

Five Seasons in Mexico



Thanks to Ted and the Calgary chapter for inviting us to speak.

We'd like to start with a territory acknowledgement – we aren't sure where everyone else is, but Bjarne and I are speaking to you from the traditional and unceded territory of the Lekwungen-speaking people. As uninvited settlers we try to be conscious of the footprint we leave so we do as little harm as possible and hopefully some good in this beautiful area we live in.

Agenda (Where we're heading tonight)

- Introductory stuff
 - the boat
 - our route
 - overview of the 5 seasons
- Down the Coast
- Southern Baja
- Mid-north Baja
- Mainland



We intend to tell you about some of our cruising experiences from our 5 seasons in Mexico.

We'll start with some introductory stuff and then we'll focus on locations, especially ones we really liked and some that are less visited.

The locations have been roughly grouped into these four areas.

We are especially fond of connecting with nature so often avoid areas where people are gathering, not that we are averse to a good beach or cockpit party, as some of our audience can attest to.

Anyway, you'll hear more about wildlife and scenery than culture from us

Of course, we can't possibly tell you about every place we have been. But we do love to show-off our pretty pictures so will cover as much as we can.

www.2bsailing.ca
Bjarne Hansen
Barb Peck



It isn't our intention to tell anyone how things should be done, just to let you know a little of what we have done.

We believe there isn't necessarily a "right" way to do things, simply different consequences, costs, or benefits and that each person has to decide for themselves what their own priorities are.



Just a little info about Hoku Pa'a, which is the Hawai'ian name for the North Star
 She's a 1980 Niagara 35 – purchased in 2013
 We've listed some of the accessories she has here
 She has a few more bells and whistles than we had on our previous boat, Freya, which was the 30' boat we sailed to the South Pacific.

-Radar- installed in 2020, as part of general preparations for cruising farther in 2021.

Ham/marine SSB

Roller furling

Watermaker – note that “malfunctioning” is not the brand

Neither of our boats have had a fridge.

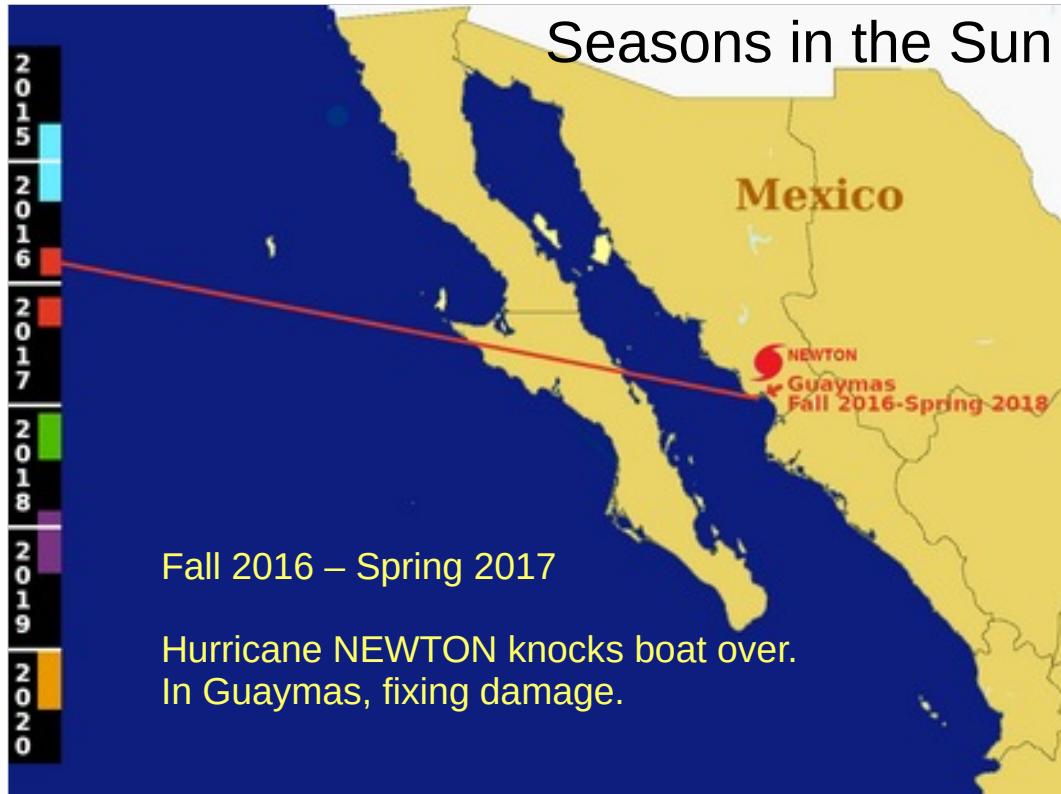


We want to give you an overview of how we spent the 5 seasons.

This first year, in 2015, we headed south and then had about four months to explore the Southern Baja in the Sea of Cortez, or Gulph of California

We had a family emergency that affected some of our location choices as we needed to have better access to communication but otherwise had a wonderful time.

We then left the boat in Guaymas, as many do, flew home to Victoria and went back to work.



Although Guaymas, being a little farther north, has a lower risk of hurricanes than some areas, we got “lucky” in Sept 2016.

We spent this cruising season dealing with insurance and boat repairs.



For our third season, we extricated ourselves from work in January (and another family upheaval) and spent several weeks installing our new used mast along with a few other boat projects. Have you ever noticed how many fittings are on a mast?

We then had a couple of months to cruise Baja California Sur before it was time to drive back to Victoria.



Season 4 had no disasters for us and we had a good chunk of time for exploring. We went north of Guaymas this time to the Midriff Islands and then worked our way down the peninsula.

I should note that exploring this northern area in December is not usual at all.

Most cruisers who are going there will do so as summer approaches – both to decrease the risk of hurricane encounters and to get out of what is apparently uncomfortably hot weather.

For us, we didn't think we'd have another chance to get to this area so went when the timing worked for us.

Once again, we left the boat in Guaymas and returned to Canada in May.



Season 5 had us exploring some of the mainland, making it as far south as Banderas bay before crossing back to the southern Baja.

This season's disaster was the one that has affected everyone, COVID.

Our original plan had been that we would return next season for a short time, then head off-shore to French Polynesia.

The pandemic lead to a big revision of plans, and after weighing options in a very unpredictable world, we decided our best course was to sail the boat home in May 2020, leaving our car in the boatyard with hopes to return for it in the fall (ha!)



When we went off-shore in 2004, we left Victoria and headed out Juan de Fuca for Hawai'i with no stops. Being older and wiser ;-) than in 2004, when we headed off-shore in 2015 we took a different approach by breaking up the first part of the journey, letting us catch up on sleep and get settled

Used Bamfield on the west coast of VI as our jumping-off point, we separated "getting out the Strait" from "going down the coast", which have different ideal wx conditions. Plus, it's just plain nice to hang out on the West coast

First stop after Canada was San Francisco. We had a fast 6 day passage, thanks partly to accurate wind forecasts (via GRIBs) that let us avoid heavier winds inshore.

After that, we had shorter passages and explored a bit of Southern California and the outer Baja coast, seeing some great beaches and wildlife.



Departure from Bamfield

- started out sunny
- not long before fog

Down the Coast



Farthest offshore ~130 NM. Very little traffic. Plenty of wind for most of passage.

We intended to be about 100 NM off-shore, but ended up going farther to avoid some stronger winds.

Down the Coast



As we neared SF, we relied on VHF contact with SF VTS Vessel Traffic Service to assist with avoiding heavy freighters

Down the Coast

under Golden Gate, 6d 20m



6 days and 20 min (but who's counting?) after leaving Bamfield, we sailed under the GG.

Clearing into the USA in San Francisco went smoothly. We took a taxi to Customs (they didn't want to board our boat) and they issued us our Cruising Permit at no charge (it was his first one that year – took a while and he was apologetic for the delay).

We spent a month in SF – some exploration and some fixing of the things that broke on the way there



Lots of anchorages in SF Bay – much better than San Diego later on. Because of those repairs we didn't explore as much as we would have liked.

Here we are at Angel Island, a quarantine and immigration facility from 1891 to 1940, where many Asian immigrants first landed in the USA.

We think many folks stop here so you may have already heard a lot about SF, so we will carry on.



We had a short visit to Half-moon bay, just south of San Francisco then made for the Channel islands, about a three day sail away.

Once you round Pt Conception you are in Southern California and the weather and water got noticeably warmer.

The islands have a mix of public parks, protected areas either forbidden or needing a park pass, military areas, and private property so you definitely need to check where you are allowed to go ashore.



As is common with channels, there was a stiff breeze blowing when we entered it, fortunately from behind, so we had a fun “sporty” sail on a sunny day, although had to head up into the wind in order to anchor, tucked behind the high cliffs of Santa Rosa. The wind remained fresh so we never did go ashore. The holding was fine and the island blocked the waves.



The anchorages can be rolly at these islands. We tried two of several anchoring spots at Santa Cruz one with good snorkelling. We were excited that the water was starting to get warmer.

At the second anchorage, we wanted to hike ashore, but a high surf was running. I don't like big waves, but with much coaxing and coaching, Bjarne lured me through the surf onto land. Thus, we were able to walk a short distance in our swim gear to inspect the olive and eucalyptus trees - all looking very dry. Getting back through the surf required more coaxing. I was instructed to wait closer in to shore until it looked like a smaller wave set coming in, and then quickly swim past the point where the waves break. How am I supposed to tell where that is? I swam like crazy. Somewhat breathless, I finally popped my head up and looked back. Bjarne was way behind me, calling out, "You forgot your flippers!"

In the evening we tried to find out who had won the federal election (not a lot of Cdn news) and listened to the Jays lose in the playoffs. The US Coast Guard were late illuminating their anchor light. Tsk. We didn't tell them...

Channel Islands Flotsam



No, it wasn't a Birthday aboard.

In the stretch from channel Islands down to Ensenada, we recovered over a dozen balloons, one or two at a time. Didn't have to deviate off-course either to get them, leading us to think there were hundreds scattered on the ocean.

40 miles to Santa Barbara from Santa cruise

Santa Barbara



Sailed & arrived just before 17h00 (aka Happy hour). Lots of sea lions swimming about, curious about us. Half expecting to wake up to a sea lion in the cockpit, we closed the hatches and went to bed with the moon and a fishing boat to keep us company. There is no dinghy landing - one rows up to the tall dock, times the surge from the swell to grab hold of and climb the ladder, and then uses the crane to lift the dinghy up 20' onto the dock. That seemed complicated so we swam ashore, with some things in a dry bag, for a tramp on the island.

Santa Barbara



Friendly naturalist told us about restoring the island to its pre-human ecosystem to encourage more birds, including some endangered ones, to stop over. It took over 30 years to eradicate the rabbits that had been brought to the island by a family that tried unsuccessfully to farm it.



Santa Catalina

This is a very popular island for sailors as it is fairly close to the southern California coast. It is the most developed of the channel islands.

Unfortunately, all of the good anchorages are filled with mooring balls, which are pricey to rent. This annoyed us so we tried to anchor in a rather marginal spot and then had a bit of a fright when the boat dragged rather near some pointy bits while we were off exploring. Our revised spot was not much better.



This isn't a common sight for us in Victoria, so we were excited to see a buffalo on Santa Catalina – that explained why the tourist t-shirts had buffalos on them.



We also saw a fox!

The island has extensive hiking trails and we chatted with a backpacker. We weren't there long enough to explore much of the hiking but it looked like an appealing place to hike, and obviously, there are some interesting animals to see.

Due to the trouble anchoring in the first harbour we were at, we found a small cove to wait out the 0300h departure for Oceanside. The wind picked up and changed direction so that by dark we were making like a salad (tossed that is). We got little sleep in the violent motion. It was a relief when it was time to get up for our early departure. Under a bright moon and a few stars, we set sail for Oceanside and our friends, not feeling too regretful about changing this channel.



Ensenada
Welcome to Mexico!

We'll skip over our three stops in SoCal.

Reaching Ensenada marked the start of our 5 seasons of cruising in the Mexico area.

Ensenada is close to San Diego and is well set up for checking in. There is still Mexican bureaucracy but it has been stream-lined so you can do much of it in one location

...Baja Naval? The marina we stayed at (there is a more expensive one) had very helpful and friendly staff

Keen to head south so didn't spend much time here. Plus, as noted, we aren't drawn to the cities. There was no place to snorkel here.

Down the Coast

Rolly Blow



From Ensenada we hit some uncooperative winds and made very poor progress. You know those times when the track on the GPS starts to look like interesting doodles...

Because of that we weren't going to make our planned stop before the predicted strong winds kicked in so we ducked in behind the meagre shelter of Punta Colnett.

During the day of the blow, we and the several other boats were being sideswiped by swell refracting in from the point.

HopToad next to us was disappearing to their boom, and Bjarne and I were both feeling queasy and off our feed. But the anchor held and we weren't sailing into the gale.



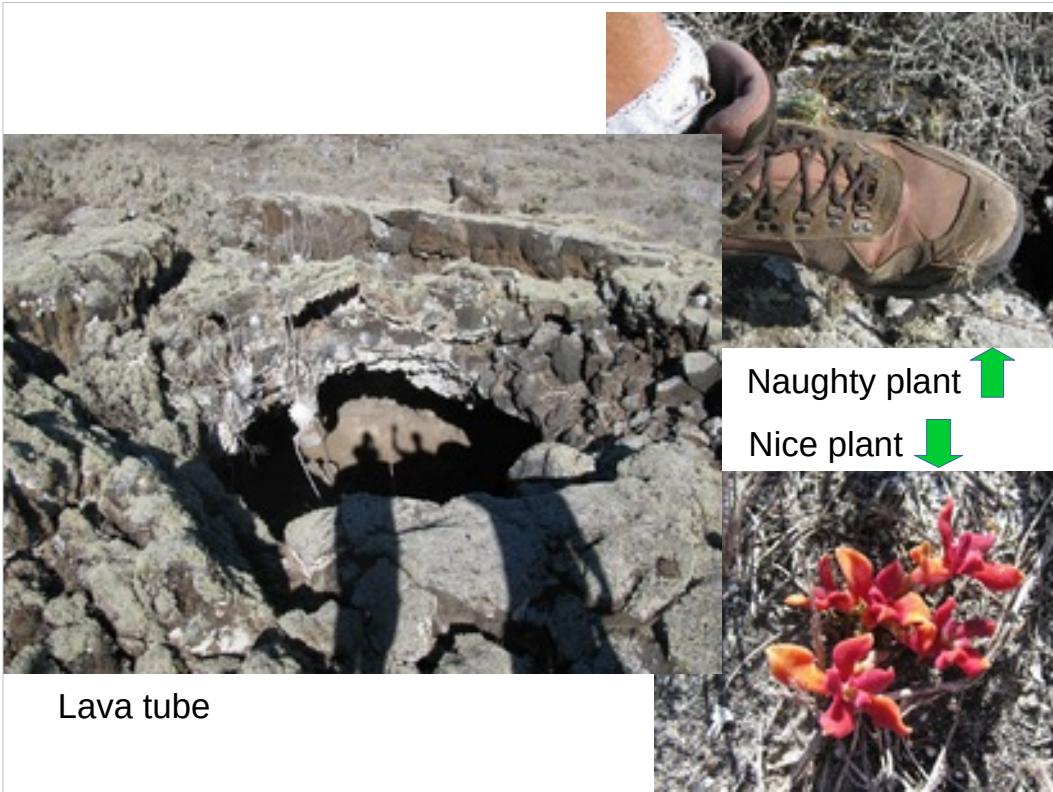
I. De San Martin

Small Is off the coast with two potential anchorages. For some reason (predicted wind direction?) we decided to anchor on the south side (the less usual I think)— as I recall, neither option seemed awesome but we were content enough with our decision – at first.

During the night we had a lot of noise from the chain interacting with the rocky bottom

When it came time to depart, we were unable to get our anchor up. We sent Bjarne down with the scuba tank and spent quite a while with him yanking our chain and me moving the boat this way and that to untie ourselves.

Before we discovered just how well attached we were, we went ashore. This lagoon was very popular with sea lions, obviously going back years as can be seen by this skull.



What we liked best about this island was the lava tubes. We haven't seen many so this was exciting for us.

Here was our first exposure to this type of cactus, which I'll call the flying-burr cactus because they seem to leap off the bush if you get near them. We thought it amusing to notice how well it stuck to my boot. It was less amusing when one attached itself to my bare leg – it was quite challenging, not to mention painful, to get it off.

Bahia Tortuga (Turtle Bay)



- Well-protected
- Fuel
- Provisions
- Other cruisers
- Whales

-very large, well-protected bay – most protected on the w.coast of Mx

-fuel and basic provisions

-we were there after the Baja Haha so not as busy

-can leave dinghy at end of pier or on the beach -either way, we found someone tried to shake us down - what does an offer of watching your dinghy mean? - does it need watching, will they harm it if you don't pay up...?

-we had a very awkward interaction with a local who insisted on dragging us around town – we thought maybe he was taking us to the port captain but really it was just a sort-of tour, done at a very fast walk – our Spanish was very limited and our attempts to politely say we were fine on our own were ignored – we bought him a drink but then he also wanted money. We found this all very unpleasant but probably if you just be prepared to pay you'd be OK



- Thanksgiving dinner while waiting for weather.

Turtle bay was not as picturesque to us as some places – dry, dusty, brown
Didn't seem to be a spot for much sight-seeing or playing in the water;
Cruisers tend to accumulate here. In addition to getting fuel, and fresh provisions, and having a secure place for some repairs, the next good anchorage is about 300 miles south so folks will wait for a good weather window. Thus, there is an opportunity to get to know some of them.
We were here over American Thanksgiving so naturally a dinner with food-sharing was organized. Maria, the proprietor of the small cafe, generously allowed us to use her space. We made sure we bought drinks to help compensate.



Several of us left Turtle Bay around the same time.

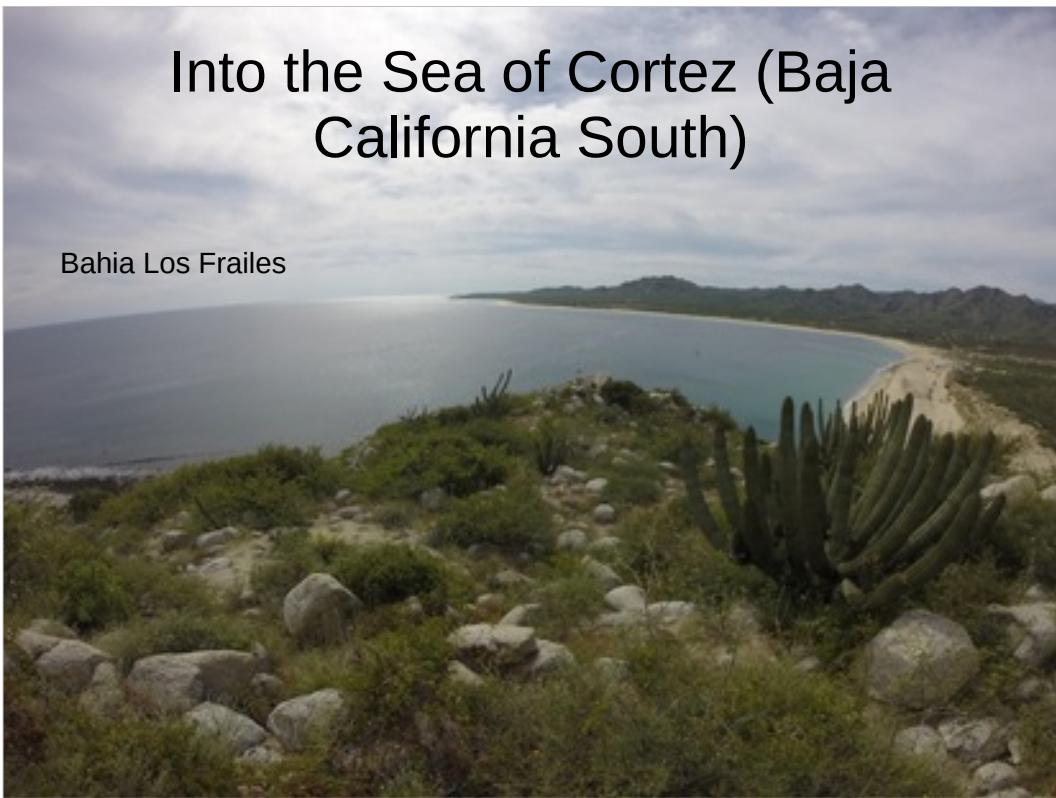
We kept in touch by VHF. For some of our companions, this three day passage was their longest one to date. That's probably true for many who harbour hop down the coast.

So we had five boats sharing the large anchorage at Bahia Santa Maria - a lovely spot with clear water, nice sand, and good eating. No one lives here. This is around where you officially enter the tropics and the change in temperature was noticeable.

The next stop, not much farther, was Magdalena Bay, which is very large but we didn't go very far into it, nor did we stay long. At certain times of the year (Jan-March?) this is a great place to come and see the mom humpbacks with their calves. You can rent a car and drive there from La Paz. We didn't manage to fit that in.

Into the Sea of Cortez (Baja California South)

Bahia Los Frailes



True to form, we by-passed the busy, touristy, and expensive Cabo San Lucas so our first stop in the Sea was Los Frailes.

We found the snorkelling wasn't bad in terms of having a large variety of critters in the sea, but like much of the Baja, there was little in the way of colourful coral. We'd been a bit spoiled by Fiji.



As we were new to the Baja, we were excited by the unfamiliar to us flora. We took, and would continue over the years, to take many pictures of cactii and other plants, marvelling at the many types.



Los Muertos

Next stop, making our way toward La Paz, was Los Muertos.

There was a resort here and a restaurant (you can see a building behind the big cactus) so we had our first hamburger in a couple of months.

Pulmo Reef Excursion



Not too far around the corner is a protected area, Pulmo Reef, that is reputed to have very good diving. We tried to go snorkelling there last year, but after a long hot walk, it was way too windy AND even if it hadn't been, you weren't allowed in without a guide which needed more fee than we had brought with us. Well, some excursions work out better than others. We went for a hike instead and enjoyed the beautiful above ground scenery.



La Paz is a fairly large city, with over 250,000 people; we were here several times

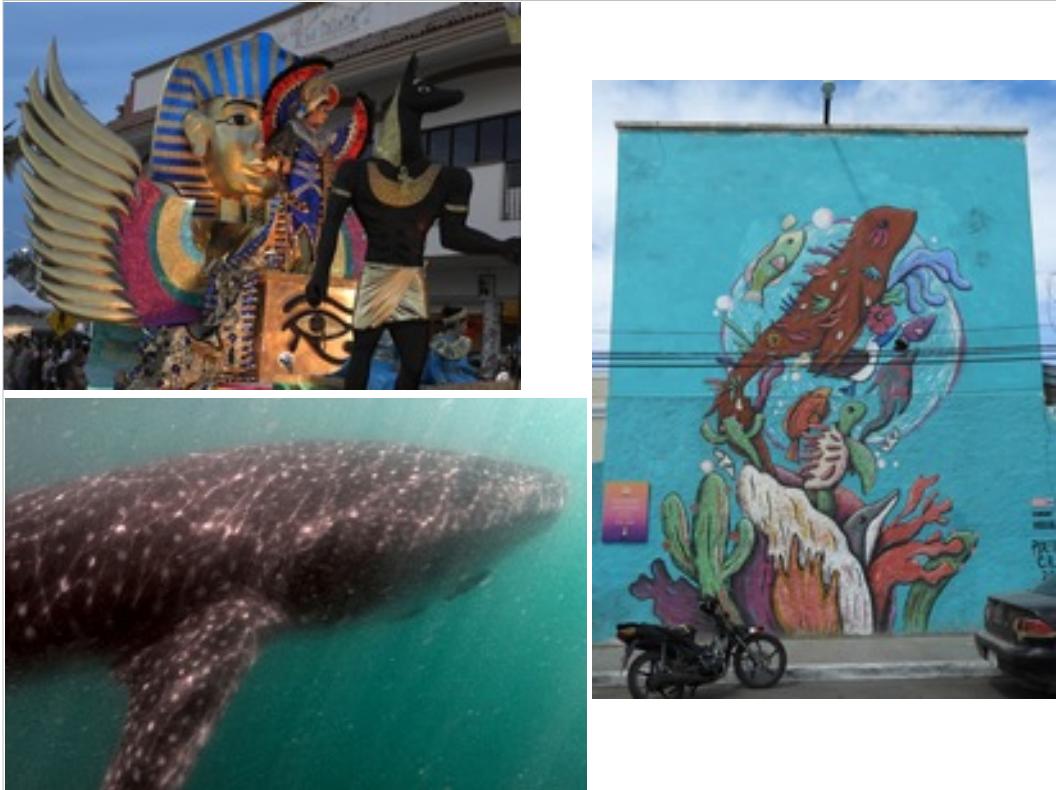
It can be a bit of a tar pit harbour – easy to spend more time (and money) there than you intended

It is attractive, with lots of art around and a nice malecon.

LaPaz is a great place to re-provision and you can get important supplies like this cereal, which translates roughly to chocolate sugar bits with marshmallows.

There are also lots of boat related stores and services and you can get pretty much anything you need, or have it shipped to you.

There is a large cruising community and a club that organizes many activities and resources., including daily coffee drop in. One of my favourite resources organized by Club Cruceros is the large book exchange.



If you time it right, you can catch Carnaval. Mazatlan's is bigger and had more glitter but La Paz was no slouch in the partying at this time.

We were anchored off the main beach at carnival time and the entire boat was vibrating along with the beat of the music.

It is a good place if you like night life. We don't usually take advantage of this.

We hadn't managed to encounter whale sharks on our own so we splurged for a tour to swim with these huge fish. An awesome experience.



In La Paz there are lots of eating out opportunities. The polka dotted tree marks a good ice cream place.

The food at the bottom right is from a street vendor and is call Tosti Elotes, a messy mix of doritos, mayo, corn, parmesan and various sauces. Not very good for you, but very yummy.

La Paz is also a convenient place to have guests from home hook up with you. They can fly to La Paz or to Cabo San Lucas and take a bus. Here Bjarne is with my aunt at one of the many restaurant in La Paz.

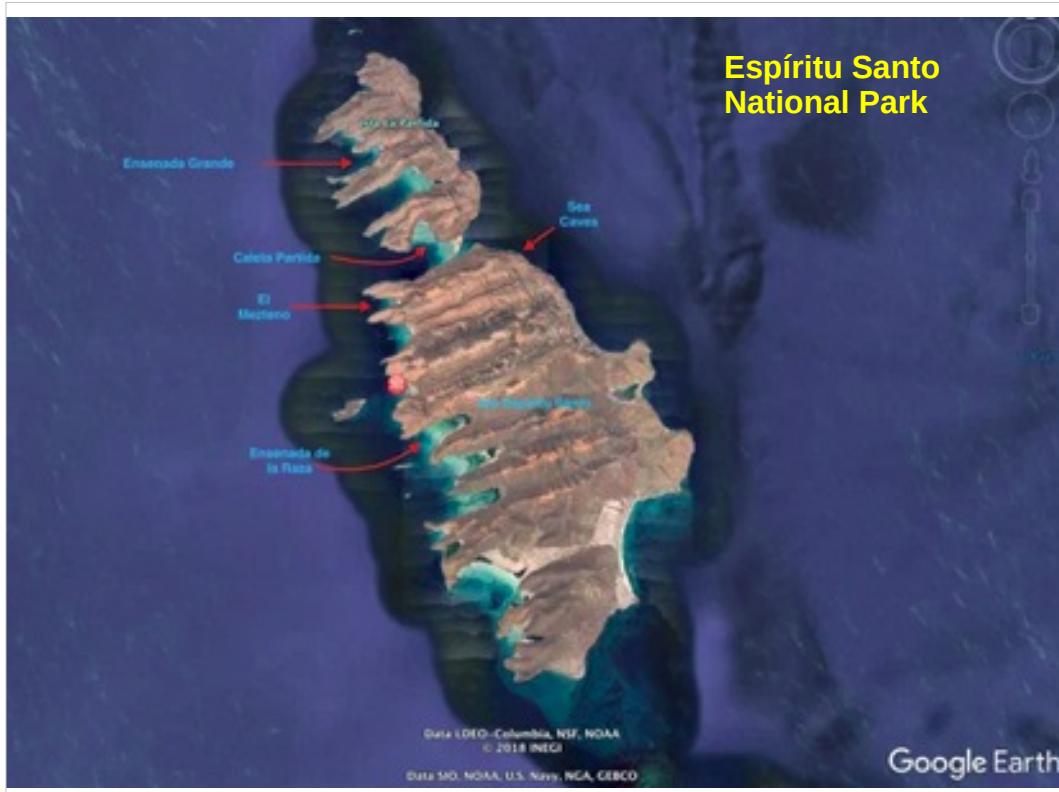


The anchorage can be a challenge. Although there is lots of space for boats, the strong current combined with wind can make getting ashore a real problem. It was important to time shore leave carefully, especially if you don't have a high-powered dinghy engine. The changing current also unsticks anchors and can lead to the infamous La Paz waltz.

There are several marinas. Some are quite pricey and often reservation are needed. We took a dock when my aunt visited, thinking that would ease her into the cruising life but this was the only spot available. It looks like we are in the high rent district but we are on the wrong side of the tracks. The boats speeding by as they left the marina, combined with the fast current at times made quite a bit of bumping. We had one boat that bonked into us when the current caught them. No damage and we got some wine for our troubles.



Final note about La Paz it does sunsets really well.



The La Paz area makes for good cruising. There are many anchorages within a reasonable distance – no need for overnight passages. Particularly nice, about 20 NM north of the city, you are at the national park consisting of Espiritu Santo and Isla Partida.

In addition to being easily accessible from La Paz, there is beautiful scenery, with interesting geology, good hiking, great underwater life, good social opportunities and other interesting wildlife.



We'll show you an assortment of photos from the area around the La Paz area



Really cool rock formations - If you like rocks, the Baja is a great place to be.



Good hiking
Great vistas



Some of the interesting flora and fauna you might see
– always impressive how things can grow out of
cracks in rocks!



King Angel fish
Barber fish
Urchins

Some of the colourful underwater scenery. One place (not here) we saw so many urchins they made us think of the Tribbles from Star Trek taking over the Enterprise



More cool rocks – not an unusual sight to find cliffs with interesting layers- magnificent



Just one of many different kinds of rays that can be found in the Sea



Usually we just look at the fish, but once in a while we catch one and eat it.



Cortez Rainbow wrasse



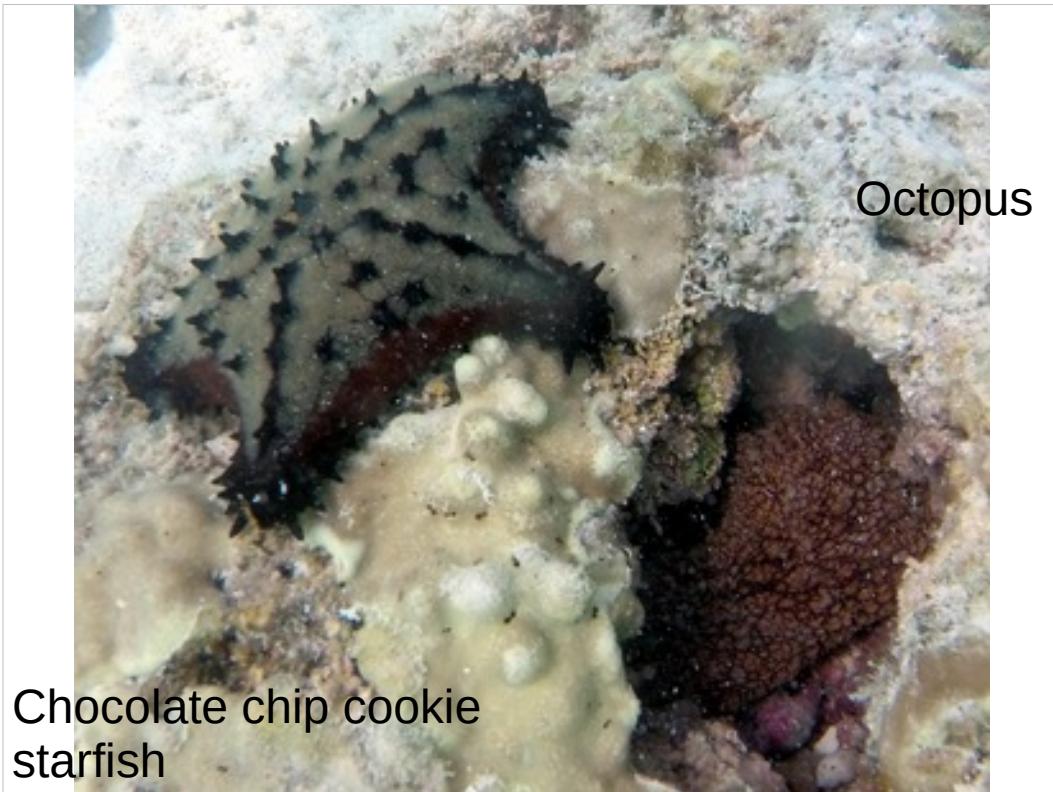
Turtles were often hard to get a good look at – you would hear them exhale and by the time you located them they were usually sinking back down



Sea Caves



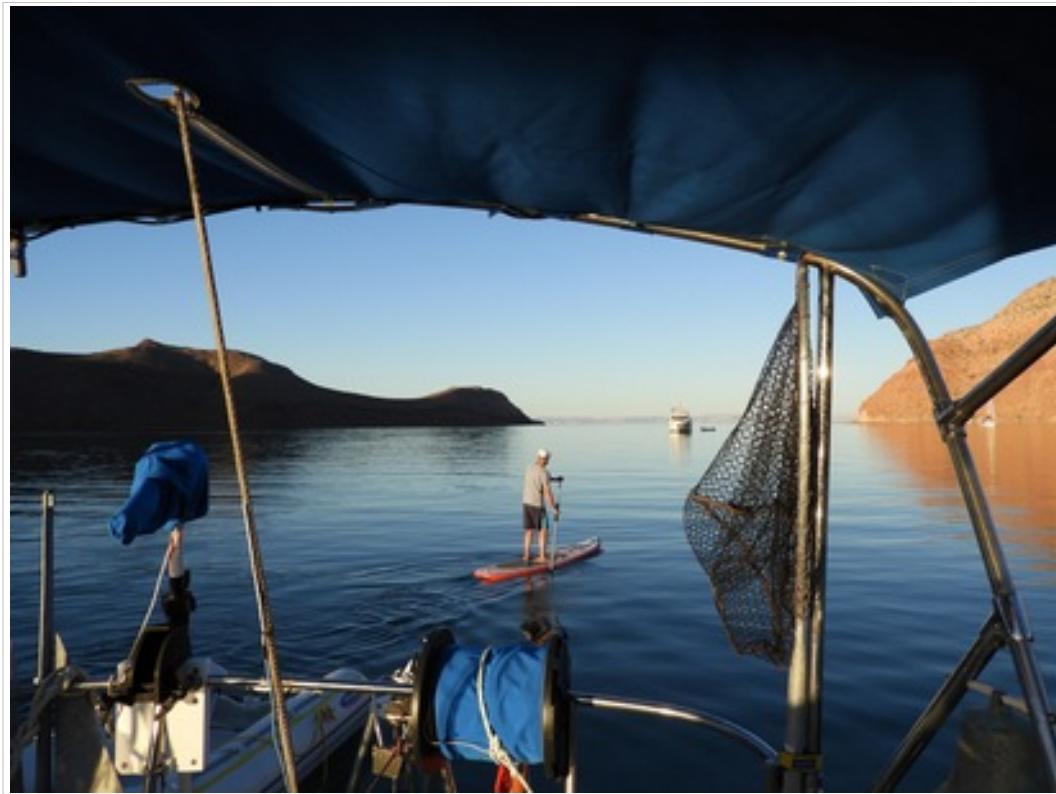
There are lots of nooks and crannies around the islands that are fun to explore from the dinghy.



Octopus

Chocolate chip cookie
starfish

More underwater life. It's hard to tell, but that blob on the the right is an octopus. And of course, you can see the distinctive and aptly named chocolate chip cookie starfish.



When the winds are calm, the anchorages can be a great place to explore by paddleboard or kayak.



As I said, good hiking, awesome cactii, lots of great folks around if you want to hang out with other cruisers

Speaking of connection with others – you can still get cell phone reception in some of these anchorages. As you head farther north, there is little reception until you reach the Loreto area

Snorkelling with sea lions at Los Islotes



Los Islotes, also a protected area, is just north of the Espritu Santo National park. There is a sea lion colony there.

We dinghied there outside the usual tourist time so we could use a mooring ball - it is quite deep for anchoring

It is a magical experience to swim with these playful creatures, especially the young ones

- but like all young ones, you can get them wound up if you aren't careful and they might nip - In our case, Bjarne wound them up and my aunt was the one who got bit.



Because it is a protected area the pups and females aren't shy, but one should avoid the more dangerous males. If the lions happen to mostly be on shore, there is lots of other colourful sea life as well.

I said it before but this really felt like a magical experience for us.



Isla San Francisco

About 40 miles north of La Paz is I. SF
If you've seen pictures of the Baja before, chances are
you've seen some of I. SF – the bay is a beautiful
large half-moon on the west side – it's the island on
the cover of Shawn and Heather's Sea of Cortez
Cruising Guide

We have visited there several times – it is definitely
one of our favourites.

During the winter people most often anchor on the
west side (on the right here). However, when we
headed south, later in the season in April, the winds
allowed for us to anchor on the east side.



Here is yet another one of those cactus pictures I warned you about.

Here are some more underwater denizens – these are cortez garden eels.

We have seen a lot of Ospreys in the Baja areas, but, just like seeing bald eagles here at home, we never tire of it.



The hiking here is quite good. Along the south shore, you can hike along a high narrowish ridge – great view and fun if you like rock-clambering.

On a later trip we discovered you can have a longer hike to the north – it has some interesting, narrow paths on hillsides with loose stones, lots of cactii, and good views all around.

If you get all the way to the end at the the north side of the island you have yet another great view of that channel – and you can see why you want to check your chart before navigating it!

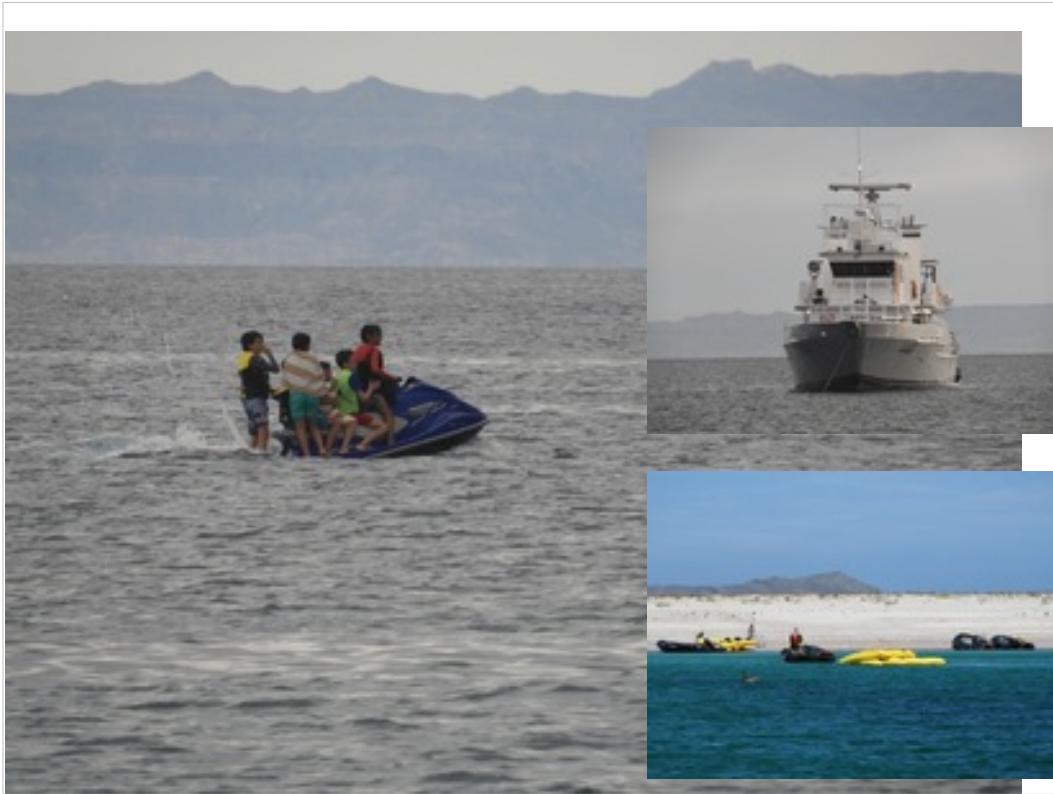
After the hike you can grab your snorkel and mask and cool off in the water. The vis is often not great there and the water was coolish (18-20) when we've been there, but usually you can see something interesting



To the west of the island you get a good view of the Sierra Gigantes. In the morning light they are stunning.

In the cooler months, you can get yellow fin tuna. A few single handers came back every year and mostly hung out at this island, fishing like crazy. They were generous with their catches and we had some very nice chunks of tuna. We reciprocated with baked goods.

Later in the season (March) the herring are abundant. These fishers were casting their nets for them. Not long after they left that morning the dolphins came in for their share.



Because the anchorage can hold a lot of people, this can be a good place to socialize with other cruisers. The long beach is a bit pebbly but it is perfectly good for beach parties.

If you are looking for peace and quiet, sometimes I SF is not the place to be. It is close enough to La Paz that larger boats carrying tourists sometimes come to the anchorage. You then might get lots of inexperienced kayakers paddling around, which is OK, or jet skis buzzing about – less appealing to us. We were amused in this case by just how many kids were on this jet ski.



Continuing to mosey northward one can find Mangle Solo in the San Jose channel – not great protection but we spent a lot of time underwater here. In the shallows near the shore we discovered a few octopuses. One got quite ticked off at Bjarne for leaving the GoPro nearby and threw a stone at the camera. Nobody likes the paparazzi.



Some goats wandered down from the hills of Isla San
Jose
And yet another neat cactus

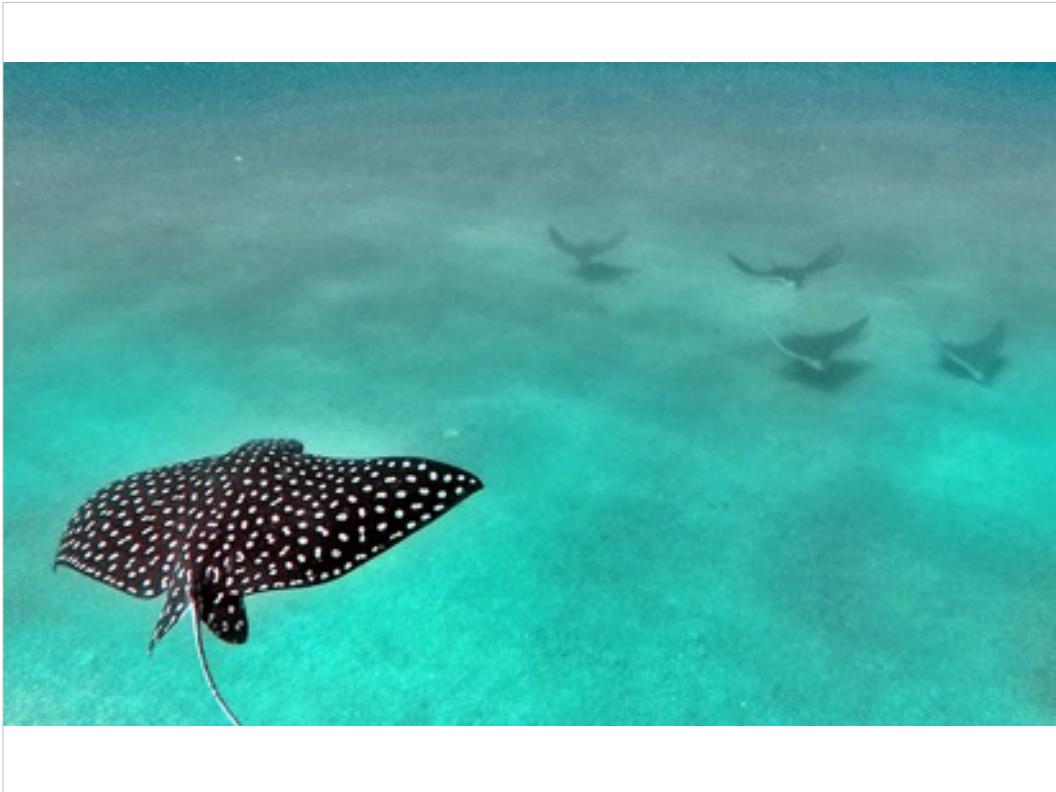


Moving up the Baja but still south of Loreto there are a few anchorages open to the east with varying degrees of protection from the north.

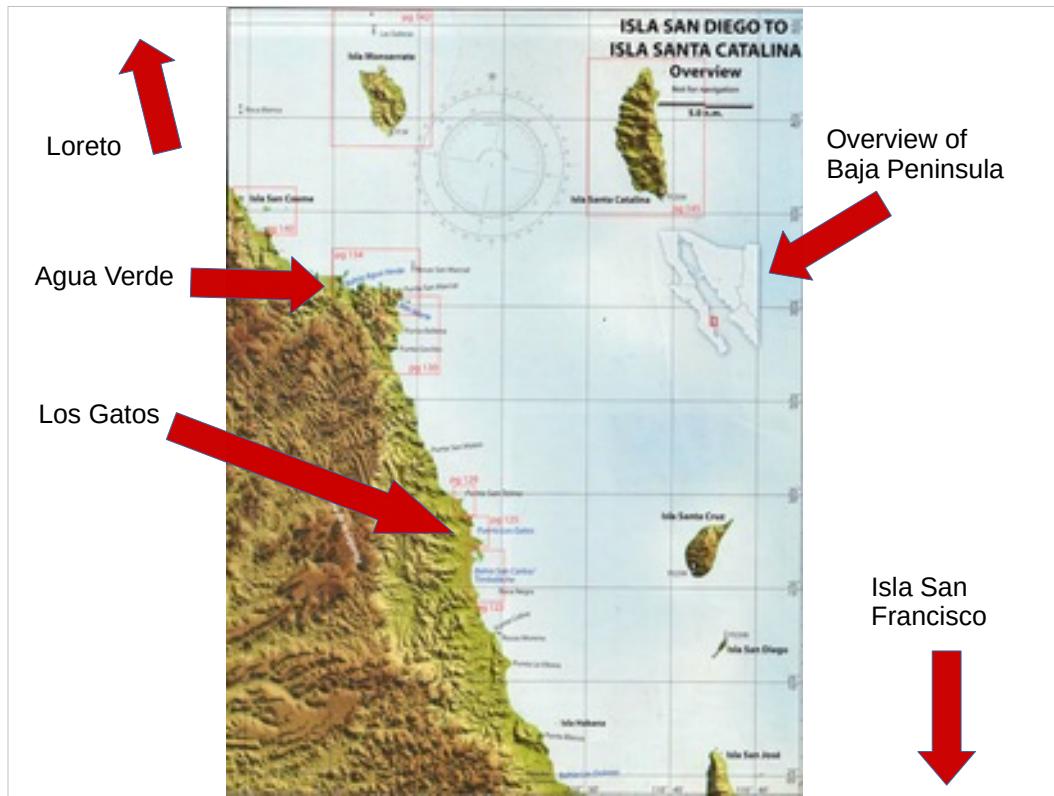
Puerto Los Gatos is probably the most visually stunning of them.

Back to those rocks again – there are these incredible reddish rock (sandstone) formations to the north and some attractive layered hills to the west. There's also a nice beach. And the rocks are really fun to climb on.

However, the anchorage can be quite uncomfortable if the winds are not from a good direction so one can't always count on staying there.



And of course part of our rating of an anchorage includes an assessment of the underwater scenery. In this case we were very pleased to find, not one, but 5 eagle rays!



So, a bit of orientation – we are still fairly far south on the peninsula

Los Gatos, where the red rocks were, is partway up in the picture

We'll head to Agua verde which is 52 NM from I.San Francisco (marked with an arrow)



Bahia Agua Verde is another picturesque anchorage – it is popular for several reasons, in addition to being pretty

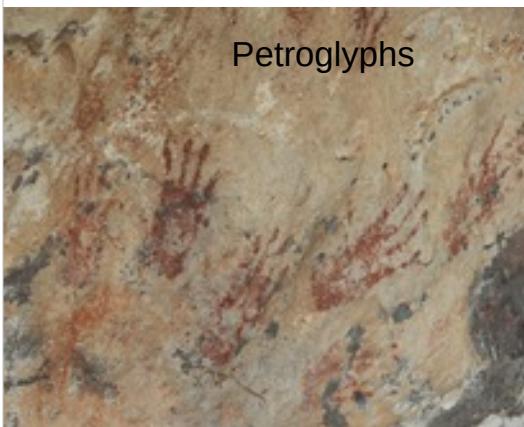
- it has some protection from the north winds that are prevalent in the winter
- you can get some fresh provisions
- there is internet access but no cell phone reception
- there are a couple of restaurants

We stopped here on March 20 last year after blissfully meandering our way north and discovered the world had gone nuts



AV is famous for its goat cheese. You can purchase a very fresh round of this mild flavoured cheese.

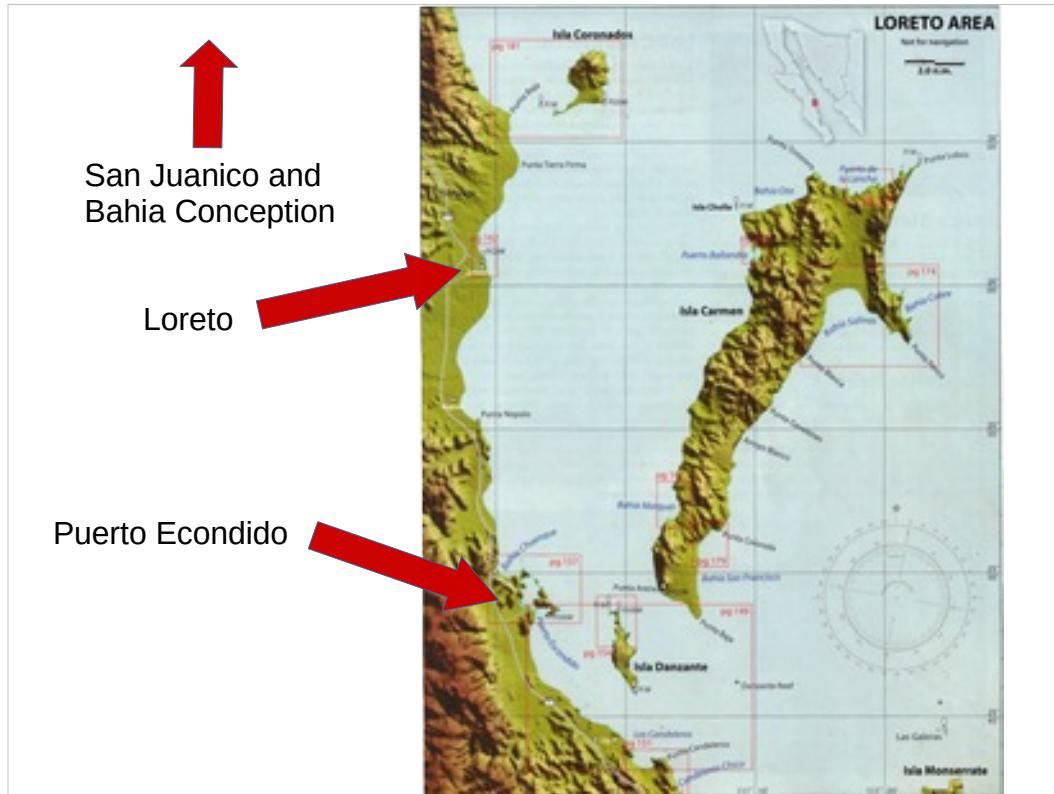
We experimented a bit and found we could keep the cheese by wrapping it in vinegar soaked cheese cloth. It dried out nicely. This is all part of your entertainment when you don't have a fridge.



In normal times, a cruise ship stops here weekly

Of course we spent some time underwater as well.

There are even some petroglyphs a little outside of town, although it was a bit of a search to find them.



Loreto area is another cruising hub, and many folks come back here time and again – cell reception can be found here, although sometimes you have to climb a hill to get it

There are several places to anchor on the islands shown here and they are not very far from each other. There is a good-sized town, Loreto (arrow), and a good place to shelter and get administrative stuff done, - Puerto Escondido



-The town of Loreto is charming – had some tourist infrastructure but not excessive and overdeveloped



- a good place to get supplies and is great for touristy shopping
- lots of restaurants, can get laundry done
- the anchorage is open roadstead though so you have to time your visit to the weather
- when we had our lunch out we would pick a spot on the water so we could keep an eye on the boat and we usually felt rushed because the wind was going to pick up in the afternoon
- It is easier, but not cheaper, to rent a car or take a taxi from Escondido



Puerto Escondido -very large and, as you can see, well protected in a way

However, when the winds pick up, although your boat will probably be secure on the mooring, there is a long distance to get to shore in choppy waters so it can be a challenge and you might get stuck on your boat for a few days in a big blow



- need to take a mooring ball or go to the docks – prices went up drastically a few years ago, but services are pretty good (wifi is a bit unpredictable), the showers are hot, and, as I said, you can arrange for transportation into Loreto
- cell reception is good onshore, although it is hit or miss in the mooring field



Steinbeck Canyon

Great hiking in a few spots nearby

- It's a bit of an uninteresting walk to get to this one but once there, the Steinbeck Canyon is a great place to hike



I'll just show you some assorted photos from the islands in the Loreto area.

Danzante can only hold a few boats but if you can get a spot it is lovely.

-dolphins sometimes come into Danzante
There are whales around the Loreto area – once in a while you get lucky



Also at Danzante



Juvenile Giant Damsel fish



Some of the critters we've seen in the area
Sorry, we know our fish better than our lizards so I
can't give you a name for this one (Bertha?)



Crown of thorns – fairly common there, which eat coral



Barred Pargo -about 30 cm – good eating



Puerto Balandra on Isla Carmen, across from and
about 10? miles from Loreto

Good anchorage except it is very deep in the middle so
you have to find a place along the edges
– good place for socializing – lots of people
congregate here



This picture was taken from a hike at Balandra on Isla Carmen, looking south toward Danzante

If lucky (we weren't) you might see some big horn sheep on I. Carmen



Isla Coronados

Isla Coronados – one of our favourite places
It is very close to Loreto, which is convenient, and has
cell phone reception

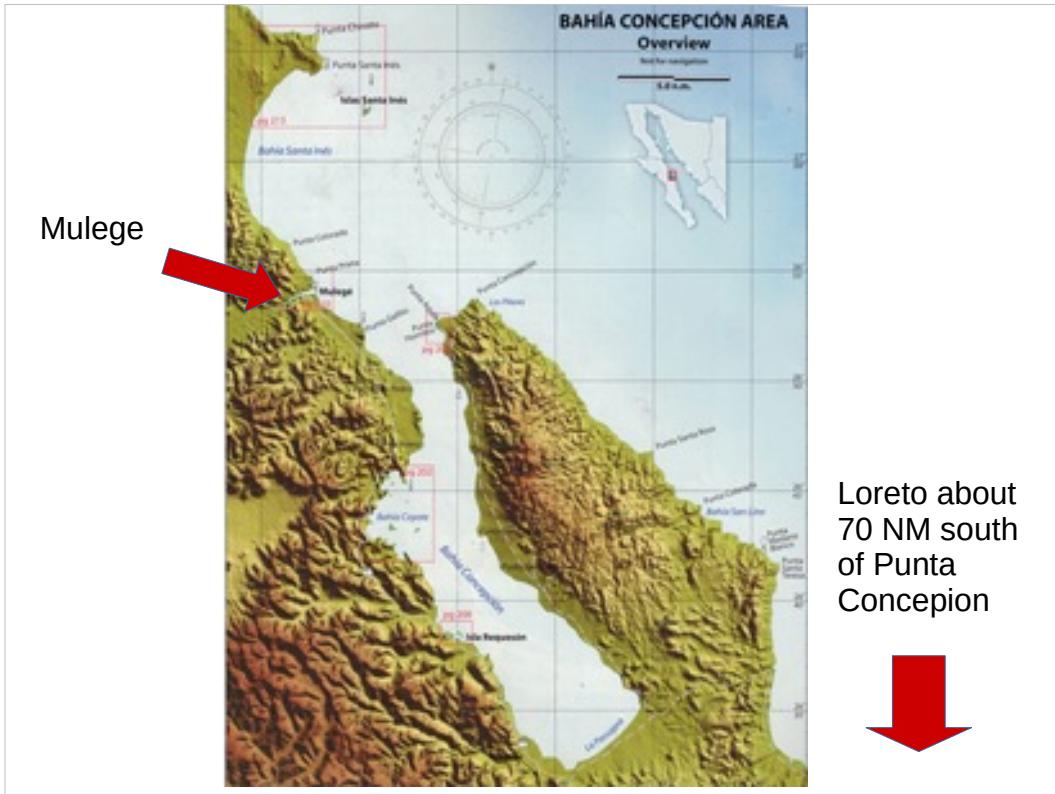
Coronados has a few anchorages, and is a popular
spot for the boat tours to bring visitors to
-we've had some good wildlife spotting there – whales,
dolphins, and hoards of rays splashing by



Surprise – we like it for its hike!

The island is an extinct volcano and the walk to the top is very enjoyable, over varied terrain, and with interesting plants, most of them pokey.

It starts out with this nice sandy trail but soon you are walking on hard black volcanic rock and then loose sandy pebbles at the steep part – a good workout but the views are fabulous.



We'll make a bigger jump to the north, skipping some good spots on the way, up to Bahia Conception

You can see this very large bay (about 20 miles long) has several places one can anchor

There is a town, Mulege, which one can hitch hike to for more significant provisioning, so we are told. Unfortunately, it's not good for anchoring at.

But in the bay, there are some anchorages where you can get a few things and some with restaurants. There is not much cell-reception.



The main highway runs close to the shore in places so it can be noisy with the sound of airbrakes.

And many cruisers who return here year after year as well.

Pelican dinner time

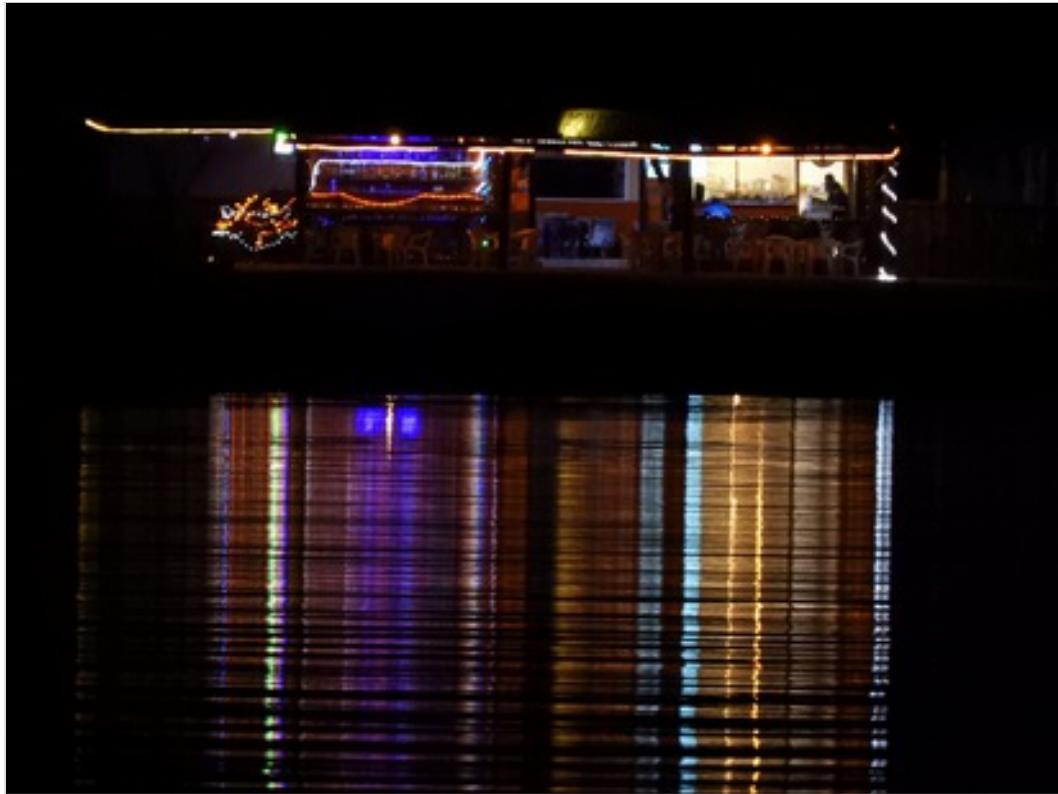


Watching pelicans dive bomb into the ocean is quite entertaining.

Here we have a seagull patiently waiting for a chance to swipe some food.



Thee are a lot of gringo-types that regularly spend their winters (and some all year round) here on the beaches, either in RVs, or small beach houses



The benefits of hanging out where there are a lot of other cruisers is there are things like this:

Santispac has two or three restaurants
-this one had Tuesday night two for one margaritas – a very popular event

A veggie and fruit truck with lots of wonderful fresh food comes weekly to this beach during the peak cruising season.

Santispac



Easter - Semana Santos

At Easter time, the beaches become packed with Mexican families on vacation

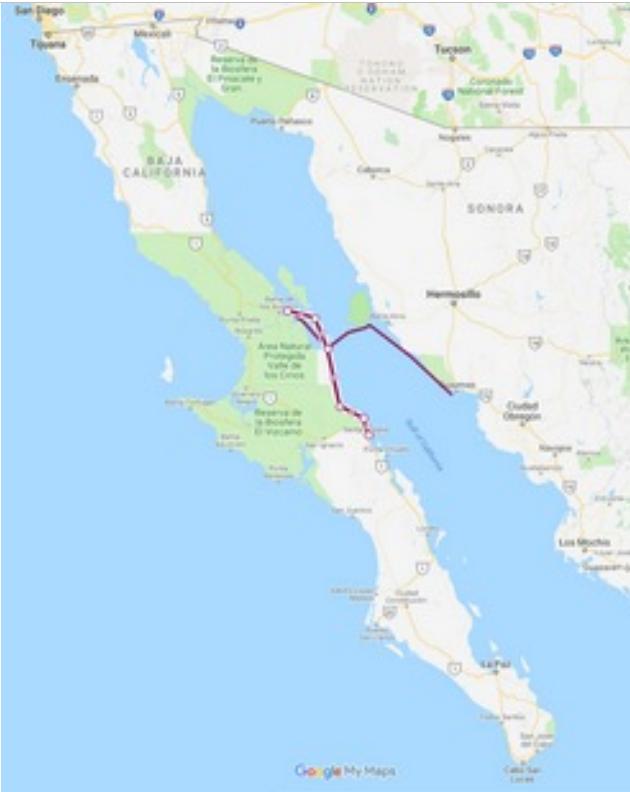
At Santispac there was even a small fair with rides and games during that week – Semana santos (saints week)

It was kind of fun to be there when there was so much activity but it did bring out the noisy jet skis.





To the north of Mulege is an impressive shell beach at Punta Santa Ines, near Punta Chivato

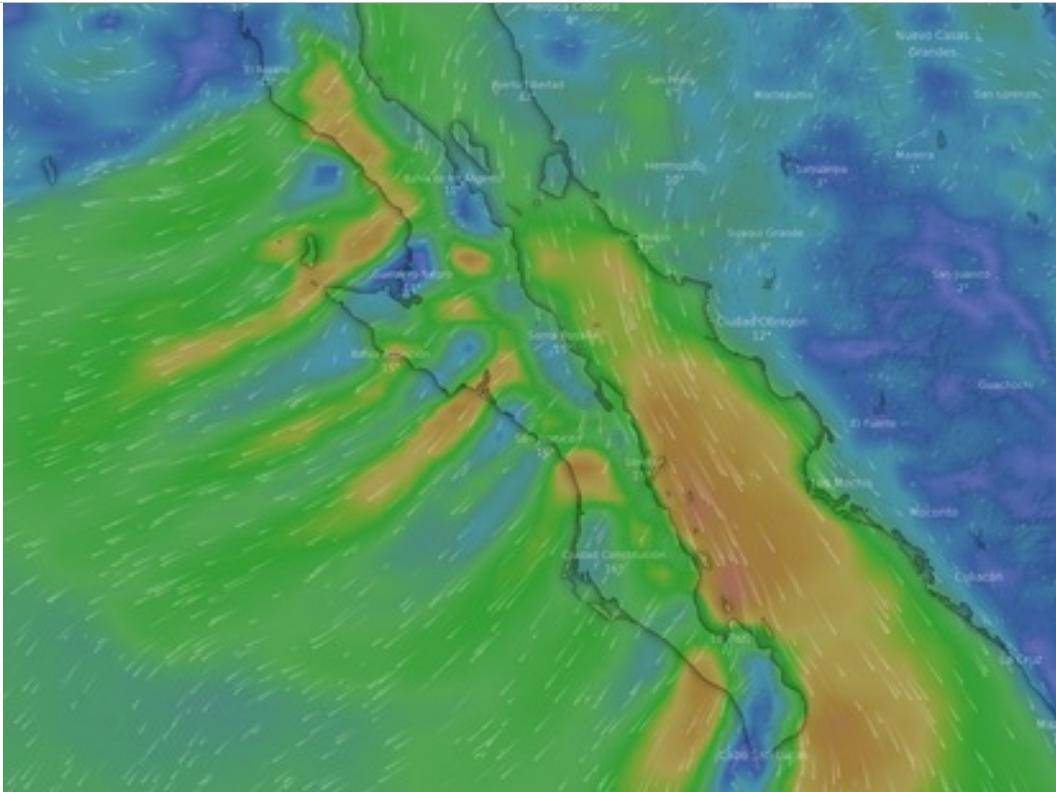


From Midriff Islands down to Santa Rosalia

Let's move north in the Sea of Cortez. Several physical differences from the southern portion of the Sea are worth pointing out:

- the passage distance from the mainland to the Baja peninsula is lessened significantly. Not only does the Sea narrow in this area, but there are also islands spanning the passage, allowing one to break the journey to the Baja up into passages of 20 miles or less. These Midriff Islands include Isla Tiburon, Turon, and San Lorenzo.

It isn't quite a free lunch though; If you store your boat in Guaymas, you'll have to sail north a ways in order to take advantage of the shortened crossing.



The second difference from the southern Sea is the prevailing weather, which depends on the season. In the summer, cruisers head to the northern Sea of Cortez to lessen the likelihood of encountering a hurricane.

Being contrarians, we visited this area in December/January, when the prevailing weather is driven by high-pressure systems parked over the Arizona plains. The cold heavy air periodically spills south and is channeled by geography down through the Sea. You can see in this Windy plot from yesterday how the air accelerates as it is pushed south, even spilling out into the Pacific through gaps in the Baja mountains.

These strong north winds, called Nortes, repeat on 2-5 day cycles, with calm periods between.



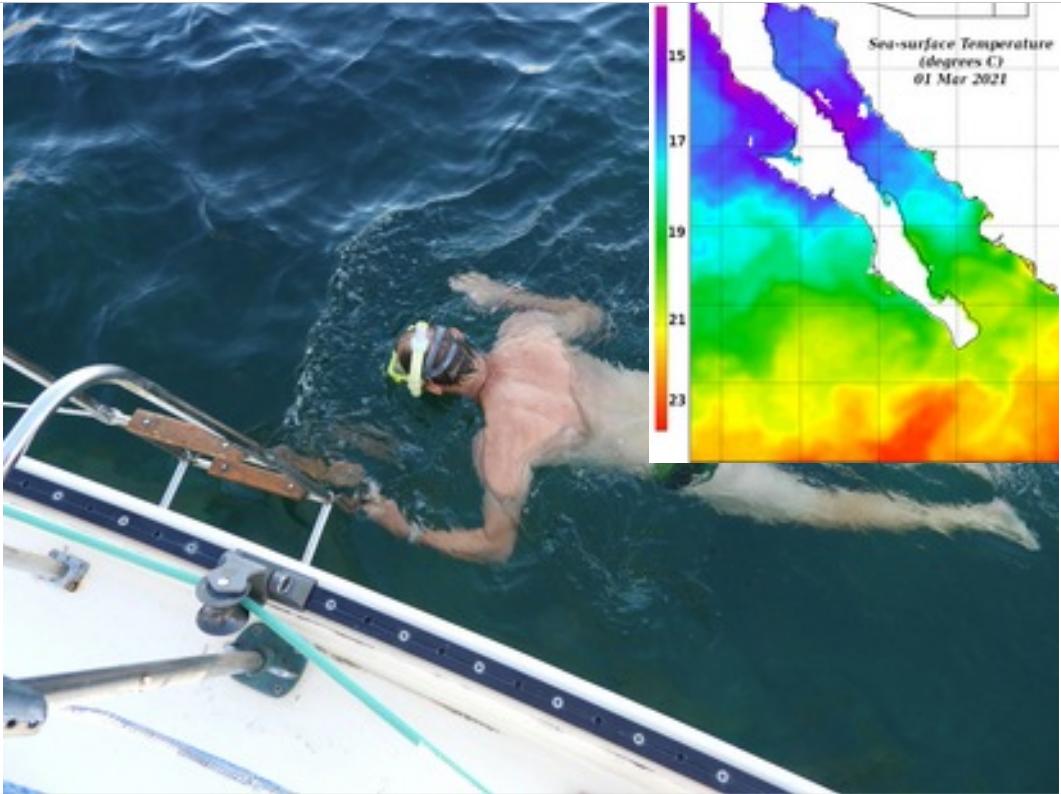
It's our impression that the Nortes were generally a little stronger in the southern regions of the Sea, but there was still plenty of days in which we enjoyed sporty sailing.



The cyclical nature of the Nortes kept us on the move – changing anchorages frequently to avoid unwanted waves and wind directions – so we got to sample a decent number of anchorages in the Midriff islands on the way across to the Baja.



Being Winter, and with the wind originating in the high plains of Arizona, there was definitely a nip in the air. Nighttime temperatures dipped into the single digits, but once the sun rose it quickly warmed to the high teens / low 20s. Not a tropical vacation, but if you can handle summer cruising in BC, you can handle winter cruising in the northern Sea of Cortez.



Swimming and snorkeling are doable in the 15C water, but a thin wetsuit increases the enjoyment.

We learned that the winter Nortes are crucial in sustaining the sea life – the strong winds churn up the Sea and bring colder, but nutrient-rich, water to the surface.



The cooler air and sea meant that we encountered very few sailors – in fact we ran into only one other cruising boat in this area until we reached Santa Rosalia.



The area is not totally devoid of humans though – there are scattered fishing camps, such as this one on Isla Tiburon.



And we also encountered fishing vessels fairly often, with their accompaniment of screeching sea birds.



One crewmember with an artistic hand left a picture of their vessel at a shore campsite.



Here's a shorter-range fishing panga crew working hard.



The solitude meant that we got to enjoy some really fabulous anchorages all by ourselves - unmarred by the sounds of gensets, sea-doos, and outboard motors.

Just quiet burbling wavelets as the moon rose out of the sea.



And the yip-yip of coyotes calling each other.

We heard them at night, and sometimes spotted them
in the mornings, roaming the shore.



Several anchorages featured sea-lions, playing in the water around Hoku Pa'a



And at Isla San Esteban we could view these fat beach sausages from shore.



Ospreys and Great White Egrets were also a common treat.



San Francisquito had a lovely beach



...and also a shallow arroyo – we enjoy following the dry creek beds into the interior, observing the neat plants and animals.



Even in December there are plants in bloom.



This one looks like some type of Chinese Lantern plant.



Despite the cooler water, we were still drawn to explore what swam beneath the surface.

The Argus Moray is noted for its bright yellow eyes, one of which can be seen here.



Stone Scorpionfish are masters of lying motionless and resembling seaweed-encrusted rocks. This one is actually less well-disguised than most.



The sandy bottom at San Francisquito was good holding for our anchor, and popular with the rays.



Las Animas Slot was possibly the most picturesque anchorage we encountered.

The high surrounding hills, which were a great vantage point to look out over the Sea, also demonstrate one of the disadvantages of winter cruising: the short days.

Even though we were closer to the tropics than back in BC, the December sun still rose later and was lower in the sky than in, say, April. With the tall hills surrounding us, sometimes we wouldn't need sunglasses until after 10 in the morning.



Ensenada El Alacran (Scorpion Bay) featured a small resort with a handful of cabins. There were no guests at the time, but we had a limited-Spanish conversation with a caretaker.



His dog tagged along while we explored the surrounding shrubs and sand. We didn't find any scorpions, despite the dog's energetic assistance.



Barb did find this Dr. Seuss-inspired plant poking way above the rest.



The most-protected anchorage in the northern Sea is Puerto Don Juan, just east of the village of Bahia de los Angeles. Sheltered from wind and waves in all directions, it's considered a hurricane-hole – though not always 100% effective, as there is a wrecked fishing boat on shore.



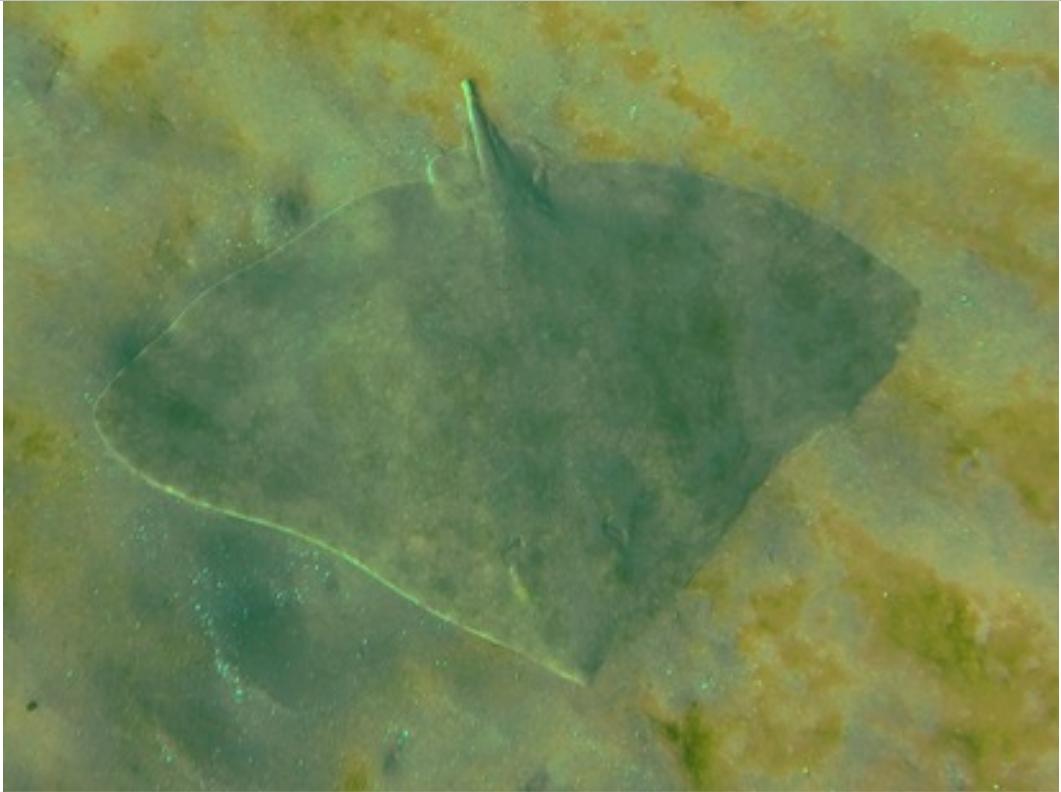
Along the lovely long hike to the peak of the surrounding hills we spotted lots of spiders, a rabbit, and assorted birds.



And were rewarded with a fantastic view of the Sea to the east and south.



About 120 miles south lies the town of Santa Rosalia, which we'll see shortly.



But first, we duck our heads underwater to look at a California Butterfly Ray, rarely spotted.



And a well-posed butterfly (possibly a Soldier or Queen butterfly, both of which are related to Monarchs)



I didn't know where to insert this collage – it's a testament to the generally-clear skies in the Baja in winter. For 28 consecutive nights (except when it was new) we took a photo of the moon, and assembled the bunch to record the lunar month.

Yes, some nights did have clouds but with some patience we managed to catch a break each time. The harder challenge was taking the photos from a sometimes-rocking boat :-)



We reached the southern limit of what we've been calling the Northern Sea when we arrived at Santa Rosalia. It was with anticipation of shopping and showers that we pulled around the breakwater into the harbour.



There once was a marina up by the wooden tower of Pisa, but the docks were destroyed in bad weather.



Fortunately, there is a exceedingly well-run Fonatur marina just south of the destroyed one. Though it's small, at this time of year there was room for us. Most of the other sailboats had owners absent for the Christmas/New-Year's holidays, but the crews of two were aboard and we enjoyed the first bit of socializing we'd had in over a month.



Santa Rosalia is a pleasant town – one of a handful along the Baja that has most of the amenities you want, good transportation along the highway, a ferry that runs across to the mainland (to Guaymas actually), yet hasn't acquired a touristy / commercialized feel.

I had one the best burgers I can recall at one of the many local food joints, and we enjoyed sharing dinner with the other cruisers at a restaurant, after wandering around town looking at the Christmas decorations.



Santa Rosalia originated as a mining town, founded in the 1880s by the French mining company El Boleo. Many historic wooden buildings as well as equipment from the mining operation remain.



Probably in the hurry to expand the mines and provide infrastructure, many items were brought in instead of being designed and built locally.

This church was designed by Gustave Eiffel (yes, that fellow) and built in Paris in 1887.



The church was then exhibited in Paris alongside Eiffel's Tower, spent a couple years in Brussels Belgium, before being dismantled and reassembled in Santa Rosalia in 1895.



The surrounding hills had large sedimentary deposits of copper/zinc/manganese ore, which were mined actively until 1950's, with sporadic attempts since then to reactivate the mines using upgraded techniques and equipment.



Some of the equipment bears “Made in Canada” labels, which was from the period when a Canadian firm “Baja Mining” had a go at it, until selling the operation to a Korean firm.



A great hike follows the very long covered conveyor belt that runs from the harbour up to the smelter. You can see the flue in the distance on the hill.



The hills are pocked with holes and shafts. As in most places in Mexico, it is up to the individual to look after their own safety – no barriers or signs to keep explorers out.



Some mine excavations were huge chambers, with smaller shafts fanning out.



Other shafts require one to crouch down to walk into, as they meander to follow the ore deposits.



After the copper mining boom petered out, there wasn't as much industrial activity in the area, though there remains a gypsum mine on an island a few miles from town.

Santa Rosalia has had a population in the 10s of thousands for a long time, so has acquired a pretty large cemetary. It's interesting to see the different ways of remembering ancestors in other cultures.



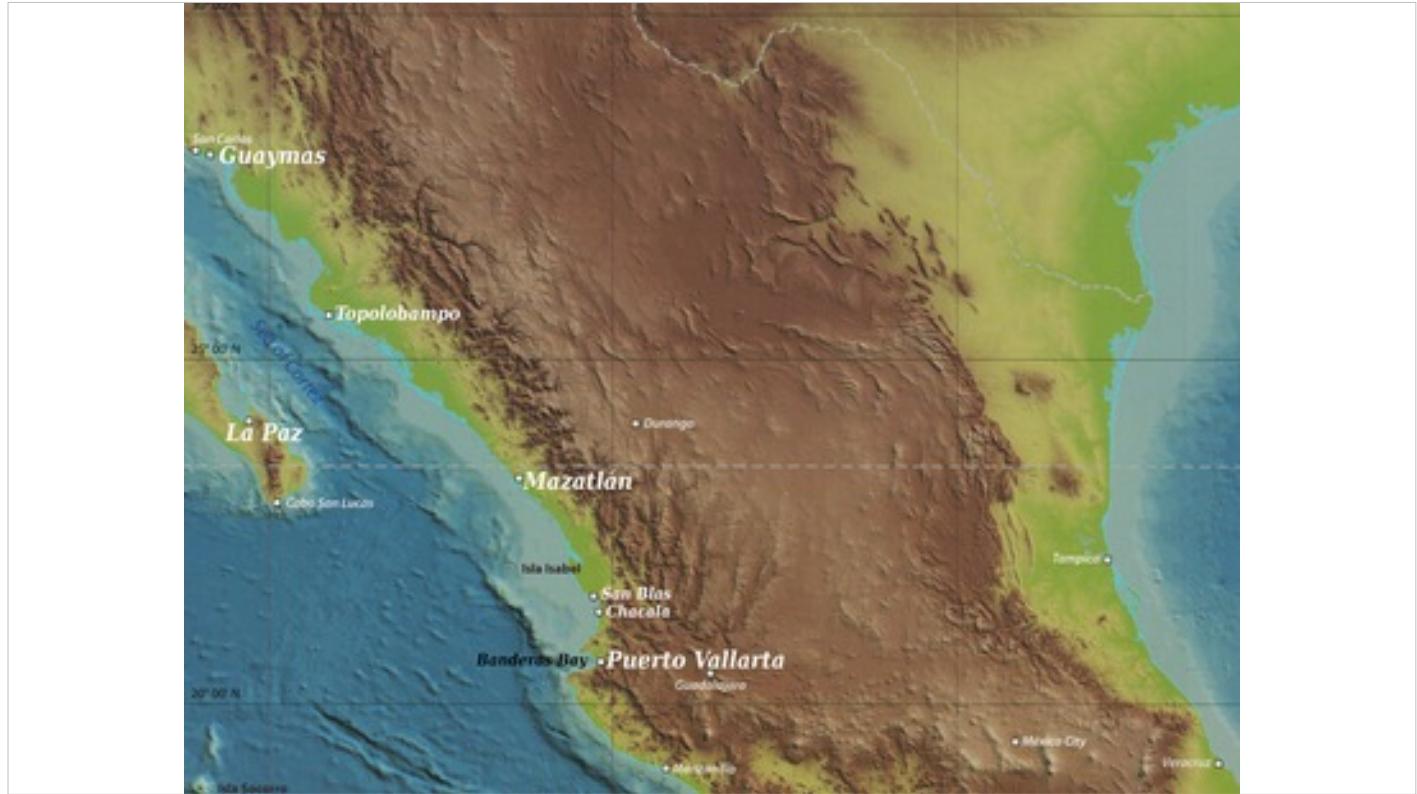
We celebrated New Year's by shooting off expired flares from the dock with our boat neighbours (there were lots of other fireworks banging away, so it didn't seem inappropriate).

Being a noisy town, we don't have as many wildlife photos from here, but the Snowy Egrets were entertaining.



And we were fascinated watching this Osprey tear apart dinner while perched on a piling.

Mainland Mexico



Now we'll move east across the Sea, to mainland Pacific Mexico, from Guaymas to the north as far south as Banderas Bay, which includes such popular spots as PV and La Cruz.

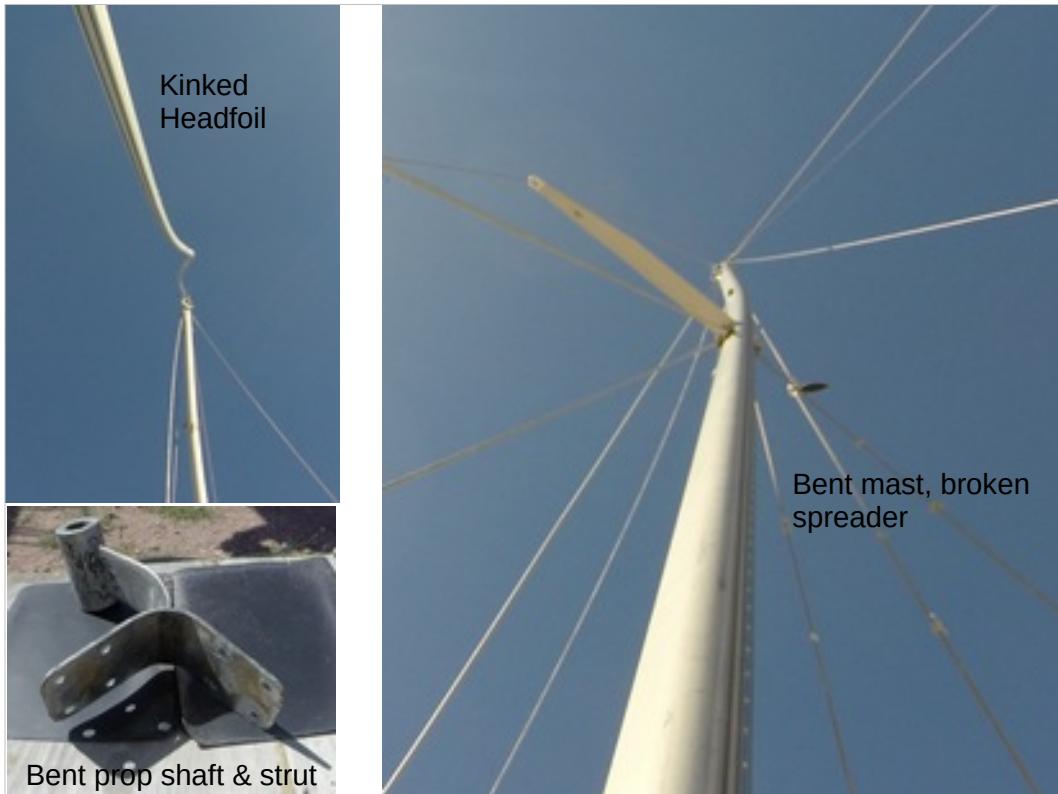
We'll start with the Guaymas / San Carlos area: home to well over 1000 yachts each hurricane season.



The farther north one goes along N American coast, the less the risk getting hit by a hurricane. The Guaymas area sees a major storm about every 10 years.

Here's the path hurricane NEWTON took in Sep 2016. Mark who was living on HOP TOAD in the boatyard at the time told us the winds hit 90 knots and there was a terrific amount of rain.

It was the rain that did Hoku Pa'a in, softening the ground to the point that two of the stern jackstands gave way and she toppled over.



There are a couple of Currents articles about our experience in making Hoku Pa'a seaworthy again (she was written off by our insurance company), so I won't rehash the details.

The biggest challenge was locating and having a replacement mast shipped down to Mexico. We spent one cruising season and the first month of the next living up a ladder in the boatyard.



Lest you thin hurricanes are your only worry when on the hard:

Look under the mud encrusting the tire of this Travelift, from which our boat is suspended, at the exposed reinforcing fabric belt which normally is hidden beneath a healthy layer of rubber tread.

And just in case you think that maintenance problems are reserved to Gabriel's Marina Seca, the previous year no boats were able to haul or launch from the Fonatur marina for about 2 months, after their Travelift blew a tire when the general manager overrode the yard boss and forced him to lift a boat beyond the Travelift's weight capacity.



Here we are splashing at Gabriel's yard.

Overall we like Guaymas for the abundance of stores and services, and the Pollo Feliz, but we dislike the dirty, dusty environment and the rank smells wafting from the nearby fish plant.



Even Guaymas has some cool wildlife: there have been roadrunners zipping through the yard, and this Osprey perched on our masthead having dinner while watching us work diligently below.

This past season, our last in Mexico, we launched right after Christmas 2019.

We planned on following the mainland Mexican coast southward, until it became time to head back north to park the boat for another season, with eventual sights set on French Polynesia.



A 150 mile sail gets one down to Topolobampo, which is worth talking about even if you don't visit, just because the name is so great!

There's a several-miles-long entrance channel before one arrives in the harbour, so we anchored off a nearby beach as the afternoon waned, wanting to wait until daylight to tackle the channel.

We found the folks of this area to be quite friendly – Several fishers in a panga stopped by for a chat (if you can call it that with our limited Spanish :-) and later dropped off two delicious chubs for our dinner.



Next morning we set out for Topolobampo harbour. The entrance channel was well marked but narrow and with several doglegs. Sailing in a decent breeze, we followed and dodged the other traffic: several fishing vessels, a ferry, and a dredger.



Our intention was to grab a slip at the Topolobampo Fonatur, and we were anticipating a good hot shower.

Fonatur marinas are scattered throughout Mexico, and were all constructed using the same blueprints, so are easily recognized. This one though had a few unusual features we noticed as we neared: newspaper and plywood over some of the windows, and a lack of docks between the pilings.

Turns out this government-run marina closed at the end of the previous season, and our guidebooks and sailor-net hadn't caught up yet. There is a private marina up a nearby channel, but they wanted \$US80 / night.



Instead we anchored near the missing docks, which turned out to be a fine location for the 4 days we spent there.

You can see a Baja Ferry in the background left – it makes regular runs to La Paz.



One attraction to Topolobampo is that it's a convenient location to park the boat while going on the Copper Canyon tour – a train ride traversing 37 bridges and 86 tunnels, through canyons that are deeper, narrower, and longer than the Grand Canyon.

The train departs from a nearby inland town, to which one can take a bus.

We were in a cruising mood, so decided to experience the Copper Canyon at some future date.



Urban art is often influenced by the surrounding environment. Mexican malecons often have statues and murals that bring a smile.



We stayed in Topo over New Year's, which turned out great for socializing. A fizz boat (that's a Kiwi expression) buzzed us a couple of times and we waved them over. A local fellow was taking some buds out for a ride to a nearby beach for BBQ shrimp, and we invited them to stop by again later.

They brought homemade ceviche and Pacificos, which we enjoyed while hearing stories about El Chapo's hometown. Badiraguato, Sinaloa is about 200 km SE from here.



Our next stop down the coast was Mazatlan. If you've watched the Love Boat, you've been in the right area.

North of Mazatlan there are acres of marinas, but we wanted to be closer to the excitement, so we anchored in two different spots just south of, and within walking distance, of town.



Cruise ships disgorge their cargo not too far from where we could come ashore, so there are plenty of things to see and do.

Mazatlan translates as “Land of the Deer”, so you’ll see lots of stag statues, as well as on the town’s coat-of-arms.



Mazatlan is hilly. There's good exercise, and views, from atop the hill with El Faro (the Lighthouse) that marks one side of the harbour entrance.

One of our anchorages is just visible to the right and behind me. Farther up the harbour are 3 cruise ships, and that number seemed to be about average on any given day.



One of the cruise ships, as it was heading out into the sunset, played the theme from the Love Boat on it's horns.



Tourists on a slimmer budget can hop on one of these local boats for picnic / snorkeling / sunset-viewing trips.

Carnaval was happening while we were in town, so many of the tour boats had an evening excursion to watch the fireworks from the water.



This is the anchorage just inside the main harbour, in front of the Club Nautico building. As far as facilities go, it isn't much – a dinghy tie-up, two rustic washrooms, cold showers, and some shelter – all with a feline army guarding the place. But the fee is low, and from here it's easy to get ashore where taxis or a 30-minute walk will get you downtown.



Our more scenic anchorage was actually outside the harbour itself, in a little hook off a beach to the SE.

There was no dinghy dock here, but we didn't have any problems just dragging up onto the beach. Several good beach eateries were close by, but to get into town itself from here required taking a water-taxi for 15 pesos – it would drop one off on the other side of the harbour near the cruise ships.



Sunsets were gorgeous...



While this second anchorage wasn't as close to downtown as the first one, it had the benefit that ashore there was a village with more rustic attractions.

We really enjoyed the fresh peanuts that this woman was roasting and selling, and came back a second time a few days later to stock up on more.



The beach was popular with horse-back riders.

This very fresh seashell is for you, Connie!



Food and drink establishments abound along the beach, running the gamut from fancy to a tent with benches.

Benji's, not the one shown here, offered a fabulous pizza con camarone.



The water this far south is noticeably warmer than up in the Sea of Cortez – about 21C in February.

Isla Cardones was a 10 minute dinghy ride from the anchorage and turned out to be a decent snorkeling site.



Adolescent Cortez Angelfish



Jewel Moray



I mentioned Carnaval – Mazatlan's is the 3rd-largest in the world, so we had timed our visit in Feb to coincide with the week-long festivities.

Ahead of the parade itself folks are ambling along, stopping occasionally to let fireworks fly. Several rockets caused the soaring frigates to have to dodge.



The parade floats are amazing! This year's theme was "Somos America" (We are the Americas) so there were representatives from many S. American countries, in addition to Canada.



Fans of world mythology, or Terry Pratchett's Discworld, will like this float's representation of the World Turtle.



There were frightful masks...



Laughing faces, and eye-candy.



This Caballero's leather tackle was intricately and beautifully detailed.



Capping off the evening was the fireworks show, which started with a 10 minute drone sequence, followed by 20 minutes of intense pyrotechnics set off from a dozen barges moored off the beach.



From Mazatlán we continued our visit of Pacific Mexico. A highly-recommended stop is Isla Isabel, about 90 miles south and slightly offshore.

It's an old volcano (you can see the central caldera on the map) whose walls fall off fairly quickly into deep water.



Isla Isabel is fairly low-lying so doesn't provide much wind protection, so it's best visited when the weather is fairly settled.

There are a couple of anchoring spots with adequate holding – as long as it's not a lee shore, if you drag you won't hit anything for a long time.



The deep water surrounding the island is very popular with whales – we could hear and see them at least several times each day.



As you get closer to land, the myriad of birds in the air, on the beach, and in the trees become apparent.



Isla Isabel is home to a large colony of Blue-footed Boobies, as well as an equally-large colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds.

There seems to be enough fish to support both populations, though we frequently witnessed aerial battles as frigates tried to upset a boobie enough that it would drop its catch.



The Boobies are nesting around this time of year (February), and their preferred sites consist of hollowed-out depressions in the sand.

There are occasional visits to the island by park wardens and researchers – some of the birds sport leg-jewellery as a result.



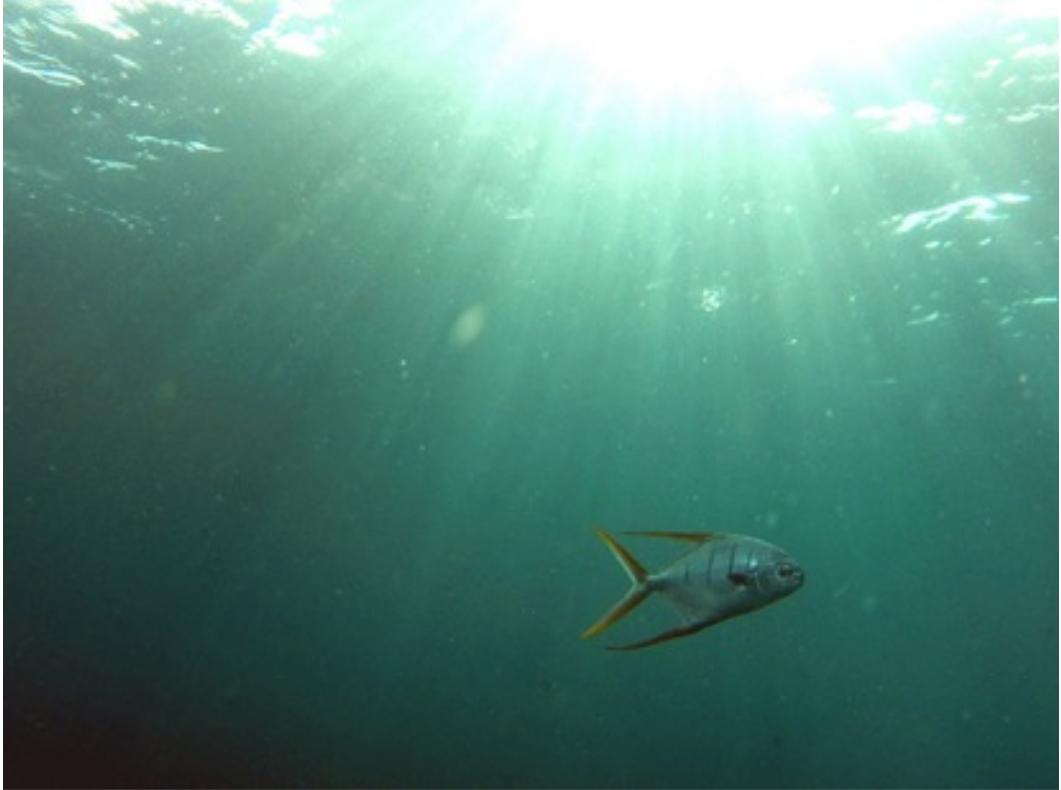
The Magnificent Frigatebirds, in contrast, nest in the low trees slightly inland of the boobies.

Males have a gular sac they use to show off.

Approaching any of the birds didn't seem to disturb them – there aren't any big predators on the island, though some of the lizards will poach eggs.



We spotted frigate chicks, still downy white.



Underwater at Isla Isabel was also great, though we found the visibility varied quite a lot, possibly due to currents.

This is a GaffTopsail Pompano.



And a Moorish Idol



And a Panamic Fanged Blenny.

As most spots in Mexico, there isn't much brightly-coloured coral, but there are a lot of spectacular fish species. We've photographed and identified well over 100 (you can view the collection on our website).



The highlight had to be while snorkeling over a sandy bottom when suddenly the water darkened like a cloud.

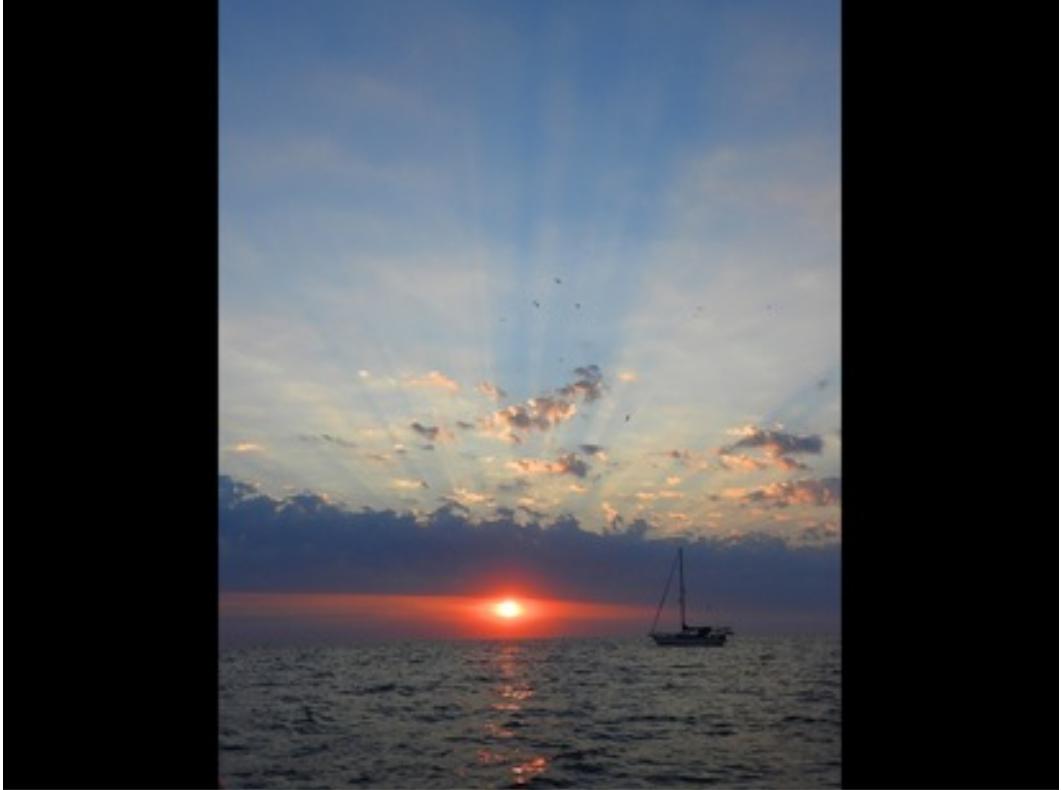


An immense school of Golden Cownose Rays spent over 5 minutes passing beneath us.



Cownose rays are noted for their long tail, and bulbous head.

They were packed several layers thick, and blotted out much of the seabed.



So, if you are passing through the waters south of Mazatlan, and the weather permits, I encourage you to stop at Isla Isabel.

There is another island group, the Tres Marias, farther offshore that were used as a prison until 2019 and had been off-limits for visitors. There were rumours last year that permits to be allowed to visit these islands would soon be available.



On your way back to the mainland, which you should do during daylight, you may encounter a floating pole with a flag (not necessarily black).

Watch out.



The flags mark the ends of a longline being used by fishers. The line may be several miles long, supported every 50 m or so by a pop bottle, and very occasionally with another flagstaff.

We had to detour twice by over a mile to locate and pass around the ends of these floating lines. A third encounter was when one of the pangas was tending to the line, and they very kindly opened a gap for us to pass through.

If you have a keel with a sloping leading edge, and no exposed rudder, you probably can pass over these lines without snagging it.



San Blas is about 40 miles from Isla Isabel, so a good day should get you there before dark.



You can anchor off the long beach over nice sand, or proceed up the estuary to a Fonatur marina. It's also possible to anchor in a few spots in the estuary, but there's a pretty strong tidal current that flows.



Overlooking the town and estuary, you can see how green and lush everything is, compared to the Baja.



We liked the clean, pretty town. There was good ice cream available in the central square.

One feature that prevents San Blas from being much more popular with cruisers is the huge population of flying teeth. Jejenes are like no-see-ums, very tiny, but they have a voracious appetite for skin and blood. We avoided being outside at dawn and dusk, and put up with them for a few days.



A fort located overlooking the town had spectacular views.



This church is the burial site of Don Jose Maria Mercado, who commanded the Mexican forces that captured San Blas from the Spaniards. He died in 1811.



Another spot where dead people were buried was in this San Blas cemetary, which featured some great artwork.



The last highlight of San Blas that I want to mention is La Tovara, an estuarial region E of town. It would be a long walk, but a local bus makes it a quick 15 minute trip.



The attraction of La Tovara is the panga ride several miles up the estuary. Along the way you'll probably spot lots of local wildlife, like turtles, crocodiles, and birds.



The destination of the ride is a wildlife preserve where you can get closeup views of Guacamaya Verde birds



...and crocodiles on land



...and in the water.



You can also have a refreshing swim in the freshwater spring at the reserve. The park warden assured us they inspect the fencing that keeps the alligators and tourists apart. Frequently.



A White Ibis, tightrope walking.



Our last night's view of San Blas, before the short hop south.



...to Chacala.

Probably because there aren't large freshwater rivers nearby, the bug situation is much improved here, and consequently there are more tourists, though most are Mexicans.



Chacala has a great beach, overlooked by a couple fancier hotels, some palapas, and a trailer park.



The Pacific swell rolls in constantly, for great entertainment. In the anchorage it isn't too bad, provided one puts out a stern anchor to align with the incomign waves.



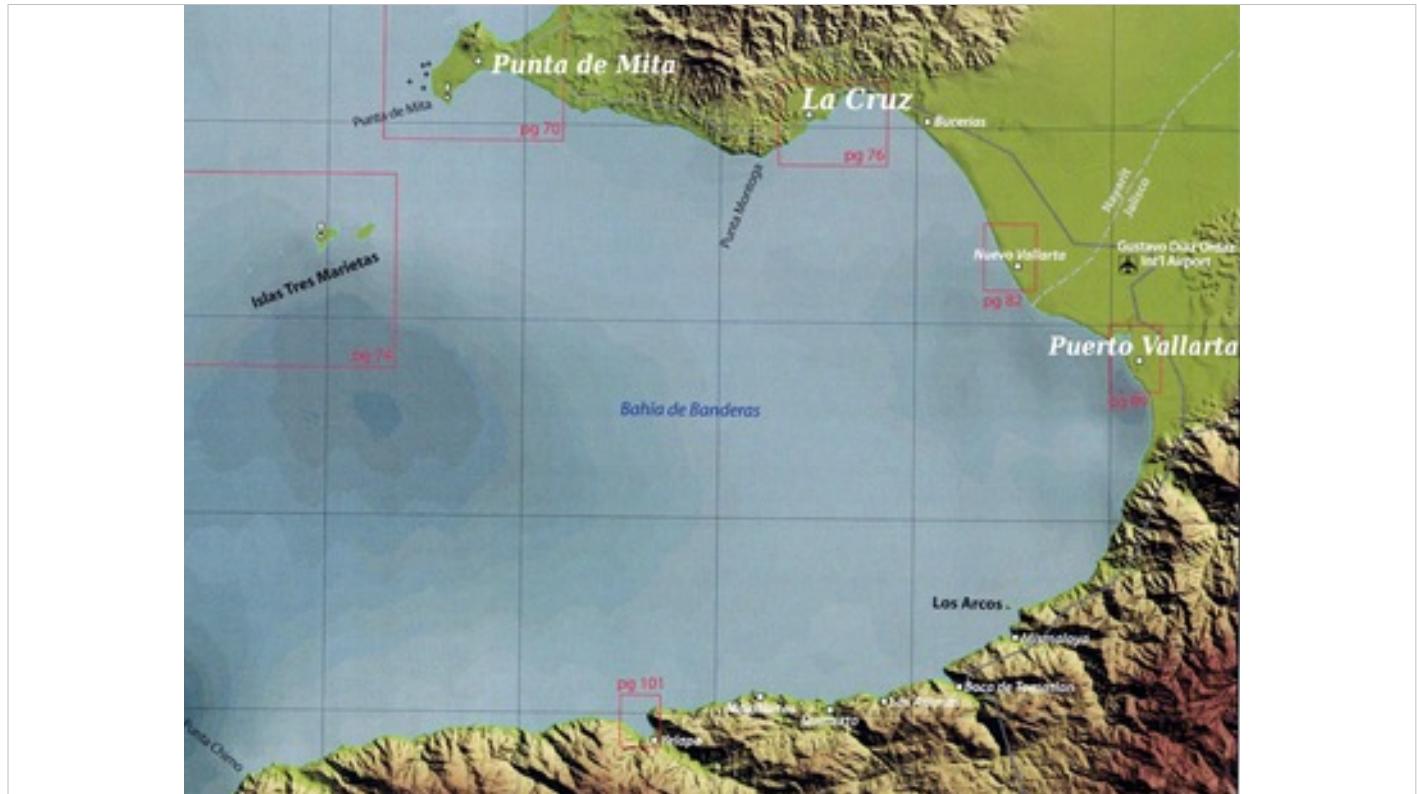
There is a municipal dock, but it isn't suited for sailboats – you pretty much have to anchor. Dinghies are OK here, however.



Chacala town is small and while wandering about you'll see lots of small B&Bs catering to visitors.



We had a small octopus hanging onto our stern anchor when we hauled up to leave. It was happily returned to the sea...



There are many reasons why Bahia de Banderas, or Banderas Bay, is such a very popular hangout for cruisers, including:

- nearby airport for flying in (and out) your guests
- both anchorages and marinas to suit your budget and tastes
- good wildlife on land and in the water
- good nightlife in the resort/tourist town of PV

Banderas Bay is large - about 20 miles across and even straddles the border between the states of Jalisco and Nayarit. There used to be a timezone change dividing the bay, but now it's all on PV time.



Punta de Mita is the first anchorage you come to rounding the corner into the Bay. Due to the long fetch, when the offshore breeze picks up it can get bumpy, but the holding is good.

Lots of surfers hang out here, as there are good breaks on nearby shallows rolling in from the open Pacific.



The town at Punta de Mita isn't all that exciting – mostly a lot of condos and real-estate offices. A bus does run from here on the short ride east to the more interesting towns of La Cruz de Huanacaxtle (La Cruz for short), Bucerias, and Puerto Vallarta.



Humpback whales frequent Banderas Bay. Barb was happy, and fortunate, to have a calf breach about 50m from her paddleboard.

Vermillion Flycatcher (Mosquero Cardinal)



La Cruz has a better downtown than Punta Mita for wandering about, and we enjoyed browsing the many street murals before having a bite at one of the many restaurants.

La Cruz has a huge cruiser community, helped by the fact it has both a marina and the large anchorage.



Many folks heading off to French Poly congregate in La Cruz several months before departure, attending educational talks similar to BCA's Fleet meetings.

Though we didn't stay at the marina, one evening we dinghied in to watch a movie projected in their outdoor amphitheatre.



Here we are being supervised while hoisting anchor to head farther into Banderas Bay.



PV is definitely a touristy spot, where the money-extraction machine is functioning well, but fun to experience.



The coastline neat PV is not very conducive to anchoring, so most everyone heads in to one of the marinas.



We found a spot right beside the malecon, below the balconies of one of the many condos.

We were hailed one day by the 3rd floor occupants, who were from Ottawa and also sailors. We enjoyed having several visits for dinner, use of their pool and shower, and general nautical chatter.



Lots of bars and shops line the walkway, and once a week is market-day, when the sidewalk fills with vendors of pretty much anything.



At the water's edge birds strut



...and crocodiles bask.



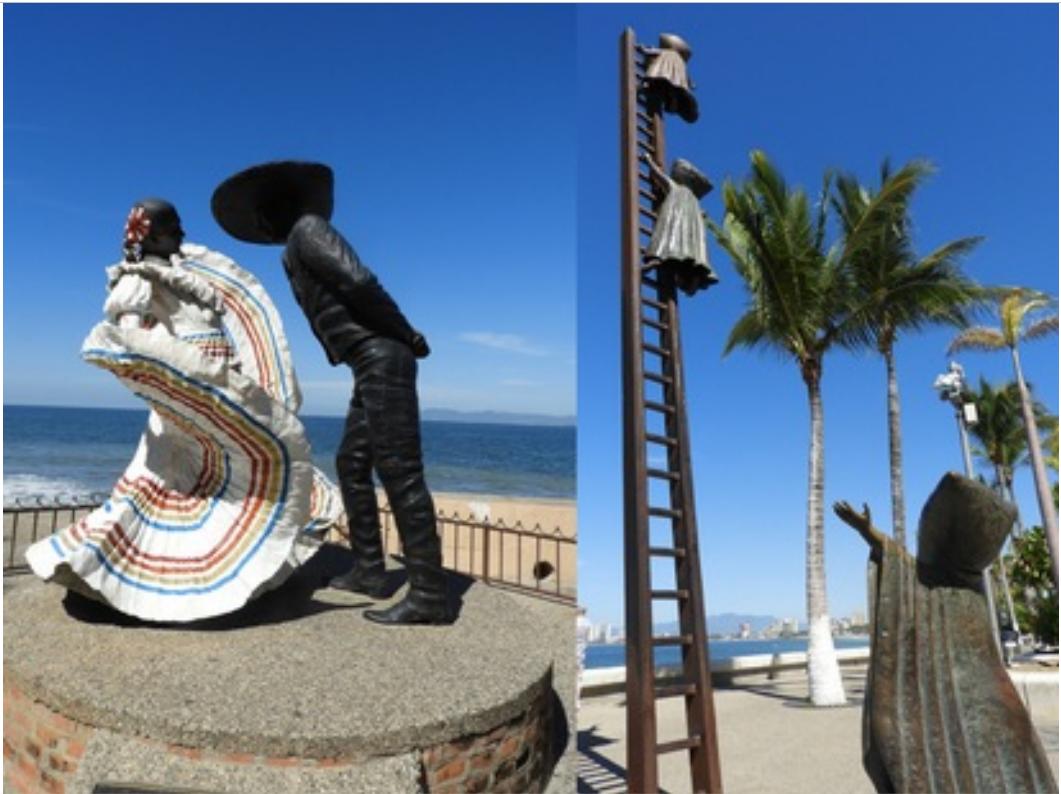
...which leads to this sign.



We took a bus ride to the south end of town and then walked back along the beach and boardwalk area.



We loved the sculptures



More whimsical art...



...and less-permanent but no less impressive art.



Before we leave PV, I want to mention another attraction that didn't cost any money (you can probably tell that we are seek out these opportunities :-)

A 15 minute walk from the marina is a nature preserve. It's situated up an estuary, but unfortunately you can't access it that way – we and the crew of Buenaventura III (Don & Heather) tried one day, but the route is posted with no-go signs.

However, walking there is fine, and there is no charge for entry.



Along the way you'll probably spot a lot of iguanas in the trees (they are almost as numerous as the birds).



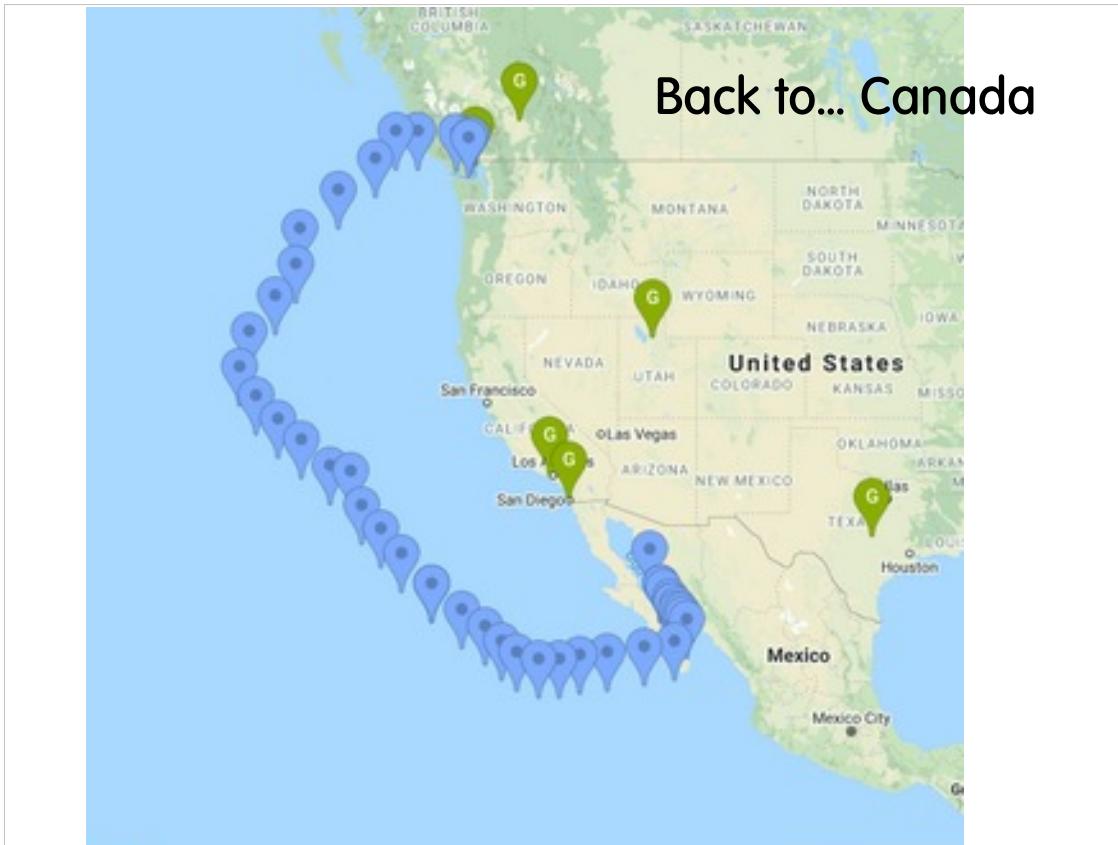
If your taste runs to flowers, there are lots there too. Interpretive signs point out the indigenous flora and fauna.



The Great Kiskadee poses on a marina piling



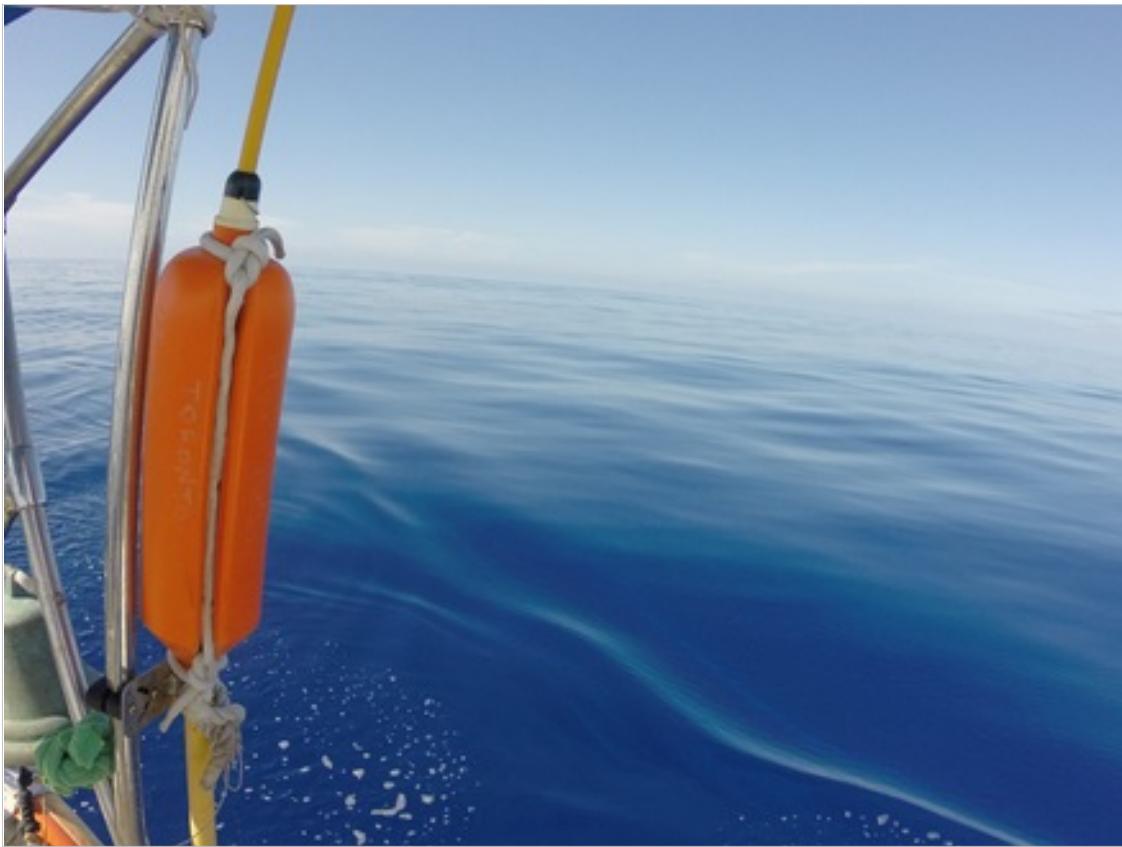
And a lovely butterfly brings us to the end of the Pacific mainland Mexico.



Just a few slides to close the loop and bring us back to Canada.

We had intended to head to French Polynesia after Mexico, but Covid interrupted that plan. In March 2020 we decided to sail home, leaving at the beginning of May and arriving 29 days later

The green push-pins, in case you are wondering, are the Winlink shore-stations that we used for email communication while at sea.



Our weather info consisted of weather-faxes and charts, plus longer-range predictions that our good friend Connie (Cookie Cutter) compiled daily for our amusement, dismay, and excitement.

There was a one-week period shortly after departing Mexico, with very light winds.



This little friend joined us when we were about 100 miles offshore, and stayed the night. He/she, dubbed Mizzen by us, enjoyed some oats and flew off in the morning. We heard via radio that the same bird showed up a few hours later on s/v Amazing Grace III.



Race Rocks in the sun was a lovely sight to behold after spending the last third of our passage in the gray damp gloom.



Our ham radio also meant that people knew when we were arriving

-so a docking spot had been arranged for us and we were surprised by a nice socially-distanced greeting party after we'd cleared customs