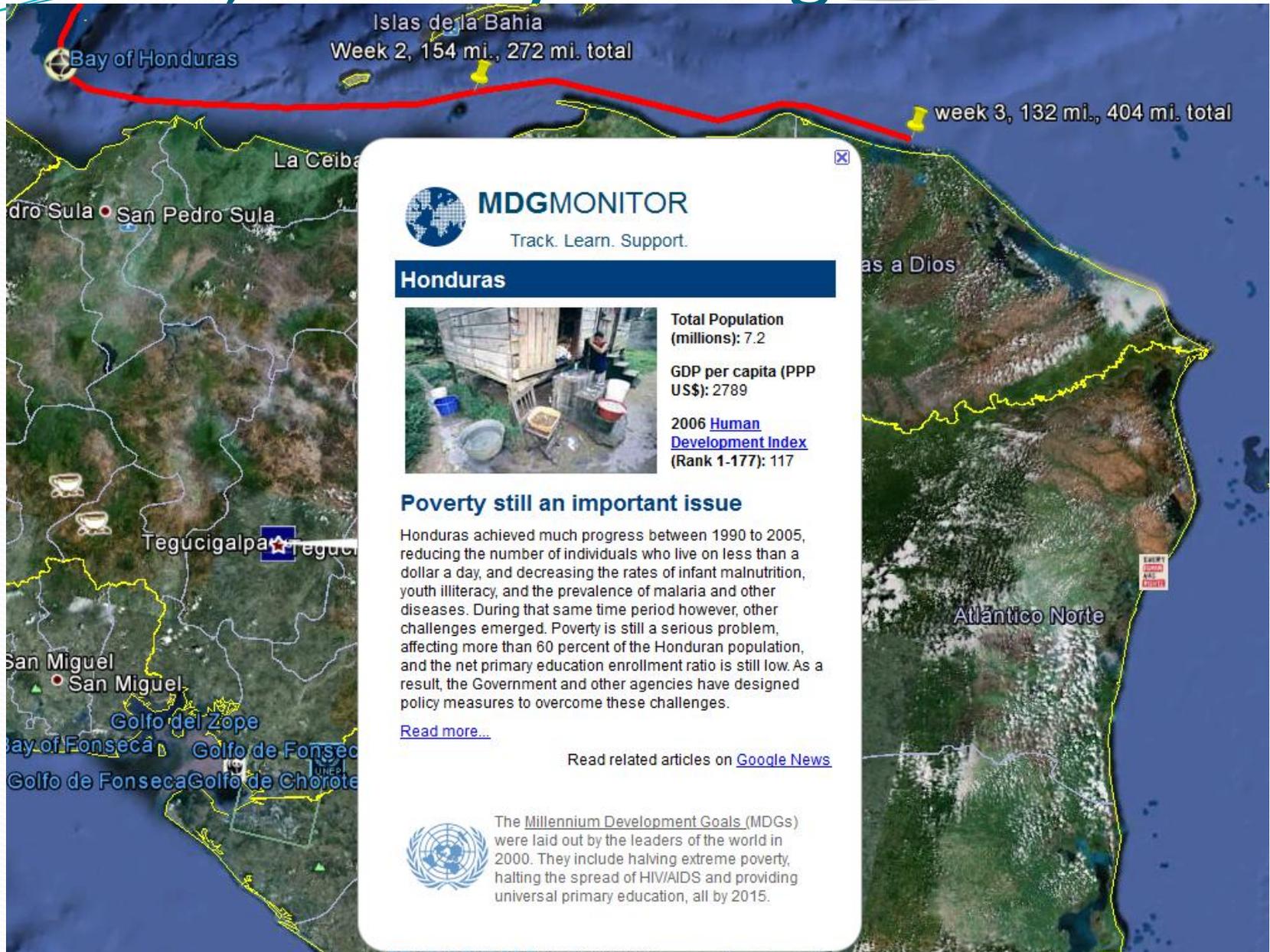
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roat%C3%A1n>



Week 3, 132 mi., 404 mi. Total



Week 3, halfway through Honduras



MDG MONITOR

Track. Learn. Support.

Honduras



Total Population
(millions): 7.2

GDP per capita (PPP
US\$): 2789

2006 [Human
Development Index](#)
(Rank 1-177): 117

Poverty still an important issue

Honduras achieved much progress between 1990 to 2005, reducing the number of individuals who live on less than a dollar a day, and decreasing the rates of infant malnutrition, youth illiteracy, and the prevalence of malaria and other diseases. During that same time period however, other challenges emerged. Poverty is still a serious problem, affecting more than 60 percent of the Honduran population, and the net primary education enrollment ratio is still low. As a result, the Government and other agencies have designed policy measures to overcome these challenges.

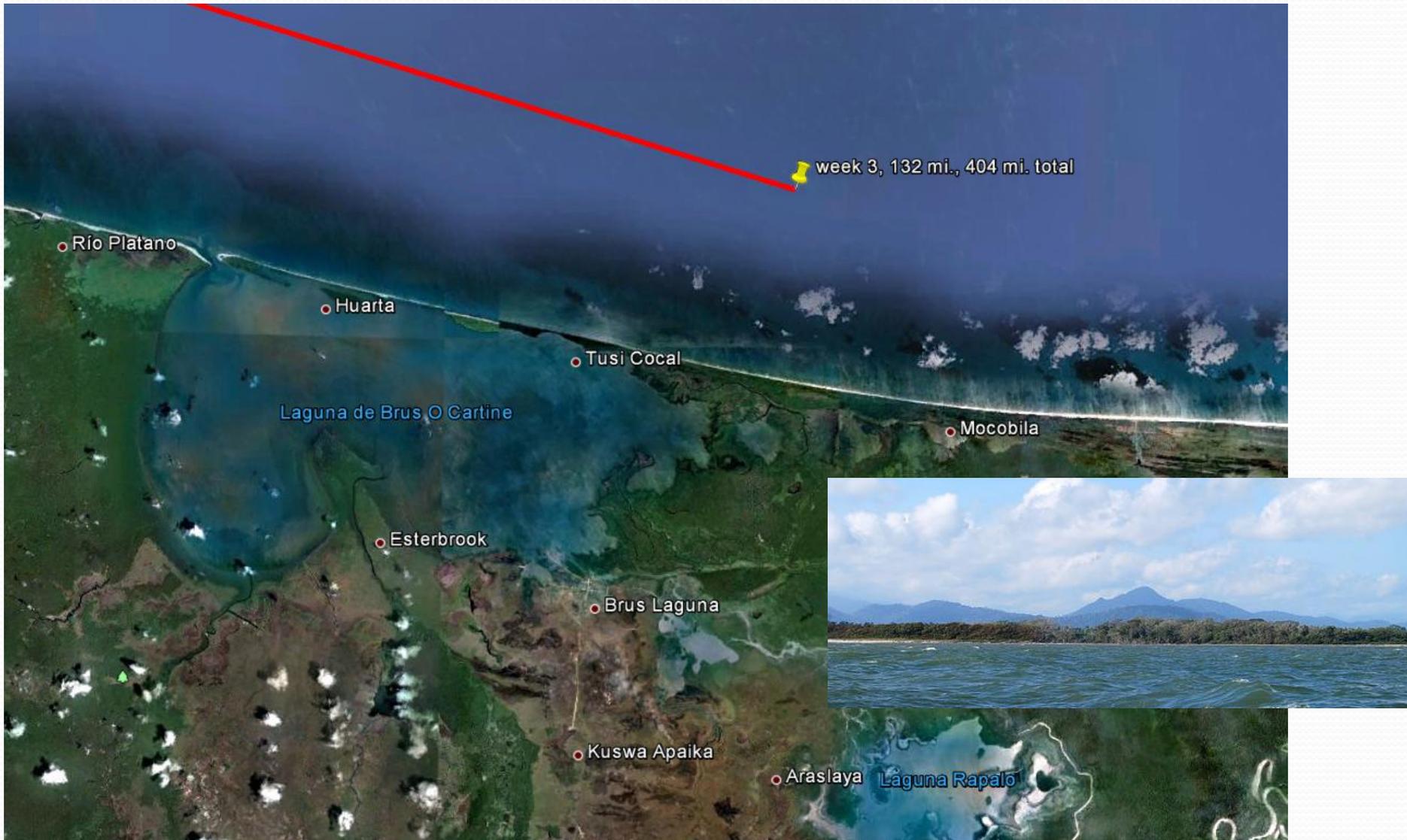
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Read related articles on [Google News](#)

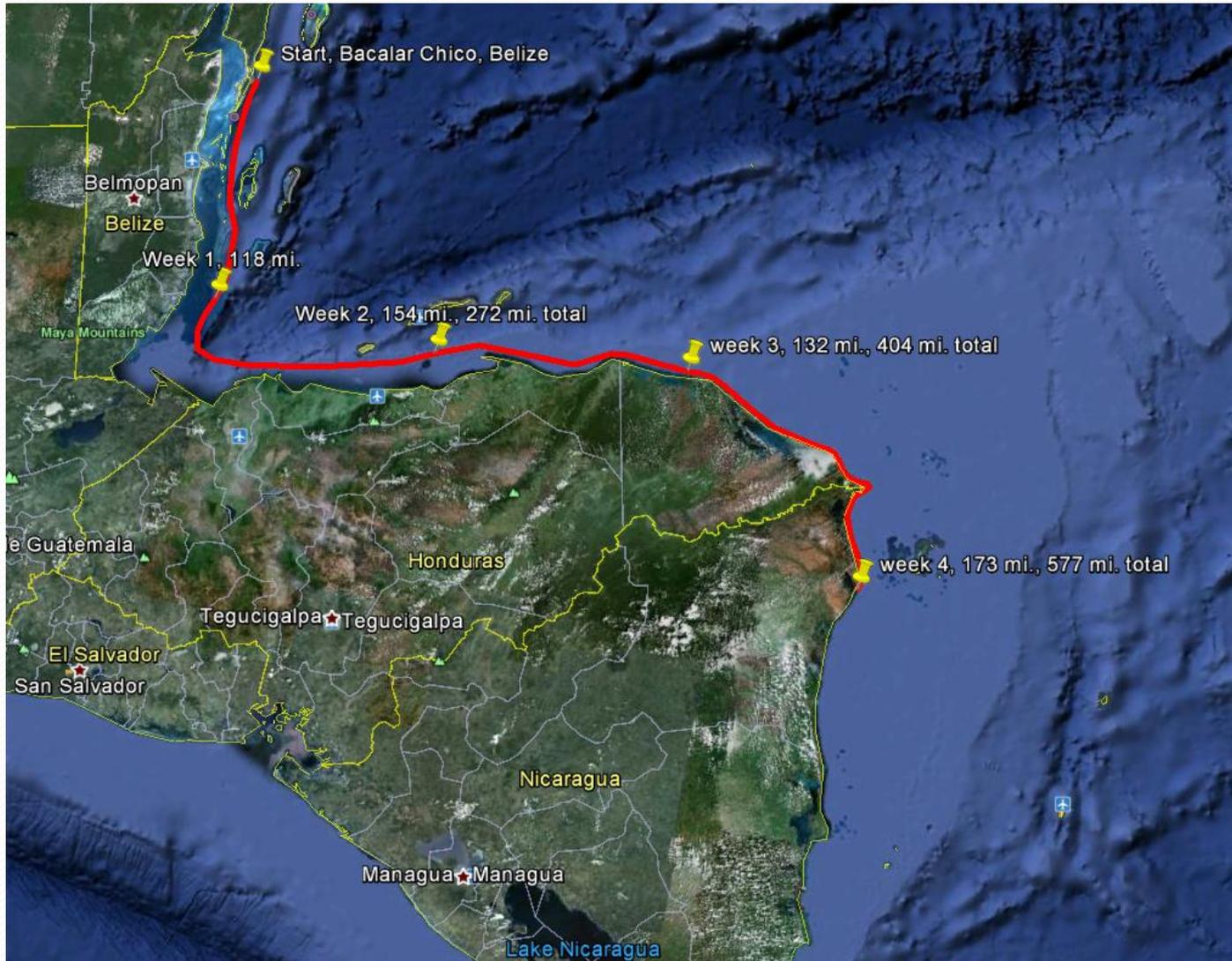


The [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) were laid out by the leaders of the world in 2000. They include halving extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by 2015.

Week 3 takes us near Brus Laguna, Honduras

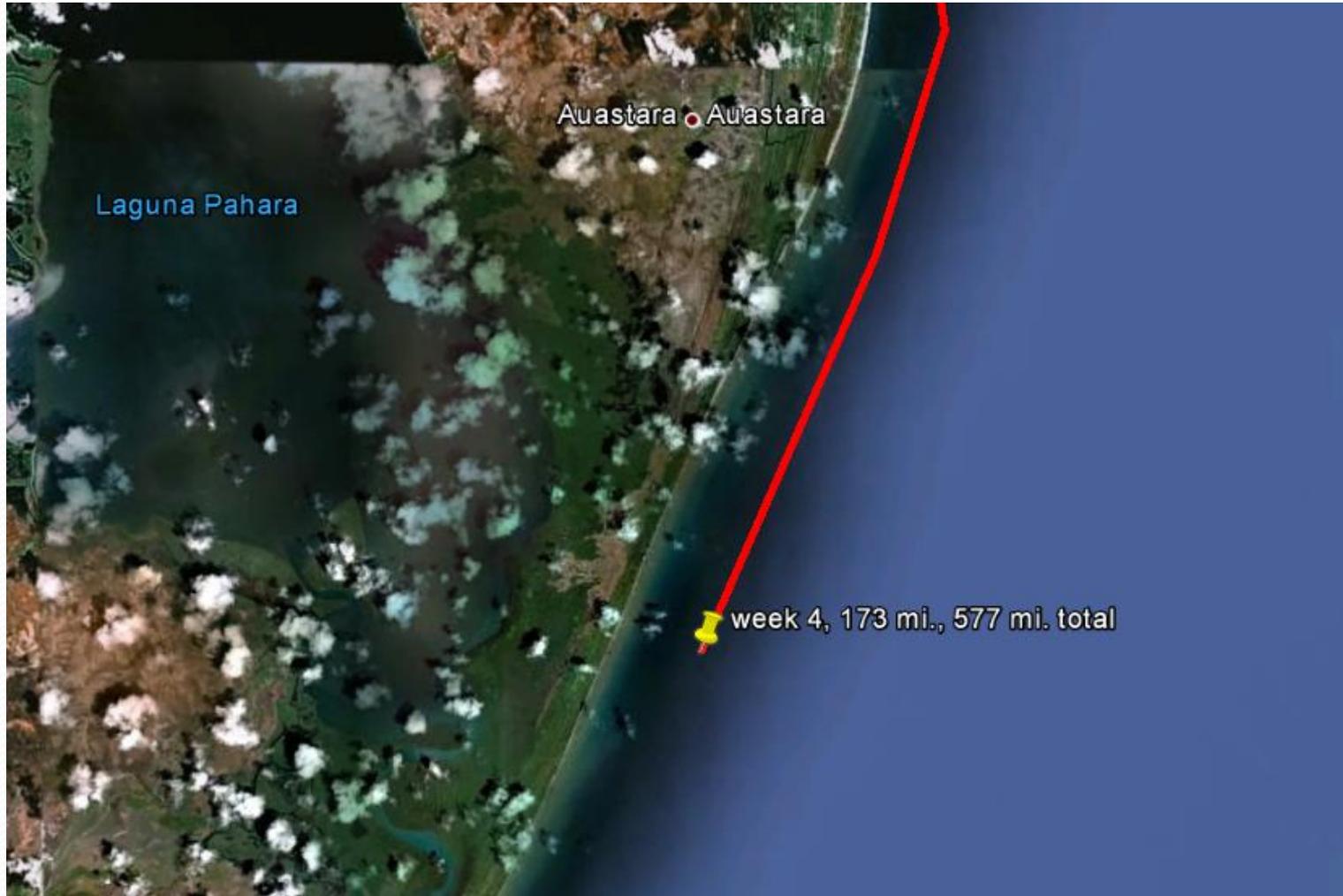


Week 4, 173 mi., 577 mi. Total



Week 4 takes us down the Miskito coast across the Honduras-Nicaragua border near Auastara Nicaragua.

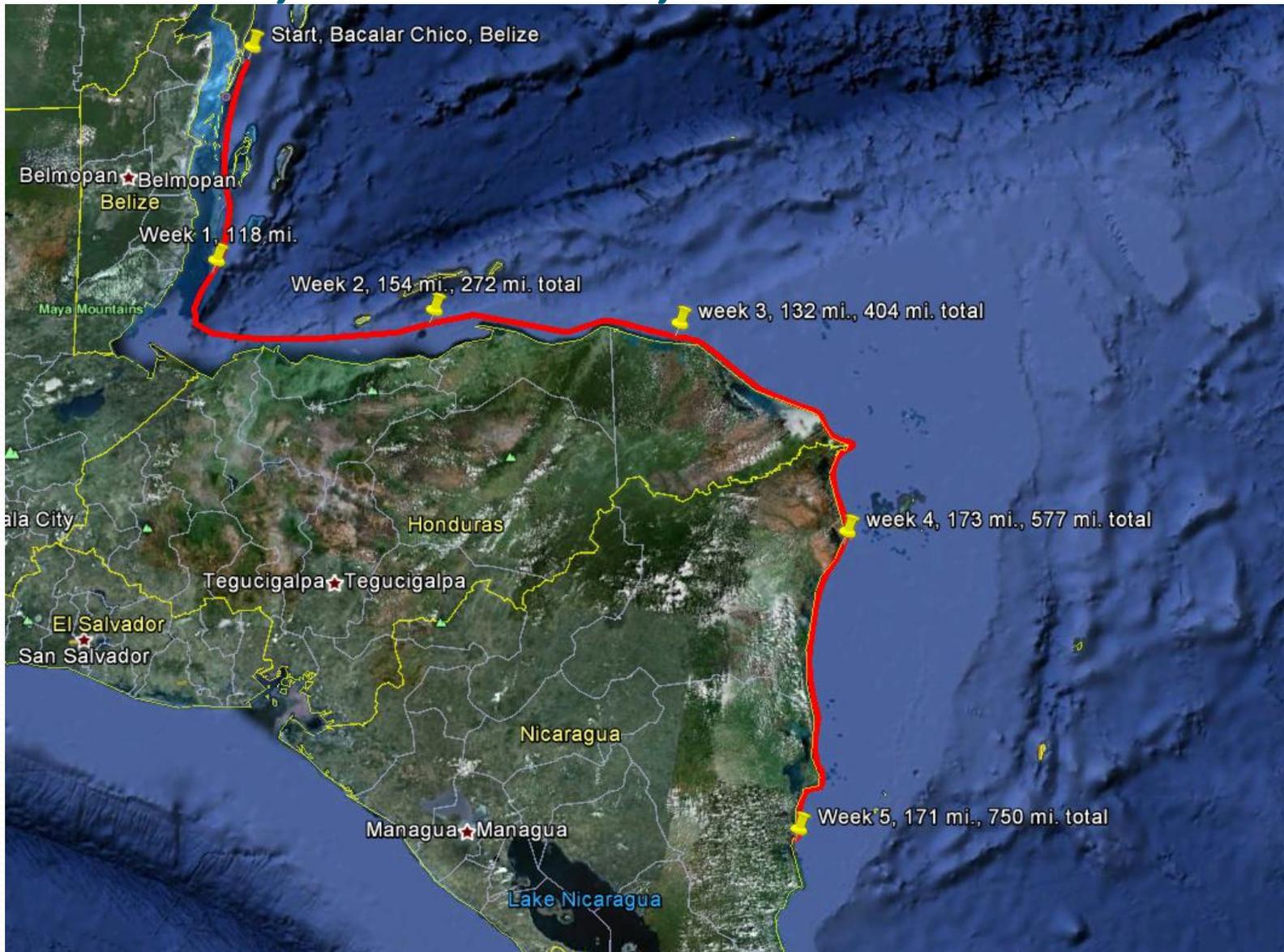
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosquito_Coast



This region is populated by the Miskito people
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miskito_people .The
region was hit hard by category 5 Hurricane Felix in
2007.



Week 5, 171 mi., 750 mi. Total



Week 5 takes us to Bluefields Nicaragua.



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Bluefields

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Bluefields (or Blewfields) is the capital of the [municipality](#) of the same name, and of [Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur](#) (R.A.A.S.) in [Nicaragua](#). It was also capital of the former [Zelaya Department](#), which was divided into North and South Atlantic Autonomous Regions. It is located on Bluefields Bay at the mouth of the [Escondido River](#).

Bluefields was named after the Dutch pirate [Abraham Blauvelt](#) who hid in the bay's waters in the early [17th century](#). It has a population of [45,547](#) (2005) and its inhabitants are mostly [Mestizo](#), [Miskito](#), [Creole](#), along with smaller communities of [Garifuna](#), [Chinese](#), [Sumu](#), and [Ramas](#). Bluefields is Nicaragua's chief Caribbean [port](#), whence [hardwood](#), [seafood](#), [shrimp](#), and [lobster](#) are exported. Bluefields was a [rendezvous](#) for English and Dutch [buccaneers](#) in the 16th and 17th century and became capital of the [English protectorate](#) over the [Mosquito Coast](#) in 1678. During [United States](#) interventions (1912–15, 1926–33) in Nicaragua, [Marines](#) were stationed there. In 1984, the United States [mined](#) the harbor (along with those of [Corinto](#) and [Puerto Sandino](#)). Bluefields was destroyed by [Hurricane Joan](#) in 1988 but was rebuilt.

As of 2008 there is still no road access to Bluefields from the west coast of [Nicaragua](#). Visitors must either fly in from [Managua](#) and other cities, or take a [Panga \(boat\)](#) down the Rio Escondido from the city of [El Rama](#).

[Full Article](#)

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Urban Bluefields street scene



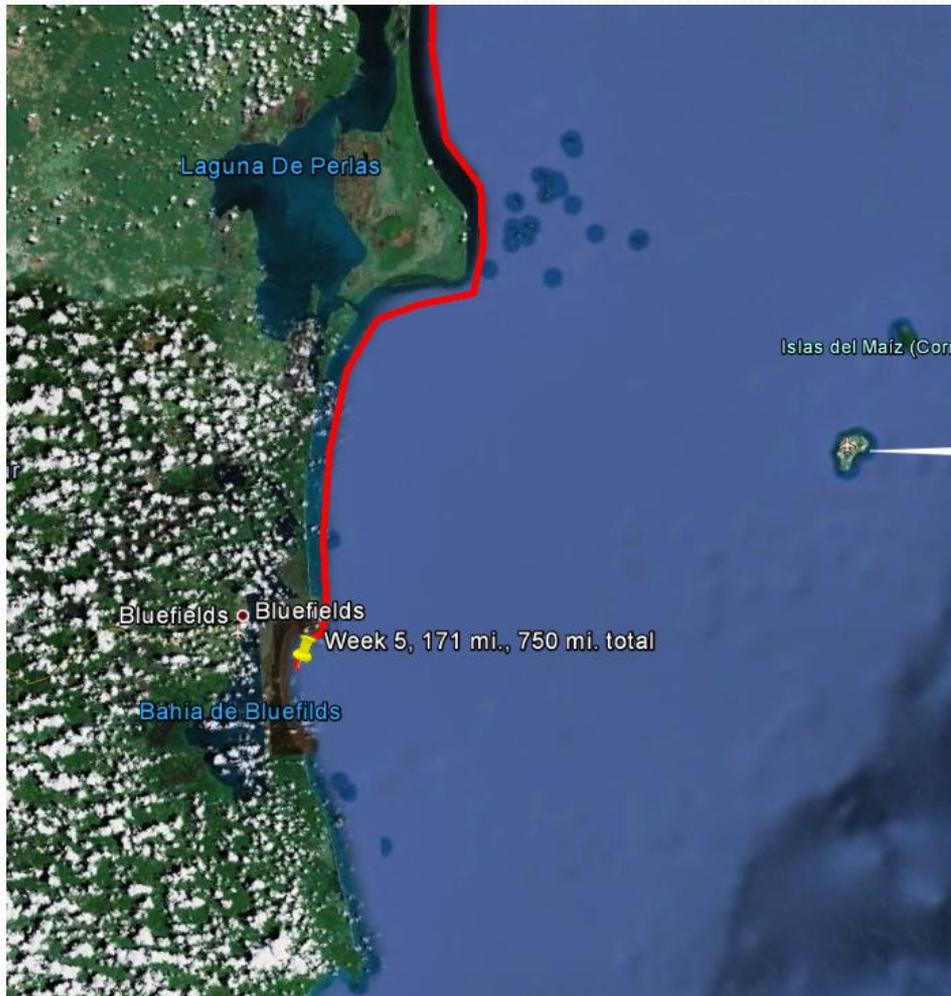
Bluefields rural waterfront homes

Bluefields

Week 5, 171 mi., 750 mi. total

Región de Bluefields

Week 5, Corn Islands to our east



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Corn Islands

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The **Corn Islands** (*Spanish*: Las Islas del Maíz) are two [islands](#) about 70 km east off the [Caribbean](#) coast of [Nicaragua](#), constituting one of 12 municipalities of the [Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur](#) department. The official name of the municipality is *Corn Island* (the English name is officially used in Spanish-speaking Nicaragua).

[Full Article](#)

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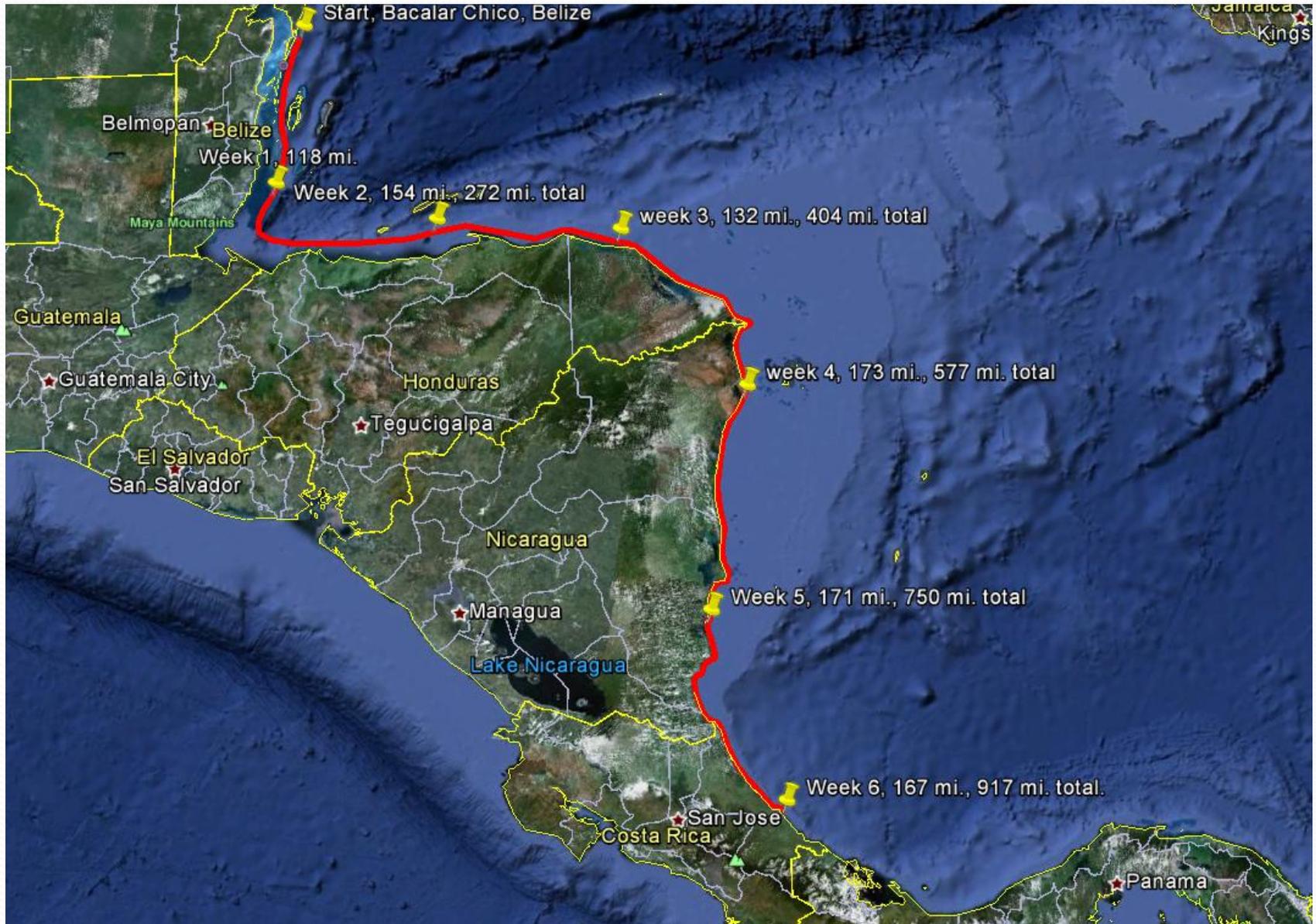


Coast of Little Corn Island.



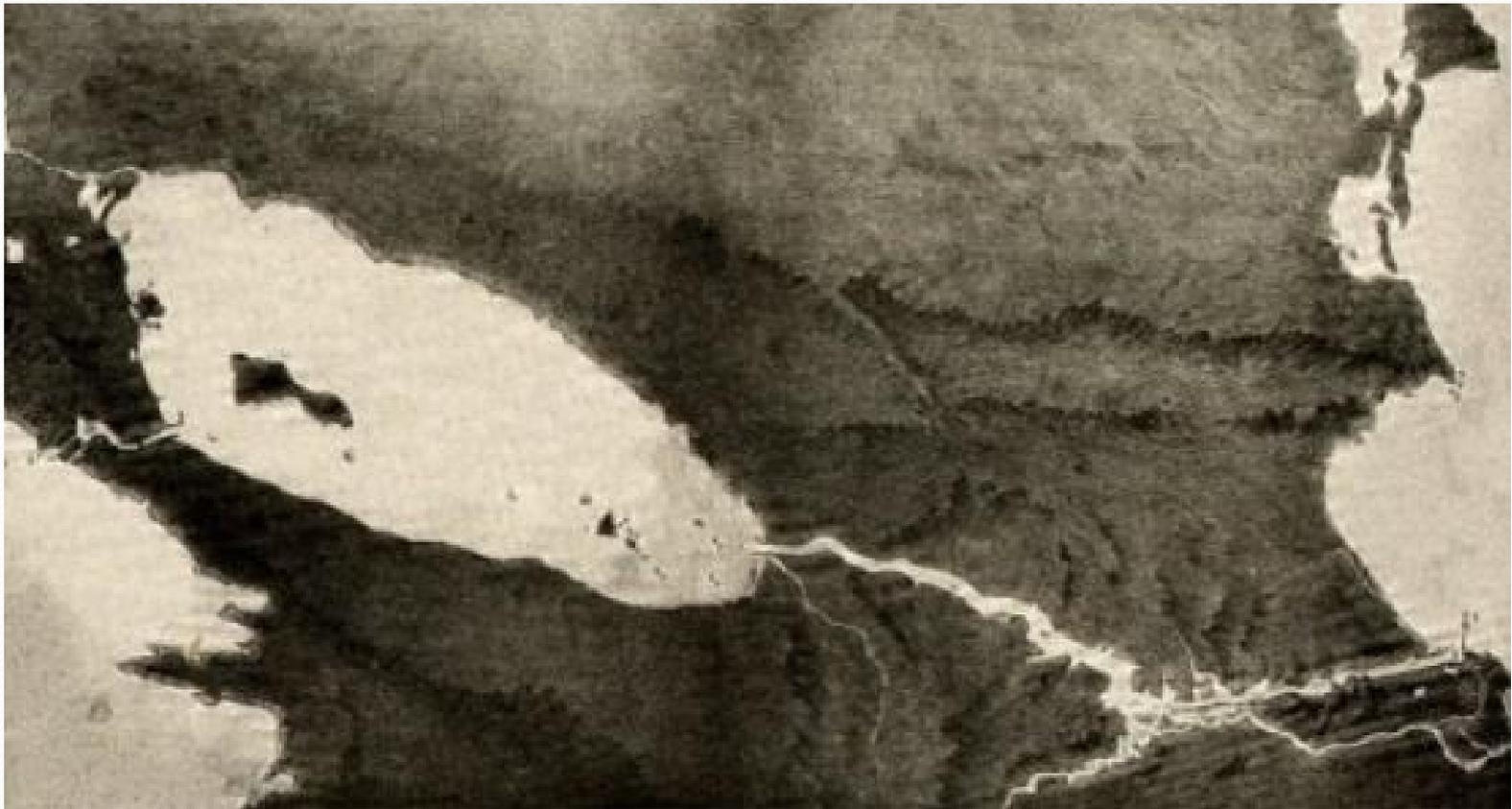
Aerial view of Corn Island

Week 6, 169 mi., 917 mi. Total



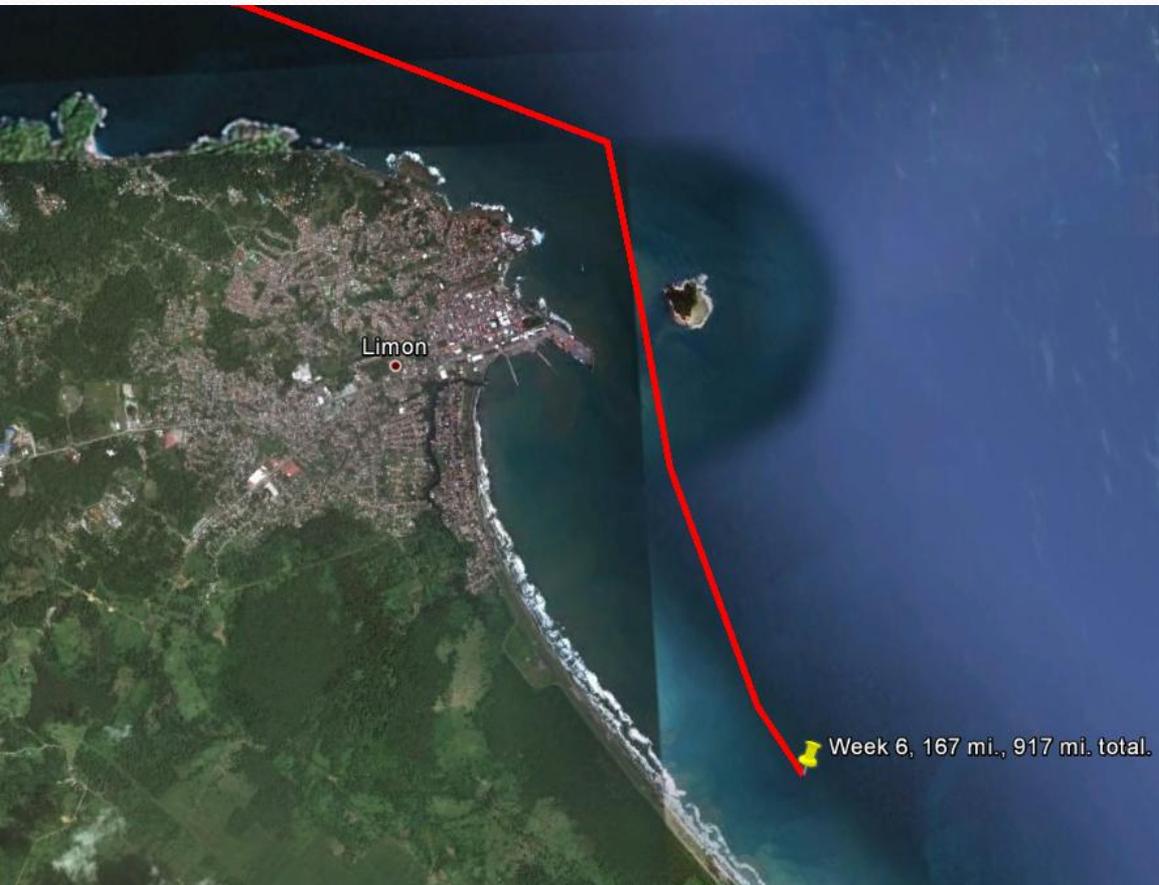
Week 6 takes us past the San Juan River into Costa Rica. This was the site of a proposed canal before the Panama Canal was built.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaragua_Canal

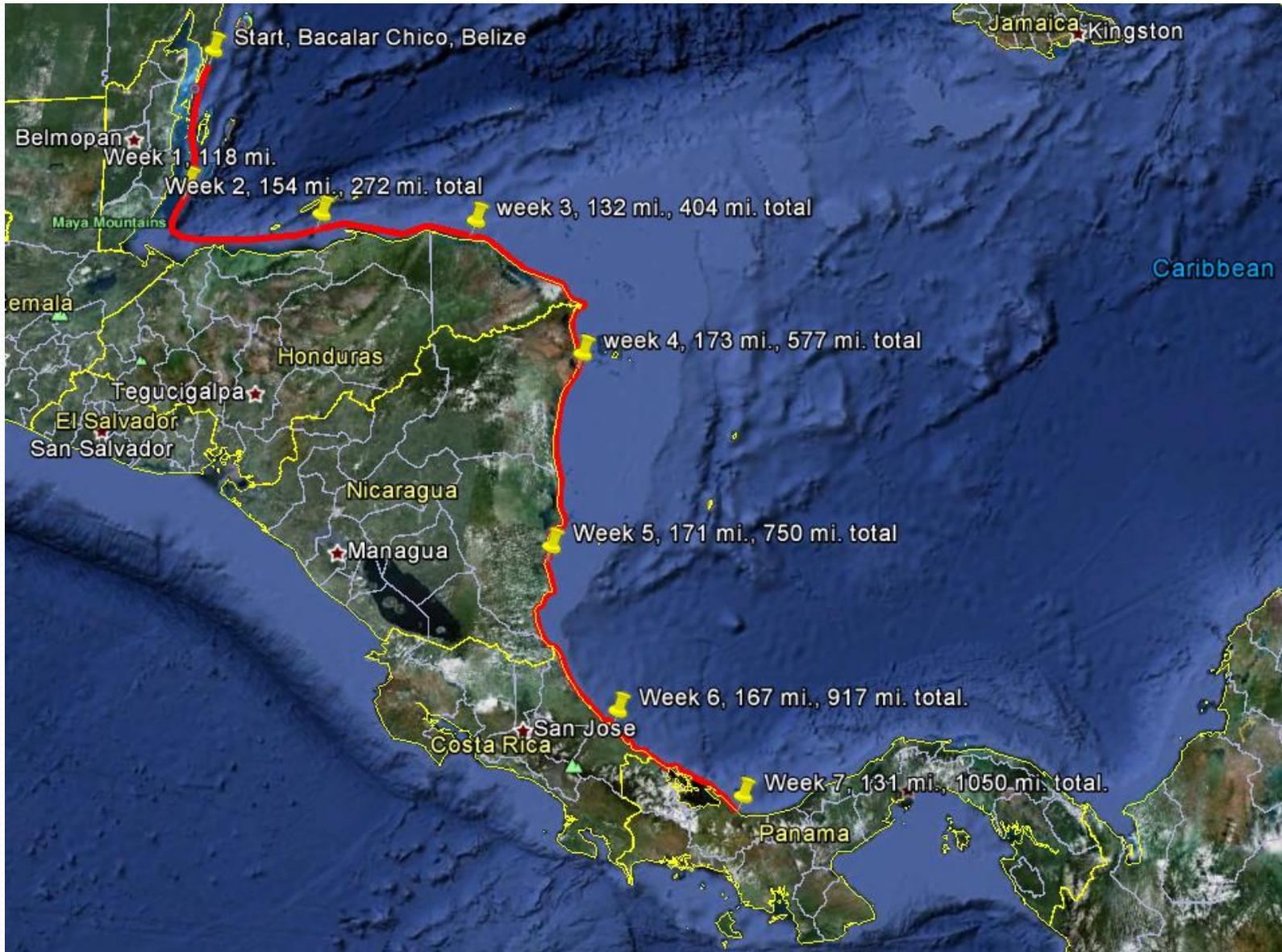


We are now located at Limon, Costa Rica.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lim%C3%B3n>



Week 7, 131 mi., 1050 mi. Total



Week 6 takes us close to the town of Bisira in the Ngobe Bugle province of Panama. Below are some scenes of the coastline.



We passed the island of Escudo de Veraguas, home of the critically endangered Pygmy three toed sloth.



ARKive
IMAGES OF LIFE ON EARTH

Pygmy three-toed sloth (*Bradypus pygmaeus*)



© Perezaso Productions

More videos and images 

Donate now 

Status: Critically Endangered

Info: With only a small population confined to a single tiny island off the coast of Panama, the pygmy three-toed sloth is the most endangered of all Xenarthra. As its name suggests, this recently discovered species is a dwarf compared with its mainland relatives. In addition to its small size, the pygmy three-toed sloth is characterised by usually blotchy, pale grey-brown fur and a tan-coloured face with a distinctive dark band across the forehead, from which long, shaggy hair hangs over the face, giving a hooded appearance... [\(more\)](#)

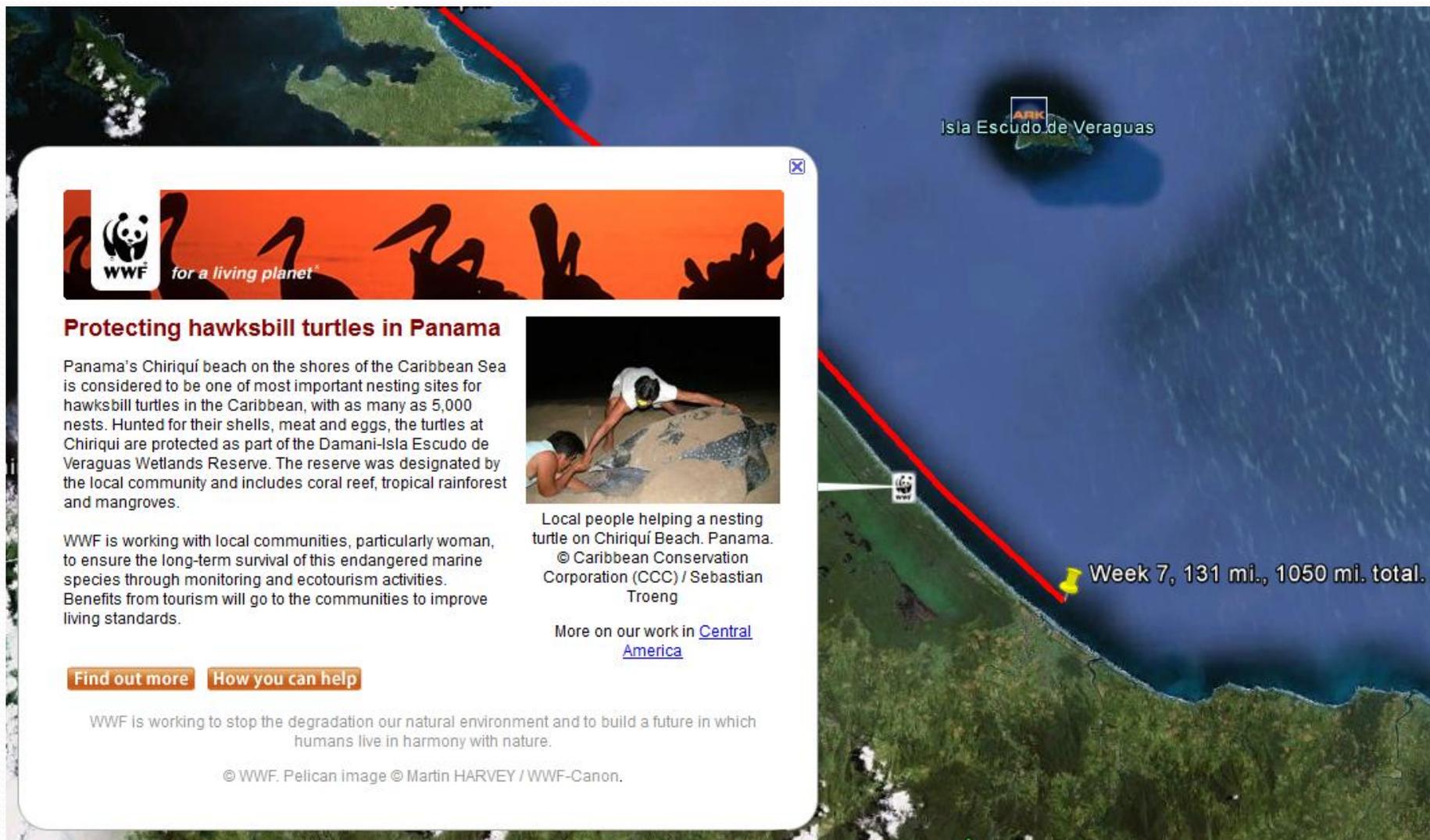
Threats: The pygmy three-toed sloth has an extremely restricted range on one very small island. Although the island is uninhabited, fishermen, farmers, lobster divers and local people are all seasonal visitors, and are thought to hunt the sloths illegally. The growing tourism industry is also a potential threat to the species, by degrading its habitat... [\(more\)](#)

Placemark details: The pygmy three-toed sloth is confined to a single tiny island, the Isla Escudo de Veraguas, off the coast of Panama.

For thousands of images and videos of threatened species, visit www.arkive.org

© Widscreen 2009

We may also spot a hawksbill turtle during our swim.



Isla Escudo de Veraguas



WWF for a living planet

Protecting hawksbill turtles in Panama

Panama's Chiriquí beach on the shores of the Caribbean Sea is considered to be one of most important nesting sites for hawksbill turtles in the Caribbean, with as many as 5,000 nests. Hunted for their shells, meat and eggs, the turtles at Chiriqui are protected as part of the Damani-Isla Escudo de Veraguas Wetlands Reserve. The reserve was designated by the local community and includes coral reef, tropical rainforest and mangroves.



Local people helping a nesting turtle on Chiriquí Beach. Panama.
© Caribbean Conservation Corporation (CCC) / Sebastian Troeng

WWF is working with local communities, particularly women, to ensure the long-term survival of this endangered marine species through monitoring and ecotourism activities. Benefits from tourism will go to the communities to improve living standards.

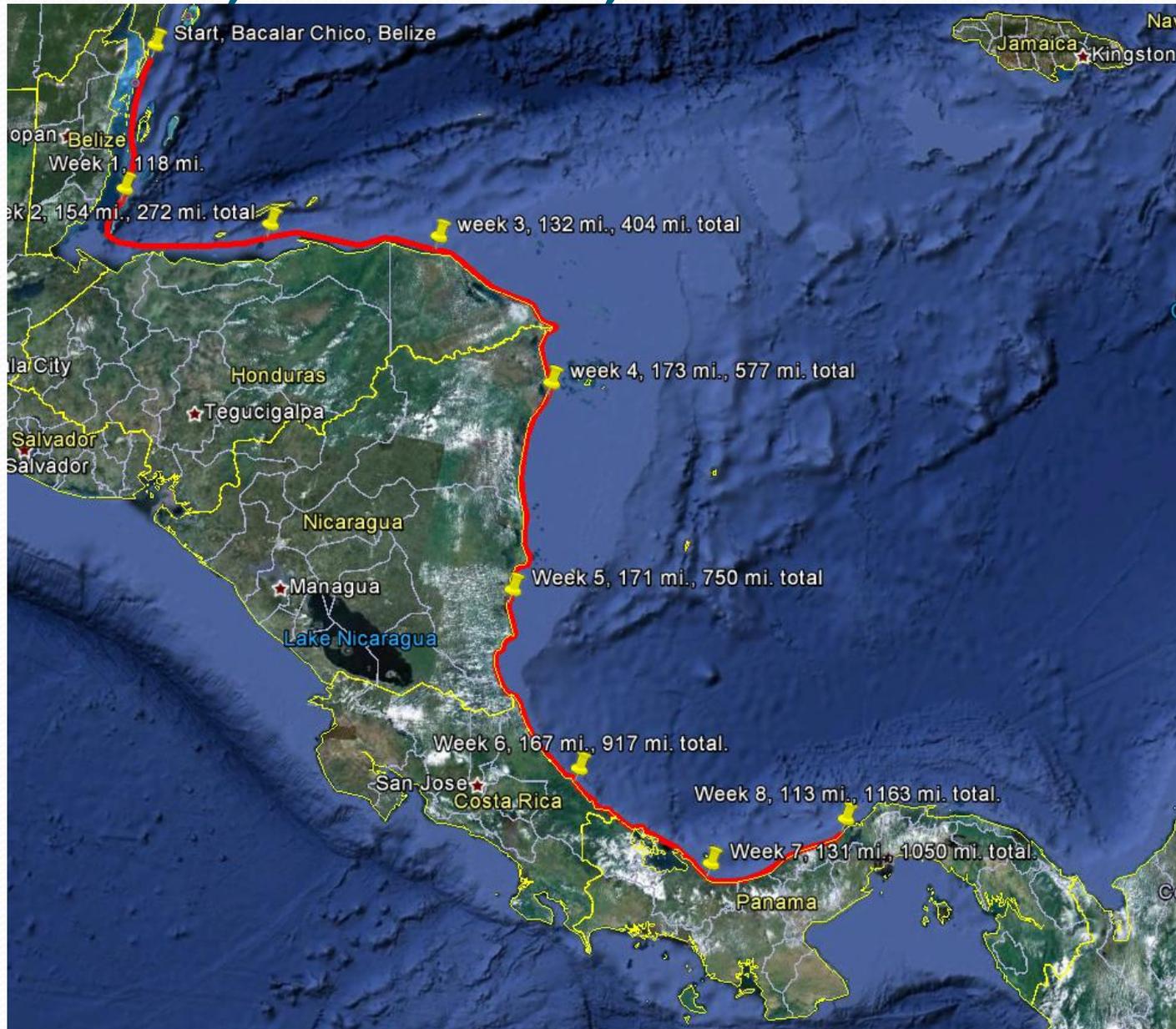
[Find out more](#) [How you can help](#)

WWF is working to stop the degradation our natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

© WWF. Pelican image © Martin HARVEY / WWF-Canon.

Week 7, 131 mi., 1050 mi. total.

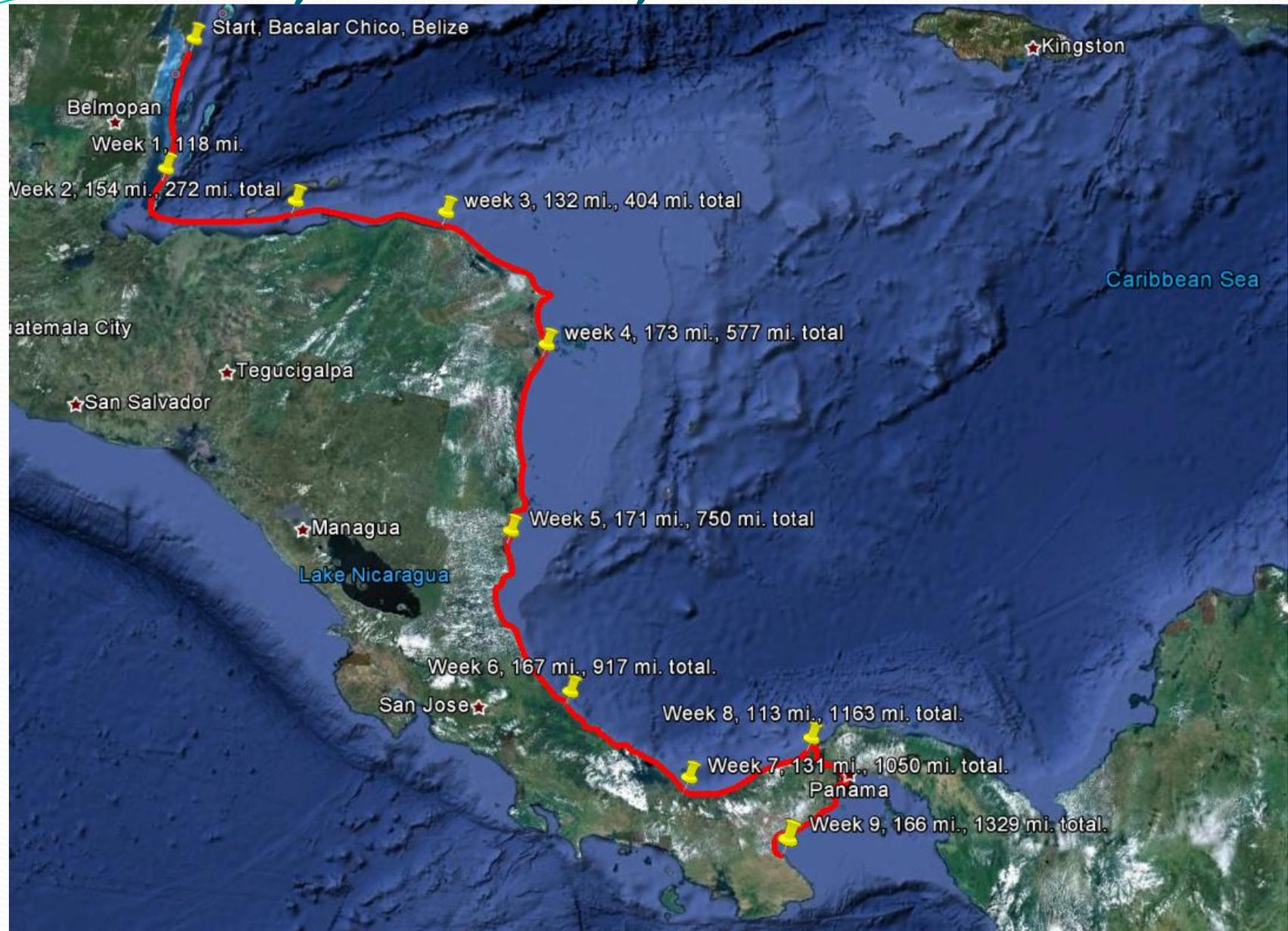
Week 8, 113 mi., 1163 mi. Total



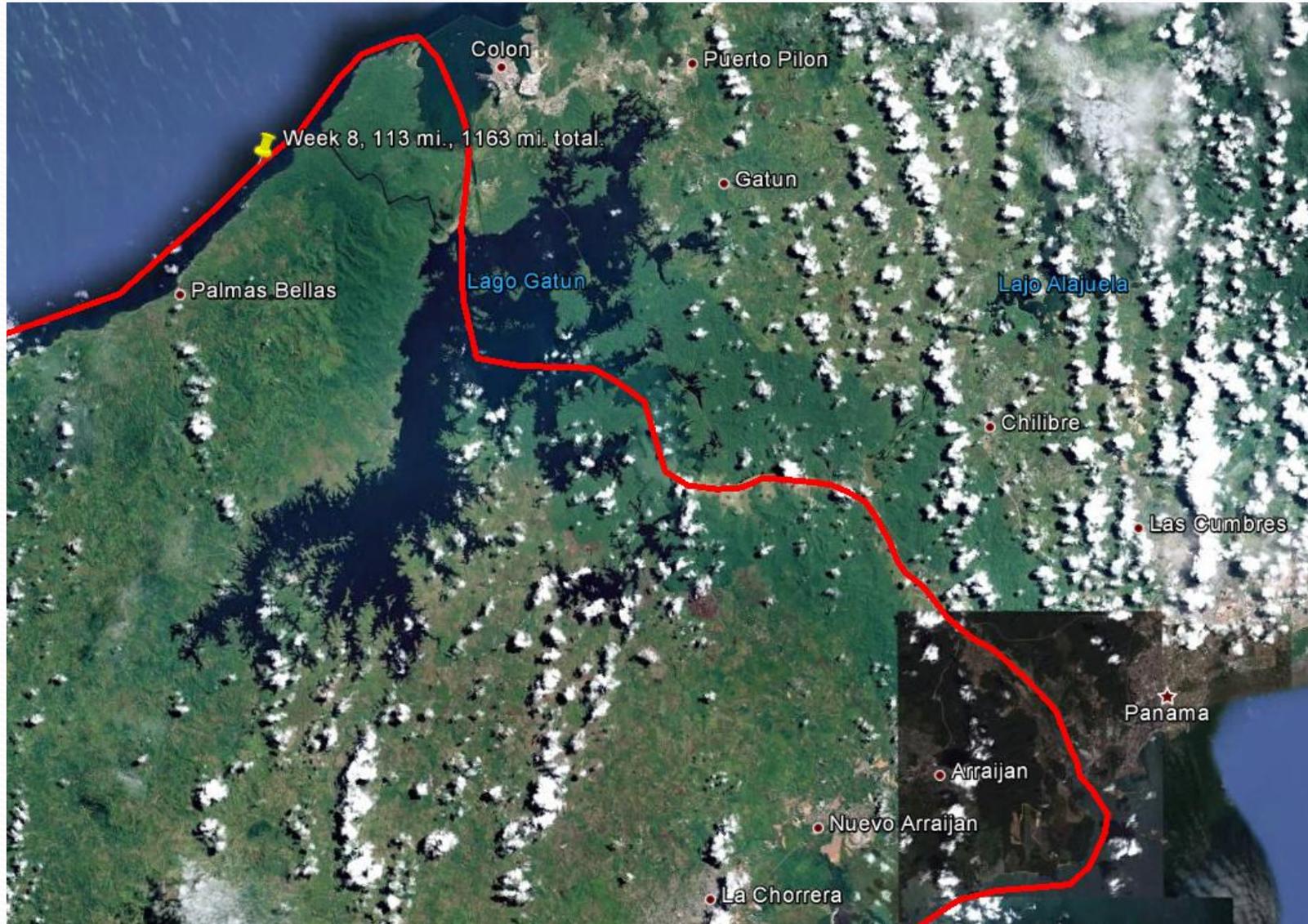
Week 8 takes us 10 miles from Colon, the entry point to the canal. Visible are all the ships entering and exiting the canal. The river we are approaching is the outfall of Gatun dam.



Week 9, 166 mi., 1329 mi. Total



Week 9 takes us through the Panama Canal! A 35 mile journey from lock to lock.



Below is the Gatun locks with the new locks seen to the right under construction.



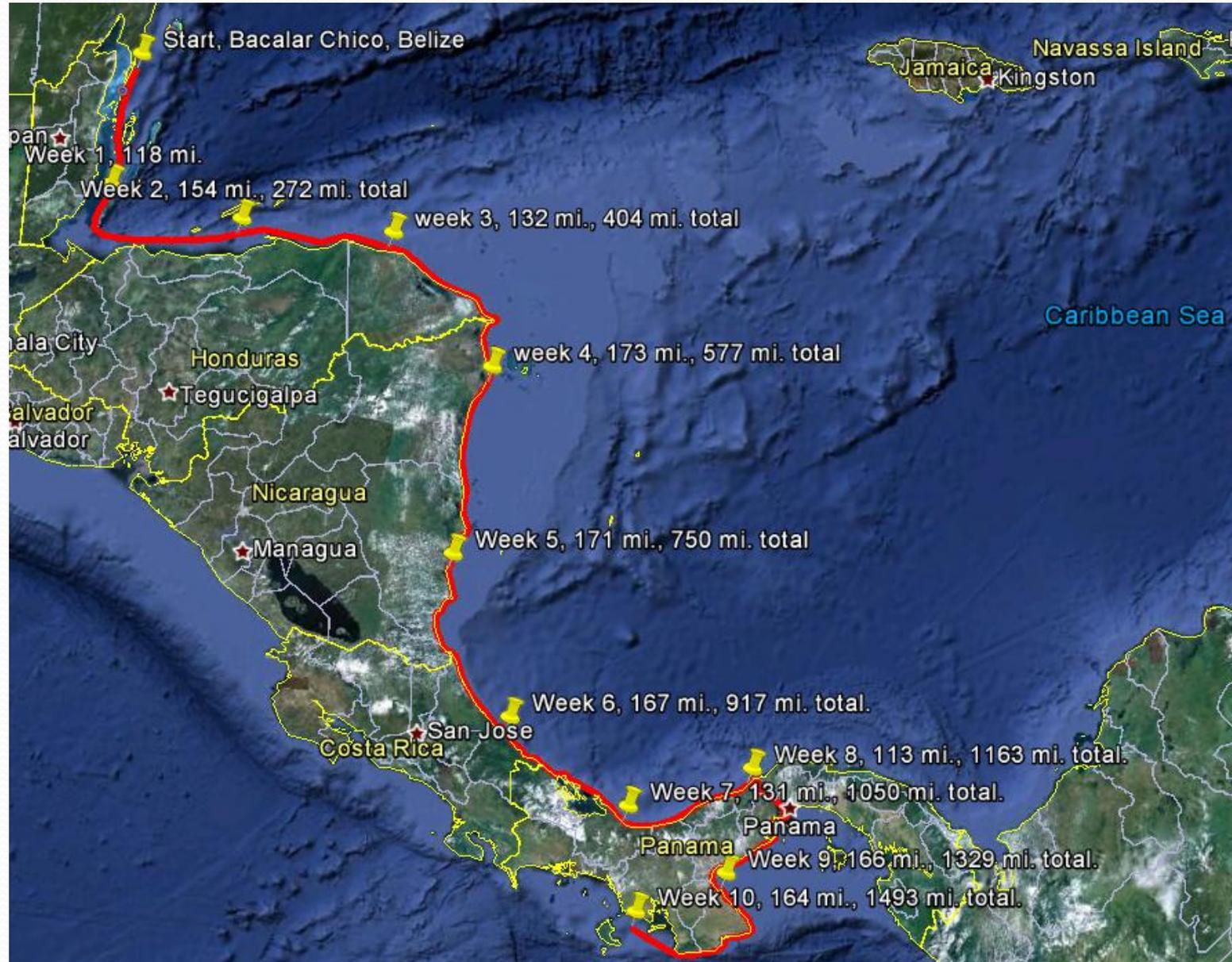
Exiting to the Pacific at the Miraflores Locks.



We continue our journey up the coast and reach Chitre, Panama.



Week 10, 164 mi., 1493 mi. Total



Week 10 takes us around the Azuero Peninsula of Panama.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azuero_Peninsula

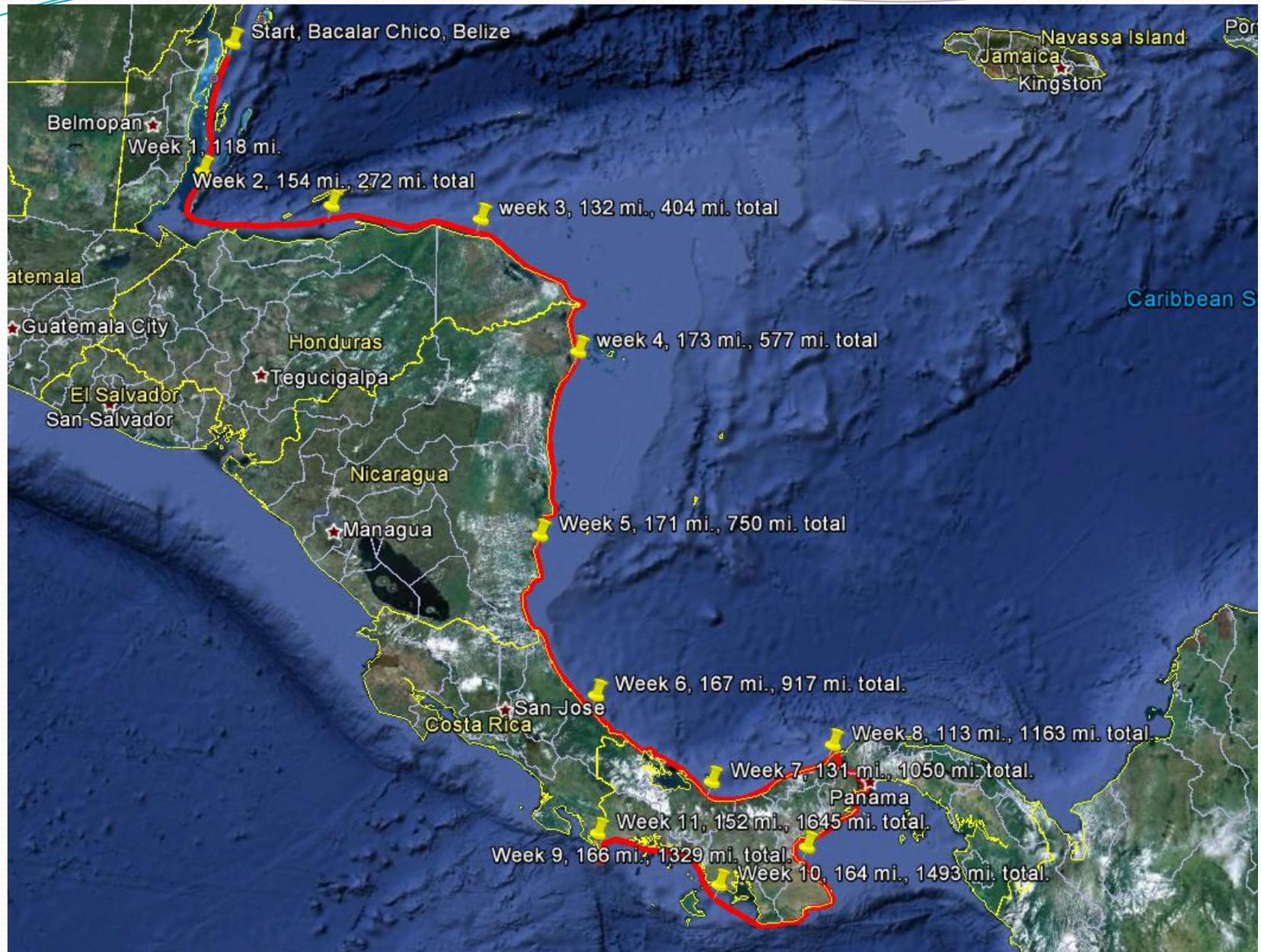


We are very close to the Island of Coiba.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isla_de_Coiba It was once a Penal Colony, but is now a wildlife refuge where the Scarlet Macaw and Howler monkey Thrives. <http://www.coibanationalpark.com/>



Week 11, 152 mi., 1645 mi. Total

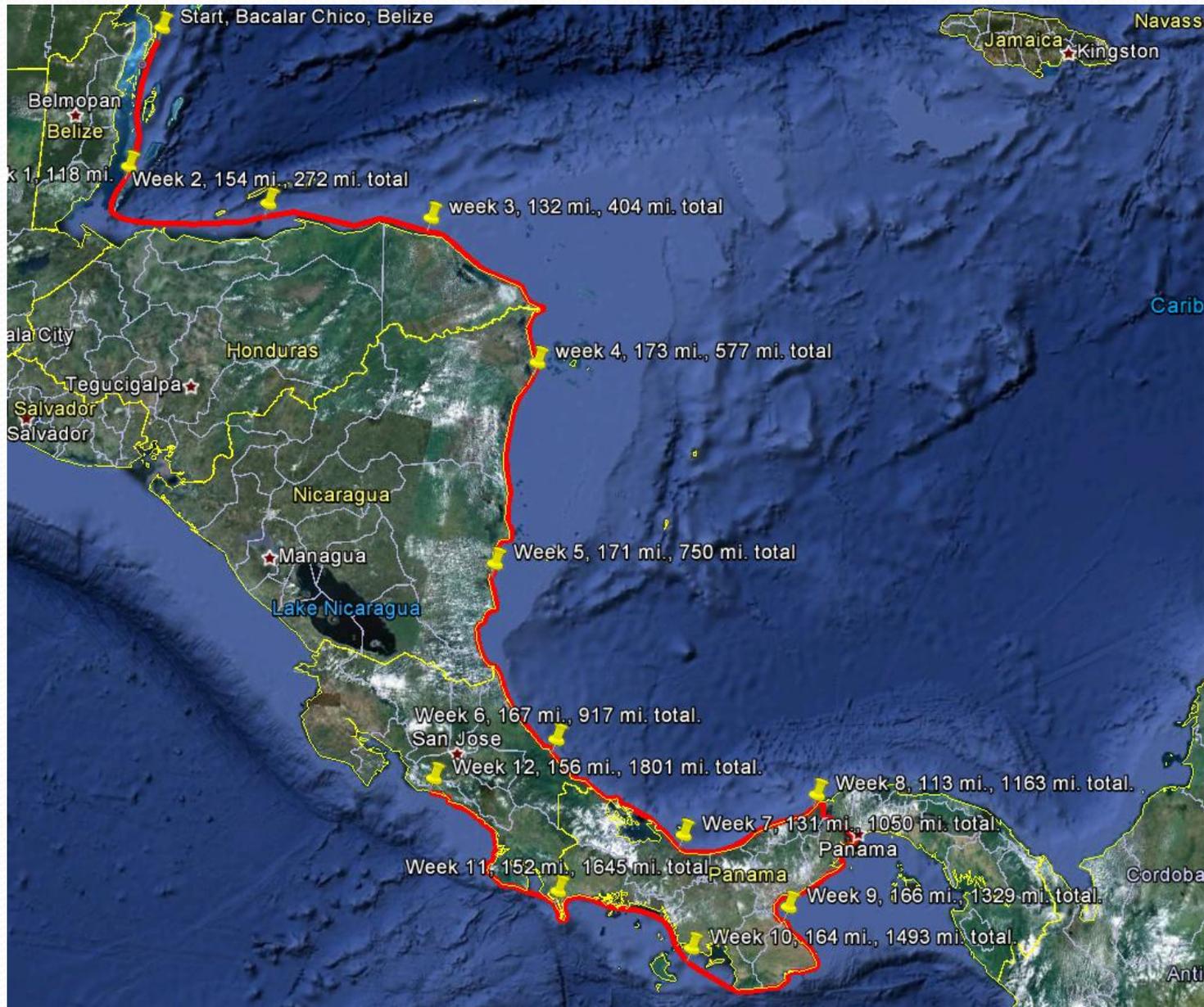


Week 11 takes us around the Burica Peninsula and back into Costa Rica near Las Penas.

- Costa Rica is a popular destination for Ecotourism.



Week 12, 156 mi., 1801 mi. Total



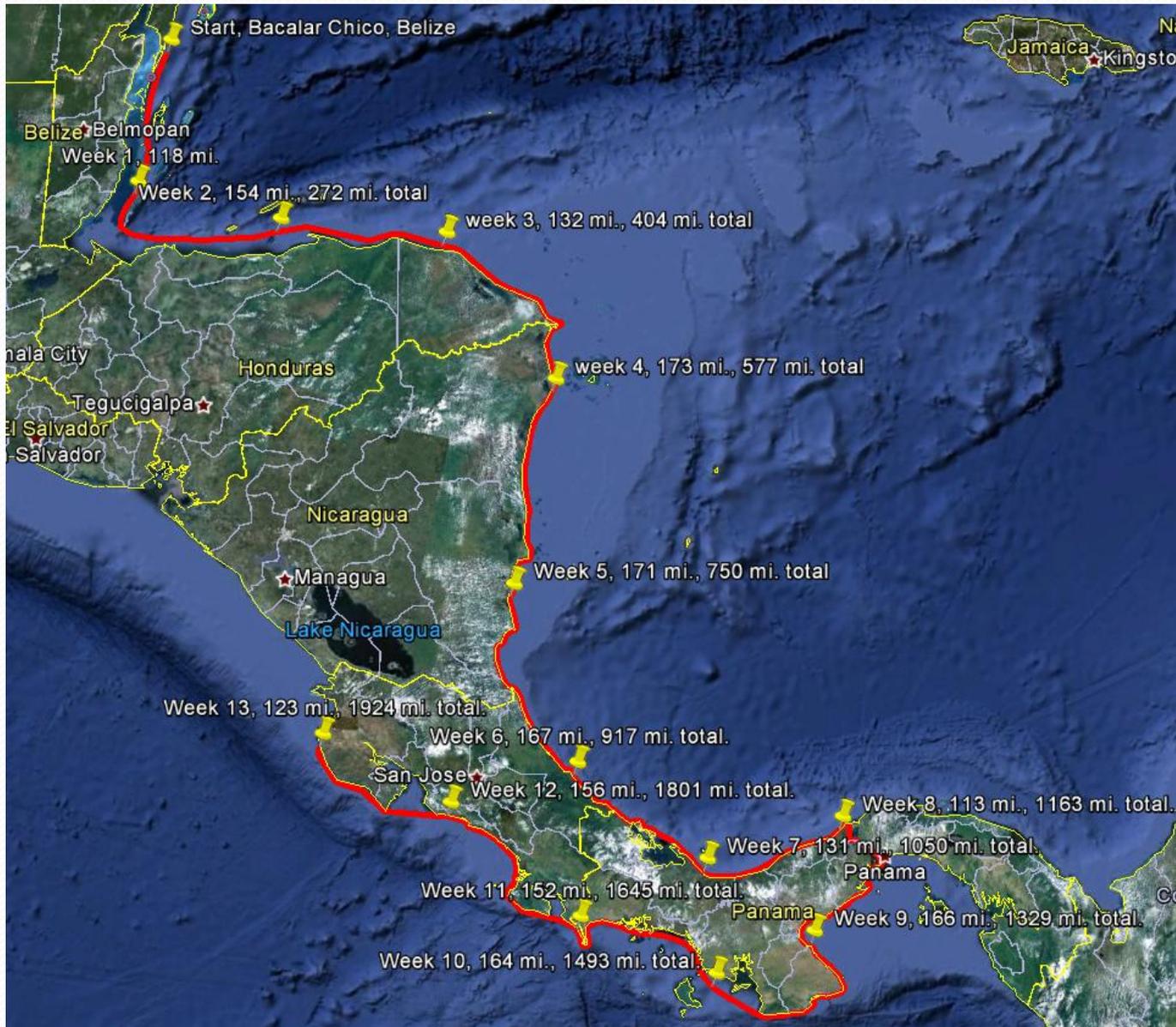
Week 12 takes us to Loma, Costa Rica. We have passed the goal of 1650 miles!



We move up the coast of Costa Rica. To our north, the capitol city of San Jose is home to La Sele, the National team. Farther north is Poas Volcano National Park.



Week 13, 123 mi., 1924 mi. Total



Week 13 takes us to or final destination of Iaya Langosta, Costa Rica.



We are in luck because we wash up along the coast where resorts are abundant. Our resort is the JW Marriott.





'Till Next Year!!!