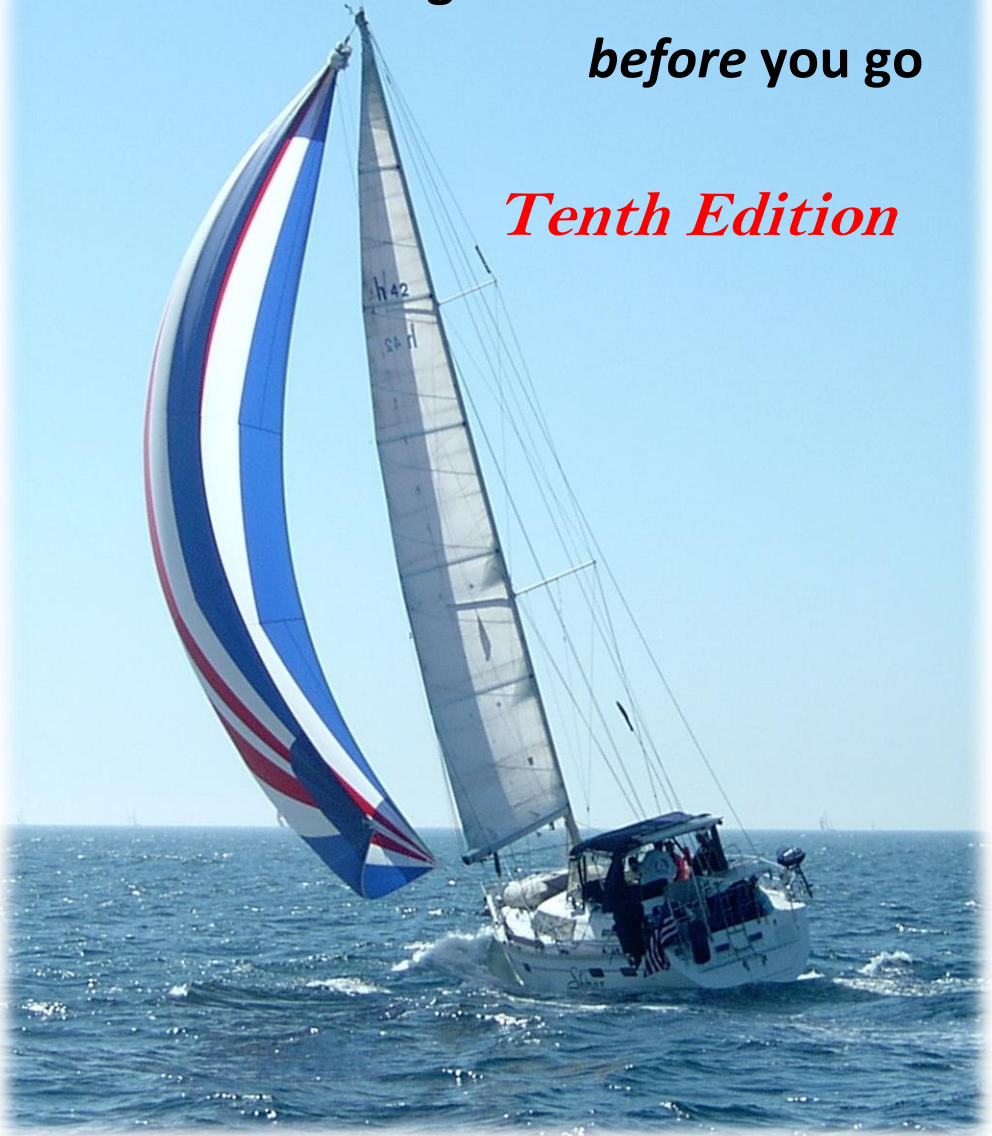


# **CRUISING NOTES**

**Things to know**

***before you go***

***Tenth Edition***



***Nora and Phil McCaleb***

***Carole and Pat McIntosh***

## ***About the authors --***

Both the McCalebs and the McIntoshes have over 45 years of sailing under their belts. The wisdom the authors have accumulated is gained from having sailed thousands of miles of cruising and some exotic landfalls.

Phil and Nora have chartered in New Zealand and the Caribbean; the four of them chartered catamarans in Belize. Carole has crewed from Tahiti to Hawaii, Pat, from Hawaii to San Francisco.

Their cruising has taken them from the waters of Canada and Washington south to Panama. They've spent memorable times in the Mexican and Central American waters. In addition to that, both couples have made multiple trips up and down the coasts of California and Mexico, including doing Baja Ha Ha's and Baja Bashes.



**Phil and Nora McCaleb**



**Pat and Carole McIntosh**

Desiring to share the experiences and collective knowledge they've gained together along with the input from other cruisers, they have conducted cruising seminars together for several years, and have helped prepare thousands of other sailors to go cruising. Their seminar notes, input from question and answer sessions and input from many cruising friends ultimately culminated in the creation of this book, eight editions ago.

They now invite you to sit back, relax, peel back the front cover, and join them as they help you prepare for a "sail of a lifetime" down the west coast of North and Central America, or wherever the wind blows!

**\* "It's about time all this stuff is available in one place!"**

\* Strictly Sail Pacific – boat show program 2014

# CRUISING NOTES

*Things to know before you go*

*Tenth Edition*

*Nora and Phil McCaleb*

*and*

*Carole and Pat McIntosh*

*Encore Press, Sacramento, California*

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Listed here are a number of businesses whose services we, or cruising friends we trust, have used for many years and been extremely happy with. We recommend each of them to you, without reservation. They have assisted us in compiling information for **CRUISING NOTES**, and have underwritten the cost of providing books for free, and below printing cost to attendees at our cruising seminars and other events, and now when boat show seminars are cancelled.

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*and*

**CRUISING NOTES** – Underway to MEXICO.

If you would like information regarding copies of either of these books for organizations or events please contact the authors at: [cruisingnotes@yahoo.com](mailto:cruisingnotes@yahoo.com)

*Twenty years from now you  
will be more disappointed by  
the things you didn't do than  
by the ones you did do.*

*So throw off the bowlines, sail  
away from the safe harbor. Catch  
the trade winds in your sails.*

*Explore. Dream. Discover.*

**– Mark Twain --**

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## **SECTION I getting ready to go**

### ***Introductory Notes***

The genesis of Cruising Notes, what you can expect from the book, what subjects are covered, and how to use this book.

**CRUISING NOTES – Things to know before you go** began to germinate many years ago, even before we had any idea it was taking shape. We were fortunate to begin boating when we were young. Like all young families raising kids we were trying to figure out what we “shoulda known before we (fill-in-the-blank)”. And naturally, as with most people, that “figuring-out” continued right into getting ready to go cruising, long after “young” had passed us by.

It continued, unseen and unexpectedly growing, and began to sprout between 1993 – 2006 as our preparations to go cruising were underway. Just like with most “seasoned” people when venturing into the details of a more demanding venture or hobby, we felt the need for some tips as to what lies ahead. Fortunately, both families had had a series of boats prior to seriously thinking about going cruising, and we both happened to belong to “trailer-sailing” groups that included pretty knowledgeable sailors who had done some cruising.

We began moving into larger sailboats, sailing on San Francisco Bay and chartering in many venues. The good fortune continued as we became the recipients of lots of good advice and help from many people before we actually shoved-off and headed south. Even more fortunately, at the time we happened to be members of the same sailing group on Folsom Lake just east of Sacramento, the Sacramento Catalina 22 Fleet 4.

As it turned out, five sailing couples from Fleet 4 had decided to go cruising in 2005. Phil and Nora McCaleb were the only ones who

made it out the Golden Gate that year. The rest of us, Randy and Nancy Roland, Chris and Robyn Parker, Paul and Marilyn Butler, and Carole and Pat McIntosh made it south to Mexico with the Baja Ha Ha in 2006.

The “book” surprised us when it actually began to take shape and blossomed out of necessity in 2009, after our return from cruising. We were asked to present a seminar for sailors getting ready to sail south at the “STRICTLY SAIL PACIFIC” Boat Show at Jack London Square in Oakland, CA. That first year we put together and passed out a couple dozen pages of notes stapled together. The next year we put what we called a book together, more like a thick spiral-bound pamphlet, and called it *Cruising Notes – Coastal Cruising*. Both the seminar, the book and the sponsors who helped it all come together were all well received, and here we are ten years later.

Now this book contains over 300 pages of suggestions, additions and revisions, log-notes, stories, ideas, bits and pieces, from the McCalebs and the McIntoshes, and more importantly, from many other sailors. These tips are gathered from sailors who have raised kids on boats, who’ve sailed many years or are just starting out, some have circumnavigated, they have been on small sailboats and on world-class yachts, some have had to turn back in the face of storms or health issues. Here are the “learning-experiences” and “HOW TO and WHY NOT” information from active cruisers. It is a fun read about the places cruising sailors visit along the coasts of Washington, Oregon, California, Mexico and Central America. The ideas, suggestions and caveats in these pages are fun to read but don’t take them all lightly. They will help you have your “sail of a lifetime!”

We really should dedicate **CRUISING NOTES – Things to know before you go** to the members of the Sacramento Catalina 22 Fleet 4, the Oakland Yacht Club, and to the countless numbers of sailors

on innumerable docks around Alameda, California who gave of themselves to insure we'd have a great cruising adventure. These people spent a lot of time and effort bringing us up to date on what we needed to know before we made that big left turn out The Golden Gate. But I guess it is dedicated to all sailors, especially the new ones.

In retrospect, we have written this book for various reasons. Among them, it has been a chance to enjoy the great memories and the fun revisiting our logs and pictures, recalling the friends and places we've visited in the years we have enjoyed the warm southern seas. It has been a chance to write a meaningful book, and that is an honor. But also, and most importantly, it gives us the opportunity to pay back the debt to everybody who helped us set our goals, to be fully prepared, and then to finally drop the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor and catch the winds in our sails, and go.

Just go. Trust us. That's the bottom line: GO! Here's how to do it!

**Cruising Notes – Things to know before you go** is especially written for sailors who are now preparing to load up their boats and head south. You have been dreaming of the day when you could cast off the lines. You have convinced the husband/wife/significant other/friend that cruising will be "The time of their life". You have your boat; you are finding the crew; you have set the date, "D-DAY" is fast approaching. The day to sail off into the coastal waters along the western shores of the U.S. or Mexico is almost at hand and you are saying, or thinking, "Oh crap, this is never going to happen. No way are we going to get everything ready!" We're here to tell you "Yes you will, and here's how you'll do it!"

By the way, many active sailors also suggested that **Cruising Notes - Things to know before you go** would also be THE BOOK you'll wish

you'd read a couple of years ago if you are in one of these categories:

1) If you are a sailor who has already decided sailing off into the sunset is on your "Bucket List," who's just starting to look for the right boat and is now begging the planning process leading to the day you can actually cast off those dock lines, this is the book you definitely need to read.

-OR -

2) You are just starting to think about sailing, and looking for a fun book to read that will shed some light on what it's all about, this is it. Or maybe you are past that and hoping to go sailing by crewing for someone. This will quickly help you get up to speed. You will know what cruising involves, and what has happened with someone else's boat to get it ready for you.

If you want to be prepared to sail along the Pacific Coast from Washington south to Panama, but especially if sailing to Mexico is in your future, read this book. Whether you will be visiting the small out-of-the-way places in the Sea of Cortez, looking for the best marinas, "commuter cruising" or sailing the coast of Mexico prior to doing the "Puddle Jump", the information and tips included in this book will help you set and reach your goal of letting loose the dock lines and enjoying a safe and memorable cruise.

By the time you have finished reading this book you will have run the gauntlet from laughing and longing to be there with us, to wondering why we put ourselves through all this, and being sure cruisers are nuts. You will have a realistic understanding of not only what you have yet to accomplish so you are ready to *"throw off the bowlines,"* but how to have a fun, great cruise. You will recognize your growth in confidence and a sense of accomplishment as you



set, and then reach your goals. You'll realize that you really can handle coastal cruising with no problem.

The time the authors have spent cruising can provide you the information needed to set your "sail of a lifetime" into motion. Not only will these sailors help you get the most out of sailing along the coasts of California, Mexico and Central America, but the planning methods they show you in these pages will help set you on your way to anywhere! Whether you are visiting the small out-of-the-way places in the Sea of Cortez or along the Maine coast, the principles involved in preparing for and of getting the most out of cruising are the same.

After some time with the McCalebs and the McIntoshes, not only will you know what to expect when you head out, you will be prepared for it too.

***Keep this information on-board and keep it handy***

**Cruising Notes** - *Things to know before you go* is meant to be referred to as you prepare for cruising, are out cruising, and be part of your memories *(with lots of notes in the margins)* after you've come back home.

**... and so it starts. ....**

Just Like Whales, Snow Geese and Salmon, . . . every year in the late summer or fall an annual migration begins. It takes place down the Pacific Coast. It starts up in the cold waters and the high latitudes of Canada and the Pacific Northwest and heads south past Washington, Oregon, and the California coast. Eventually the

migration gets to the warm waters of Mexico, and even Central America or the South Pacific.

Whether you join a sailing rally like the Baja Ha Ha, the Panama Posse or the Coho Ho Ho, or decide to take a leisurely sail down the coast on your own schedule, we are going to help you get the most out of your participation in this migration. Your cruise, whether a week in The Delta, harbor hopping along the coast, or heading south to where “the butter melts” will be well prepared after you’ve enjoyed this book.



How much you are going to enjoy your cruising depends a great deal on how well prepared you, your crew, and your boat are. Such preparation might appear a bit overwhelming at first, but it really doesn't need to be. If you have prepared for a long road trip, an

extended vacation, family members coming for a long visit, a trip to Europe, going camping, taking off in an RV, sailing for a week or two, or chartering a boat in an area that is new to you, you are already well versed in most of the kinds of preparations needed for cruising. And, if you'll come along with us, we'll help you fill in the gaps where needed. We have helped literally thousands of sailors get ready to extend their sailing destination and are happy to help you on your way, too. In the time we have together, we are going to raise a lot of questions you might not have thought of until now. We'll help you find some great sources of information, and we'll even answer some questions you may already have. Most importantly, we will give you a head start in discovering the things you'll need to have figured out before you throw off the dock lines.

Some of the topics we will be raising are: What's a good boat to go cruising on? When should I leave? What gear might I need: water maker, life raft, autopilot, AIS, EPIRB, radar; what type of spare

**With some planning, coastal cruising can be a  
comfortable series of "hops,"  
or  
a great journey with some really fantastic  
multiple-day passages at sea,  
*AND EVEN BETTER, BOTH!***

parts; what kind of anchoring gear is right for my boat? How do I update my navigation and seamanship skills? How can I plan my route and stops, and deal with all the unexpected things and the whims of the weather gods? Where are shops and stores along the way?

What are the good locations to head for, and some to avoid? What is happening now and other local information, especially about small out-of-the-way places, from restaurants to anchorages. What navigation skills do I need to know to be safe? Shall I use paper or electronic charts? Overnight passages: You've got to know when to run 'em and when to stay at anchor instead. Are you comfortable with night sailing? What about things that go wrong in the night, from electrical glitches to using those wooden plugs. Where's help when you need it? We'll give you our perspective on what you need to take and what you can just as well leave at home.

Finally, we've tried to prepare **CRUISING NOTES – Things to know before you go** as a primer for all things cruising. Keep it with you when you are looking at boats or gear. Take it with you when you go shopping. Keep it handy when you take off cruising. Talk to other sailors about their ideas and what they think about our ideas, then, use the information and ideas that work best for you.

When you are through cruising, or just between cruises, we hope this book, together with your log and your boat-card binder and pictures, will bring back smiles and memories.

And we'd like to hear how your adventures worked out too.

This book is **not** meant to replace your cruising guides. It is meant to *prepare* you to be ready to use them, to *supplement* and be used with them. The cruising guides are *indispensable* along the way. We suggest you may want to have more than just one along with you.

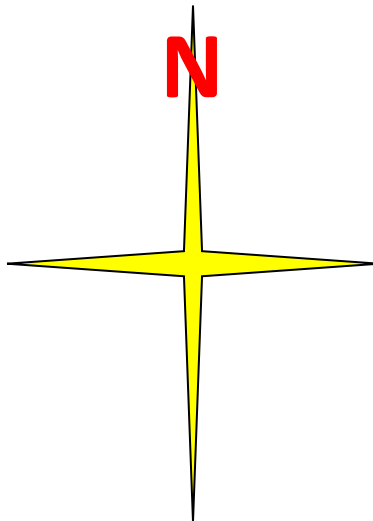
Generally, here is how the book flows: We present the subject matter and give the reader the data and facts, including some opinions from cruisers, and some pros and cons. We then relate this information to actual sailing / cruising situations where you may need this information. And in Section I you are also presented

a follow-up where both Phil and Pat each discuss the topic from their individual viewpoints and experiences, even when it's been "slightly" embarrassing to admit something. From time to time both Phil and Pat seemed to have had fun remembering things about each other that really show the human side of sailing and cruising.

To put it another way, besides giving you a fun book to read, our purpose is to help get you ready:

- \*to make the decisions about going (or not),
- \*about your vessel of choice,
- \*the preparations needed for taking off,
- \*and the myriad of other things to consider along the way.

Enjoy! We hope to see you out on the water someplace!



## ***Things to Consider***

Here is where we'll jog your planning process and start you listing and planning your goals toward "cutting the lines."

Let's start at the beginning. What things are you looking at, or are looking at you, before you can cast off? This bronze casting on the malecon in La Paz, Mexico, below, might seem to sum up the way some of us start thinking about going cruising.

Your list of items will probably not be exactly the same as what we have included here, so grab a pencil and start jotting down some of the things that come to your mind. Everybody is unique and has a different set of strengths and skill levels. This list has to be configured for you, not for a hypothetical, average sailor. It is for you, your situation, and the way you want to go cruising. So go get that pencil and start adding notes!



What do you need to do before you can decide to go? How do you set a date in the future when you will be ready to go?

What do you do with the house, kids, dog, the mail, bills, the cars and insurance, mom and dad and family? What about traditions, and your non-boating friends who feel like you are abandoning them?

How do you find, and choose **THE** boat?

How do you pay for this dream?

How do you get the boat ready to go? And more important, how do YOU get ready to go, improve your skills, and be ready physically, mentally? Where do you want to go; how long can you go? How will you feel if you decide not to keep going?

Should you sell the house and live on the boat while you get it ready to go? Should you live on the boat but sometimes house-sit?

What is the best for you? Should you get an older boat and fix it up, or get a newer boat and add a few things? Sometimes it is better to get ALL NEW. Do your research so you can make the best decision for you.

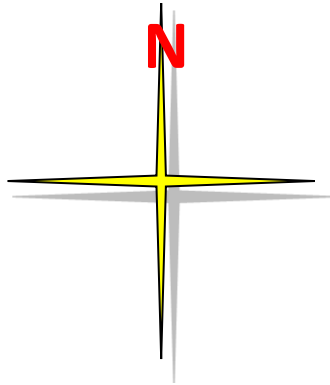
Some people with the right skills can go, and work when and where they find it is necessary; we have found several people who work from the boat, online.

The last several years have seen many people cruise for a while and then return home for a while. Have you thought of commuter cruising? It can be a good solution, but some people find that neither their time on the boat nor back in their old neighborhood will be the same.

The cruising community is very interdependent in lots of ways, and everyone tries to lend a hand if somebody has a problem. That said, you must be at least somewhat self-reliant and self-contained if you are going to go. You have no way of knowing when things will go wrong, and where you are going to be when it happens to you. We take things for granted at home. You need some stainless

steel screws? No problem. But when that happens to you even in a large city in Mexico it can be a lot different. Even if there is a new Home Depot (and these days around the larger population areas there could well be one) only 10 to 20 miles away - but there probably won't be - remember, you are on a boat so you are on foot or riding a bus looking for that stainless steel screw. Getting to a store is often not a ten-minute chore, even under the BEST of circumstances!

Many topics we'll cover may not apply to most people, but we bring them up is to raise your awareness in case they might be lurking in your future. We all know people who have said, "If I had only known about ??? sooner, I could have solved that problem." OK, if you have not gotten that pencil yet, go get it. When something comes to your mind, underline it or jot it down!





## ***Financing the dream***

This chapter covers details and some “how-to” options for handling; \*what to do with your house, \*getting your money in Mexico, \*discussions of taxes, insurance and other issues.

Cruising in Mexico can easily cost \$1,300 or so per month. Some people are doing it for less than \$800 a month, but those are the hardy souls we read about. There is often an updated article in “Latitude 38” or “48 North”, or some other sailing magazine, regarding the current cost of cruising. Every now and then you hear about someone who did it on \$150 a month and traded sea shells for T-shirts and old diesel fuel, but that is not your typical cruising family.

We normally figure around \$1,300 to \$1,500 a month will cover about everything, most of the time, *DEPENDING*, on a lot of things. Up in the Sea of Cortez it should be a lot less. Along the mainland you can easily spend \$2,000 a month or more if you are not careful. The best way to keep expenses in control is to shop where the locals shop, not where the tourists shop. If you stay in marinas most of the time, eat out often, take lots of tours and do “typical” tourist activities (take taxis, rent cars, buy lots of things to bring home, etc.), you can double that before you know it.

When you are planning your activities, your meals, entertainment, travel, comfort levels, type of gifts, liquor, and transportation, it is best to think your lifestyle is not going to change drastically out cruising. Certainly some things will change: instead of living in a nice house with a yard and patio, you will be in a cramped and constantly-moving boat where your “master suite” is apt to be the size of just your bathroom at home, your bathroom will be about the size of your hall closet, and more things than you want will always be getting wet. Your family room, bar-b-q and covered patio will all be replaced by your cockpit and bimini, and your car will

become an inflatable dinghy, so many things will change - but some won't. For example, if you don't like Spam for lunch or cold cereal for breakfast at home, you aren't going to like it on the boat. If your hobbies at home include going to the theater, shows, fine dining, live music and dancing, dinner parties or staying in five-star resorts, you probably will not want to give up all those things while you are cruising. So plan your budget accordingly.

In our first year of cruising we were "on the hook" 75% to 80% of the time. The next year we had friends from home join us at the El Cid Marina and Resort in Mazatlán, and also spent more time in other marinas, and that ran things up a bit. Our budget usually included eating out once or twice a week at modest Mexican spots. We rented a car a couple of times for inland trips, enjoyed wine, good Mexican beer, lots of pot luck get together dinners, and a few great nights out on the town. We changed our own oil and did most small maintenance, but hired all technical stuff done. Pat also gave up on cleaning the bottom of the boat really quick when a local diver told him how inexpensive his rates were, and likewise on the waxing. Phil liked swimming a lot; he cleaned the bottom of his own boat most of the time. Depending on the exchange rate at the time you are in Mexico, some things will be less expensive. Here is something you need to know and pay attention to: marinas and some other services are now being charged *based* on U.S. dollars, even though you might be paying in pesos!

It won't take you long to find other like-minded cruisers who you like doing things with. You will develop the knack of listening to the morning net and getting the "lay of the land," or going to pot-lucks or playing some Mexican Train, and you will have everything figured out just by keeping your ears open. One of the things we liked to do was ask some of the local guys working in the marinas where they liked to go to eat. When we showed up someplace and it was mostly Mexican families, we knew we were on target. On the

other hand, a night down in Old Town Mazatlán at *Pedro and Lola's* was a great treat too. But it was a splurge!

Typically, before you head out you will need to figure out what to do with your home. Can you afford a house and a cruising boat? And a little bit before you start thinking about what to do with your home, you start thinking about what kind, size, type, style, age, boat should you get. Also, how do you handle the bills, and the mail? And how long can you keep going on your savings? How do you plan to get back, and how often will you return home while you are out cruising? You will have a myriad of such questions to ponder.

We are going to be specifically discussing cruising on the Pacific Coast from Washington south through California, Mexico and Central America. However, we have gathered our experience while we cruised, chartered and RV'd over wide areas and for lots of years. Between us, we've sailed the Pacific coast of North America from Desolation Sound in Canada to Panama, Tahiti to Hawaii to San Francisco, New Zealand in the South Pacific, in the Caribbean, and Belize. We've owned multiple boats and RVs, and we've carted our families all over the country for years. These pages also contain valuable input from other coastal cruisers and a few circumnavigators. Much of our "prep and planning" suggestions will be just as applicable to helping you plan your trip along the Atlantic Coast, the Great Lakes, doing The Great Loop, the Pacific Northwest, or RVing across the country as they are to heading down the Pacific Coast.

Let's start with figuring out some finances – beginning with what do you do with the house? If you are renting or living in an apartment, that's not a big deal – usually. However, if you own your home, it presents a whole lot of choices and options you will need to work through. It is always more complicated than just to decide to sell it or rent it.

If you keep the house, you need to decide whether you should rent it or keep it vacant. What are the insurance consequences of either? Are there any kinds of tax issues or loss of home-owner tax exemptions/taxable gain later on? Should you get a property manager to handle details and problems while you are away? What if something major occurs while you are away – how will that be handled? How will you handle renting the house if you decide to keep it?

If you sell your house, what do you do? How will you coordinate selling and moving out, getting rid of or storing your things, and moving onto your boat, or wherever you go first as an interim step? Are there any tax consequences you need to look into before you make this decision? In California there are some very important “Proposition-13” time limits and value limits you need to be aware of that can save you thousands of dollars. Check with a tax preparer or accountant before you do anything. Have a tentative game plan, at least for your re-entry, even if you are planning on an extended or and open-ended cruise. What will you do for interim housing if you come home in the off season? Is house sitting a viable option for you? Check it out.

Selling your home and moving out is a time consuming and stressful event, even in the best of situations. In a volatile and uncertain market, it can be even more stressful, so be mindful of the time periods involved, and do careful planning where these financial matters are involved. This will greatly affect your cruising kitty.

In these days of 401ks and retirement accounts, rules for mandatory withdrawals and early withdrawal penalties, make sure you consult with good advisers before you decide how and when to use your savings.

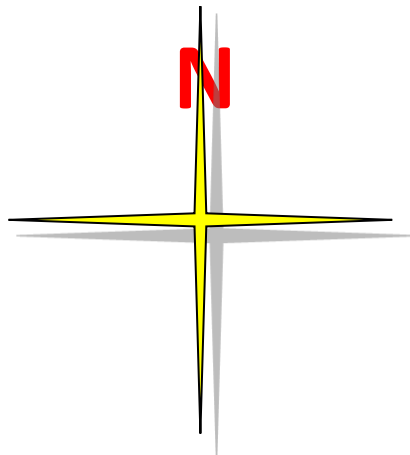
Depending on where you are going, how are you going to get cash, or are you going to use plastic? Most towns in Mexico have ATM machines, but we found in January 2020 that some small town that have had an ATM no longer had it in the town. Many of the small towns don't have a bank either. You need to do some homework here, and the cruising guides are a great place to start. But you need to read sailing blogs, find and talk with cruisers who have recently been to small or remote areas on the Baja peninsula, or to remote areas along the coast. These recent changes appear to be, at least in part, due to Mexico's efforts to crack down on money laundering by drug related cartels. Ask them how they are managing their cruising-kitty cash now! You will need to have enough ready cash available if you are up in the Sea of Cortez or in other remote areas. Also, check to see what your bank's foreign transaction fee amounts to; some can be about \$10+ per transaction. Check out credit unions, because you might find that some credit unions charge less.



While you are doing all this, it will be a good time to start thinking about what to do with your mail while you are gone, too. Bill paying needs to be addressed well before you go. Our suggestion is to have it in place several months before your departure date. That way there is plenty of time to work out the bugs before you go. You really don't want to have the first month of forwarding mail and automatic bill paying to be at the same time you are heading out and will be out of touch. Remember, if things can go wrong, they will go wrong. Make sure you are available to react and get them back on track when the new system takes over.

Speaking of bills, the McIntoshes stored their vehicles and reduced their car insurance substantially; you can usually do this even if you are only going to be gone for a few months. Some other items were handled by automatic bill pay, but since they sold their home, on-going bills were minimal. The McCalebs had a relative house sit for them, so their circumstances were different.

However you choose to cruise, or whatever you choose to do with your possessions, make these decisions early. We have friends who were still moving out of their home and bringing items to the boat the day before departure. There was anxiety all around for many reasons. With some good planning you can have real peace of mind and we do wish that for you.



Jot down some notes & thoughts about what you have to do to finance your trip. Look back at this last chapter and list some of the first things you need to check on.

## ***Finding and Choosing the Boat***

Choosing your boat is a unique experience. You will have to go through all the “gotta-haves,” “can’t live with outs” and the anxiety of compromises until you almost want to give up. The ups and downs and frustrations of finding the right boat is typically not an easy process. The list of factors that weigh in can be daunting. Aesthetics aside, size, age, condition, cost, design, and equipment are all important, but in the end, the choice will come down to what just feels right for you.



Starting with Phil – after all, the McCalebs found their boat first – we offer below our individual takes on how we approached finding the right boat.



***Comments by Phil***

Many people looking for cruising boats lean toward “vintage” types similar to the one pictured here, thinking of them as proven, sea kindly, cheaper than newer designs, and, because of the thickness of early “bulletproof”, fiberglass hulls. There are also many older



boats out there already outfitted for cruising, making them easier to find. The older boats, however, may also have drawbacks. They can be slower, under both power and sail, underpowered, less roomy (translated to less comfortable and less storage), and in need of refitting from stem to stern. The cost of such a refit can easily and quickly cancel the attraction of the original purchase

price. We also buddy-boated for months with friends who were on a vintage Tayana 38, a much sought after cruising boat, but often watched them hobbyhorse at anchor while we sat next to them in relative calm on *Shiraz*, our eight year old Hunter Passage 42. Admittedly, however, these friends paid only half the price of what we had in *Shiraz*.

Spoiled as we are, we focused on the space and creature comforts offered by newer designs. Our mindset has always been to buy “previously owned” rather than new as long as we can find what we want in a well cared for and nicely equipped boat that is still in good condition. After looking for a year, we bought *Shiraz* in 2001 at roughly half the cost of a comparable new boat and without the immediate and severe depreciation in value that comes with buying new.

Whether you’re buying new or used, start your hunt by listing things that are important to you and/or will meet the needs of how and where you intend to use the boat. Our list included things like a centerline walk-around bed (we don’t like crawling over each other when nature calls in the middle of the night), a swim platform (for ease of getting people and provisions aboard), comfort and ease in moving around the boat, ease of handling the rig, a large refrigerator/freezer system, and ample tankage. A slotted aluminum toe rail was also high on the list. You’ll be amazed at how useful this can be for attaching all kinds of stuff. And, believe me, you’ll have lots of “stuff.” A final big priority for us was speed. Not wanting to test the strength of newer, lighter weight versus vintage “bulletproof” hulls, we wanted to be able to sidestep or outrun weather.

As you’ll see, Pat recommends against ketches. I agree, and include yawls in the suggestion. You’ll see a lot of ketches and yawls out there, but their owners will typically tell you that they just don’t

use all the sail configurations, and would prefer to avoid the expense of the extra rigging and sails. That said, their biggest “plus” seems to be that simply dropping their mainsails is a quick and easy way to reduce sail and still balance the rig.

When you’ve found “the boat” and made an offer, get the best surveyor you can find, one who will spend the time to thoroughly



**There’s a wide range of boats available for you to go cruising on. Here are Randy and Nancy on *Aphrodite*, a Pacific Seacraft Orion 27 heading out from Cabo San Lucas, passing by a slightly larger boat that’s at anchor.**

look at every aspect of the boat from stem to stern and masthead to the bottom of the keel. Rather than merely review the end report, join the surveyor through the entire process. Doing so will better acquaint you with the vessel and give you the opportunity to see and discuss with the surveyor any issues that exist. After all,

you want to know what works, what doesn't, and what's in good repair and what isn't.

Independent of the survey and on my own, I also make a point of tapping the entire hull with a light hammer to search for voids. They can be easily detected by a change in sound and are not uncommon in the laying up of production fiberglass hulls. More to the point, they can raise issues of structural integrity. When buying *Shiraz*, we included in the contract a request that the sellers provide us copies of all previous surveys. One of them had noted two voids in the hull. The sellers assured us that both voids had been repaired, but, by my hammer tapping, I discovered that they still existed. Looking further, we found the yard that had supposedly done the repairs had no record of having done so. In the end, the sellers paid to repair the voids.

At 42 and a half feet with a 14 foot beam and a center cockpit, *Shiraz* never once gave us cabin fever or made us feel at all cramped. The point is, buy as big as you can afford and handle. You won't want to feel like you're living in a closet. Also, "larger" can give you a comfort zone not offered by "smaller" – a point that came home to us *big time* in 2007 when rounding Punta Elena in heavy seas off Costa Rica. We gave thanks to the wind and sea gods for not being in a smaller boat.

A final thought: as fatiguing as it can be, don't rush the process of finding your "right boat." Remember, you're not just looking for a home; hopefully, you're choosing a new and much loved member of the family.

***Comments by Pat***

We've had a lot of boats. We started with outboard day-cruisers for water skiing and weekends up in the California Delta or at Folsom Lake. These boats lived on trailers, so it was an easy thing to check out everything from the condition of the hull to the engine. Eventually in the early 1990s we switched to sailboats with more complex systems.

Here's a shot of me doing the inspection of our first "big" sailboat. She was a Dolphin 26, similar to a Coronado 25. If it looks like we



are digging through snow to see it, that's because we are. This was not only an in-the-water inspection, it was an in-the-ice inspection, on Lake Tahoe, in February. Needless to say, I was not as methodical as I should have been, and nowhere close to what Phil so wisely suggests. Most of our boats were functional for what they

were supposed to do: mostly day sailing or weekendng. Carole, as well as some of my friends, including Phil, have always referred to most of these boats as “funky.” I hate to admit it, I think they were right.

None of them were boats anybody would have wanted to go cruising on. In fact, when the subject of “cruising” would come up Carole would say, “It won’t have to be a big boat, because only one of us will be going!” So when we decided to get serious there was a lot of educating and updating for us before we closed in on **the** boat.

We read everything we could get our hands on about cruising boats and what the strong points were concerning particular boats and

**READ EVERYTHING YOU CAN FIND THAT TELLS YOU HOW  
SOMEBODY SOLVED VARIOUS PROBLEMS WHILE THEY WERE  
OUT CRUISING, OR WHAT THEY LIKED OR DIDN’T LIKE,  
ABOUT VARIOUS DESTINATIONS –  
AND WHY.**

**Good places to start will be *Latitude 38* and *48 North*; then check *Cruising World*, *Sail*, and *sail blogs*. Then spend some time searching on the internet, looking at boats and talking to owners. At this point you’ll be ready to start narrowing your search!**

rig types. We read several books and lots of stories about surveys and reconditioning boats, and what went wrong after the guy bought the boat.

One of the best things we did was talk to just about every owner of a cruising boat we could find. We remember talking with a cruiser from Washington who was in our marina in Alameda for a couple of days while on his way heading south. We started by admiring his

ketch, and said we were looking for a ketch to go cruising on. He said he had been cruising on this boat for close to ten years and loved the boat. But the next thing he said surprised the heck out of us. He remarked that “If I were buying a boat now I would not buy another ketch.” What he shared with us was probably the best information we had received about looking for a boat. He also said that with the newer designs and materials of boats and equipment you no longer need to have a ketch to easily match your sail configurations with the sailing conditions, so why mess with all the extra rigging, sails, weight and expense of a ketch. The last thing he said made even more sense, “Match your boat to how you are going to use it, and where you are going with it.”

**Just about every feature you want on your boat will result in some kind of compromise on other things. All the new technical gizmos and features are great, but do you need them for the type of cruising you will be doing?**

**A trade-off might be a bigger but older boat, fewer doodads (that you can add later) and being ready to cast off sooner.**

We did not intend to go “blue-water” cruising; we were going to go coastal cruising. We intended to spend most of our time at anchor and only some time in marinas. We expected to be at one place for a week to a month and then hop a short distance, rather than usually have three or four days of 24/7 sailing between stops. Our research told us we could find water and provisions easily while coastal cruising and cruising in Mexico. I can do some things on boats, but I am certainly not a boat mechanic, so I had to find something in relatively good condition.

Well, Carole was not overly impressed with all this talk and stuff, and at that time we had a 32' "funky" sailboat. Then we chartered a boat in Belize with a group from our sailing club, and that changed things!

She said, "Wow, you mean all boats aren't funky? We could actually go cruising on a boat like this!" We could even go through the Panama Canal, clear around and up to the New England area and see my brother in Boston. Carole was up for going cruising! She said we could buy any sailboat I wanted as long as it had four things; the rest was up to me! Now all I had to do was find a boat like that.

Carole's boat "suggestions":

1. A centerline bed that you can get into from either side.
2. A sugar-scoop transom for easy on / off, with a shower for after swimming.
3. A well laid out galley with good counter space, a good stove and an oven, refrigeration and a freezer.
4. A dedicated shower in the head.

That was the end of April, 2004. We unexpectedly found, and bought *Espiritu* in October. We sailed from San Francisco to Ensenada, Mexico, in mid-November, and brought her back to San Francisco Bay in the spring of 2005. We then took off again for several years of cruising in Mexico with the Baja Ha Ha fleet in 2006. And yes, we did get surveys and inspections, and followed Phil's advice by the time we bought *Espiritu*. As it turned out, I didn't follow them quite close enough. Nobody ever said I was a quick learner, but that's another story.



So, how do you choose a boat?

1. Depending on your sailing background and knowledge, allow plenty of time, maybe even a few years to find the boat.
2. Be aware that your plans will morph and change as you discover where and what you want to do and go. Keep in mind that in sailing just about everything, from what boat you get to where you are going, is a series of compromises.
3. Talk to everybody you can and pick their brains about cruising.
4. Read endlessly about cruising. Use the links on “Latitude 38” and “48 North” as good starting points. There are other cruising books and magazines as well, including “Cruising World,” of course. This



***ESPIRITU* with the Admiral and Captain taking a break on deck enjoying the scenery, after rounding Cabo Corrientes heading south to Tenacatita and Barra de Navidad.**

not only will educate you about cruising sailboats, but will offer ideas for upgrading them. You will find articles on choosing

destinations, provisioning, and even one we saved on doing the Baja Bash.

5. Sail with as many people and on as many different boats as you can. You will learn more about boat systems and layouts, and pick up more “tips” by accident than you’ll get from doing almost anything else.

6. Most importantly, you need to write out your goals and timeline, including the interim steps and actions as to how you are going to achieve them. If you don’t do this, you may never find your boat. If you do find it, you may never leave the dock and take off cruising. This process will crystallize your thinking and tell you what you’re looking for.

One more thing – if your spouse is not already warmed to the subject of cruising on a small boat, take him/her on a chartered 46’ catamaran with some great sailor/cruiser friends. Go where the wind and the water are warm. At the end of the week tell him/her you’d like to go cruising together and that **you** are tired of “funky boats.”

Just a quick update and confession: In October of 2012, Carole and I saw another “cruising window” opening up. We bought another sailboat, already in Mexico. She was a 1981 Cheoy Lee 35 ft. sloop and was in pretty good condition. Naturally, we named her *Encore*. The confession part of this is that one of the rules we’ve talked about had to be “bent.” I think that it was OK in this ONE instance because of my background, the resources available, and the circumstances.

We did follow all the rules in figuring what we wanted this boat to do. We did a lot of research on the boat, and talked with several people who knew the boat and how it had been cared for and used.

We were going to use her in Mexico to continue sailing in the Sea of Cortez and along the Gold Coast, unlike as we had intended with *Espiritu*. With her the intent had been to do blue water cruising.

*Encore* was an older “traditional” boat that was basically sound, but needed some new equipment. Here’s where I bent the rules, by not



getting a survey due to circumstances beyond our control. A hurricane and a tropical storm came through, one after the other. We were able to do sea trials but not sail the boat up to Puerto Vallarta for a survey. We therefore bought her without one - well, without a REAL surveyor doing the inspection. I had to do it myself. I do **NOT** suggest you bend the rules this way - at least until after you’ve owned and sold over a dozen boats yourself. Even then, Phil says, **DON’T EVER** buy a boat without a survey!

Here’s why we thought we should include this updated information: as you can tell from the photos of *Shiraz* and *Espiritu*, they are very nice, large, up-to-date, and relatively expensive sailboats. However, we don’t want to leave you with the false

impression that you need that kind of a boat to go cruising on, or you can't go. We each had over \$150,000 in our boats, (in 2002 to 2004 dollars). With *Encore* we are barely over \$22,500 including the used dinghy with outboard, the brand new CPT autopilot, and the new radar/GPS/sounder/chart-plotter we've purchased.

Just for the record, we didn't get the CPT autopilot because CPT is one of our sponsors. They are one of our sponsors because of the experience we had on Capricorn Cat coming back from Hawaii with an almost 30-year-old CPT unit. That unit had just been rebuilt and sent back to the boat in Hawaii, for about \$500!

In a few years of sailing *Encore*, we ended up putting lots of additional gear onto the boat. As of 2014, we had driven down with a pickup load of stuff, up-graded the dinghy, out board, old plumbing and some electrical wiring, and, something we'd just

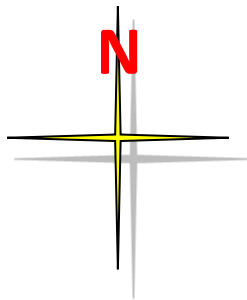


heard about called HyperVent. It helps to control the condensation under your mattress. We wish we'd had this available when we took off for Mexico in 2006, on *ESPIRITU*! Our experience with HyperVent has been so great we have asked them to become a sponsor for *Cruising Notes – things to know before you go*.

We've also spent time on engine repairs and upgrades, but none of this was anything we missed on our survey, it was just boat-stuff. These repair, upgrades and things, are the things we all do on boats. Most of it was planned, some of it was not. If you don't know what we mean by this now, within your first month of cruising, you will. Relax and enjoy it.

Our point regarding the discussion of *Encore* - a point worth re-emphasizing - it can be frustrating and time-consuming doing boat chores in Mexico. Before you buy a boat and head south, know what you are getting into. Unless you have lots of experience AND talent, you may want to think twice before you decide to purchase an older boat south of the border if you intend on upgrading it much. Don't take for granted that it will be as quick and easy to get supplies as it is back home.

Now you know the process, you have done the research taken your time, and you have settled on your boat. We are assuming you are about to start getting her ready to head out cruising. Depending on what you have found as your cruising home, and how you want to outfit her, this next process can be a short one or it can consume a few years. Our following sections involve outfitting, provisioning, and other issues you'll need to address before you are ready to drop your dock lines.



## ***Prepping the Boat Before You Cast Off***

Okay, you’ve chosen a boat and cracked the nut needed to buy it – now what? The answer depends on what condition the boat is in, how well it’s already equipped for cruising, how deep your pockets are, where you’ll go cruising, how soon, and how safely you want to do it. Start by making a list of what must be done to make the

### **TO - DO LIST**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4
- - - - 100.

**BUT. . Don’t wait ‘til everything’s done –  
or YOU’LL NEVER GET TO LEAVE THE DOCK!!!**

boat cruise-ready and what you’d like to add to it. Then estimate all costs and prioritize your list. A great suggestion, a lot of fun, and a big help for your list is to go sailing with other people on their boats. Go for day sails and weekends or longer. You will pick up ideas and techniques that will make life easier and more fun on your own boat. Don’t be “reinventing the wheel” in solving problems! Get all the tips and tricks you can from other sailors before you go.

Here are some tips that we included on our lists at various times:

Shake-down cruises and spares: Just like a pilot has a check sheet, so should you!

- ✓ Practice with everything on your boat so you can use it comfortably when things don't go as planned.
- ✓ Identify harbors to run to and hide.
- ✓ Get cruising guides. ***Don't use only one guide.*** Where one of the guides has great sketches of the view coming into a cove, another may have more color charts and photos, and another one will have more complete narrative descriptions, or be recently updated. Check them out; cross reference them.
- ✓ For the Sea of Cortez (at least) get the fishing maps from *FISH-n-MAP CO.* They have lots of good info the guidebooks don't have. You can get the maps before you go, or in Mexico where the fishermen are, not necessarily in the marinas where the sailors are.
- ✓ Before you head up into the northern Sea of Cortez (or south to the Tehuantepec) talk to others who have recently been there. Get local information about current conditions, and what to expect when the seasons change. We've talked with several folks who wished they'd taken the time to do just that.

The condition of the boat and how it's equipped will determine the time needed to prepare it. If you're starting from scratch, give yourself at least a year, and two or three is not beyond reason, depending on your finances, how much you can do yourself and the amount of time you have to do it. Accept the fact that, even considering the above, you will likely not complete everything in time, forcing you to decide whether to delay leaving the dock or to complete those projects while under way.

There is no reason for you to find a rusted solenoid running the anchor windlass or turning on/off the LP gas while you are out

cruising. Check it out as part of your preparations and change it at the dock. You might want to carry a spare, but don't take off with



a rusted one as pictured even if it's still working, because it won't be for long.

If you depart with major projects not completed and plan to have the

work done as you cruise, consider that, like marina fees, the cost of work south of the border is no longer as cheap as you might hope. Another consideration is that every domestic insurance policy we've seen, and there have been many, has excluded coverage for the hauling of boats outside the U.S. Add question marks for the condition/maintenance of hoists and the number of marinas that actually have insurance to cover haul-outs outside of the States. Even if insurance exists, add a dash of skepticism about the costs, speed, and reliability of getting an insurance claim through another country's judicial system. Throw it all in a blender and what comes out should give you food for thought, if not concern. For example, we knew of at least two boats dropped by hoists in Mexico while we were there. Bottom line, unless you are dealing with a yard and people you know personally or have come highly recommended, we lean towards recommending you complete major projects north of the border. Don't get us wrong, you can have great work done south of the border; however, it is very time consuming, difficult and expensive to get parts in Mexico, and, the daily work schedule can be very different than what we assume.

Since you had a good surveyor when you bought her, you should already know the overall condition of your boat. Start by making her water tight. Remedy all leaking windows/ports and other



water intrusions. Do what is necessary to ensure she's not likely to sink any time soon. Repair or replace thru-hulls and sea cocks, water hoses, and other potentially calamitous conditions where needed. Sea cocks should be opened and closed on a regular basis to keep them working freely. If thru-hulls below the waterline need replacing and new bottom paint is warranted, doing them simultaneously will save money. If the bottom paint is to be done, consider raising the waterline; when your boat is fully loaded for cruising, she'll likely be down in the water several inches. You won't want to be constantly in the water cleaning topsides that no longer sit above the waterline, especially in the tropics where all nature of waterborne critters have a propensity to proliferate rapidly.

On the subject of bottom cleaning, if you plan to do it yourself make your life easier by buying a plastic handle with suction cups on both ends sold for a few dollars by West Marine. Affixed to the hull, you can hang onto it with one hand and slide it along the hull as you move, cleaning the bottom with your other hand. Consider also buying a "hooka" (not the Haight-Ashbury kind) so you can breathe under water. You can measure the frequency of bottom cleaning in weeks rather than months in the tropics and can save a lot of money by doing it yourself. However, it is fatiguing and can be disorienting to the point of making you sick. You might prefer sipping margaritas under a palapa while watching a local diver toil at the scraping, at least part of the time, and you will be supporting the local economy.

Hopefully, your survey included an inspection of the rigging. Replace both standing and running rigging as needed. A rule of thumb for standing rigging is every 10 years. Though most owners don't do it nearly that often, consider where you're going and what you'll be doing. Most sailboats rarely untie their dock lines, but cruisers can put enormous and frequent stress on their rigs. And, again, the tropics are not kind to stainless steel. Friends of ours

cruised in Mexico for several years without first having replaced their standing rigging. When they ultimately decided to climb back uphill to the States, they wisely concluded their rig was no longer sound enough to risk the trek and shipped their boat home at considerable expense.

What you add to the boat for cruising will depend, again, on where you go. Phil and Nora planned to venture into the Caribbean and up the east coast so carried storm sails (with a dedicated track on the mast and removable inner forestay for either a storm jib or staysail), a drogue to slow the boat, a para-anchor, and a storm anchor that disassembled and stowed in their bilge. With the possible exception of crossing the Tehuantepec in southern Mexico (discussed later), such items will see little if any use cruising the coasts of Mexico, Central or South America. Coastal cruisers will, on the other hand, want to consider the following lists, broken into two categories, according to our opinions of their importance:

**Nice to Have Items (not listed in order of importance, and really, some of these are actually *Must Have Items!*)**

*Sun Shades* – Mexico is hot. Further south than Mazatlán is even hotter. More than just a good bimini, you'll want sun shades to cover as much of the boat as possible.

*"Flopper Stoppers"* – Rolly anchorages destroy sleep. Unless you plan on only staying up in The Sea of Cortez or in Marinas, you really do need to have a good "flopper stopper". Flopper stoppers won't completely stop the movement, but will substantially dampen the rolling. They'll often save what would otherwise be a sleepless night, and if the Admiral isn't happy, nobody's happy. Though they're frequently rigged to the boom and swung to the side of the boat, try hanging them from a spinnaker pole with your boom out on the opposite side as a counter weight.

*Spare*s – Maintenance under way is never ending and it's nice to have spare parts at your fingertips. However, space is typically at a premium and most anything can be found in Mexico, though that's less true in Central America. Alternators seem to be one of the more frequent problems for cruisers and finding one to fit your particular engine can be problematic so consider taking an extra. You'll quickly put hours on your engine looking for wind, so lots of oil and fuel filters are a good idea. A spare valve cover gasket or two and a feeler gauge for valve adjustments will also be a good idea if they might be needed. Recent years have seen marine supplies become more available in Mexico, but if you are going further south, be prepared.

*Slap Stoppers* – For those who sleep in an aft cabin, it's a bra with internal foam strips. Instead of attaching to the front, it ties under the butt (transom) of the boat. It miraculously breaks up waves that would otherwise slap the transom all night, robbing you of sleep. The Admiral of Shiraz chastised the Skipper for buying one until the first night it was used. It immediately became her new best friend.

*Fans* – Take a good supply, even if you have air conditioning. AC is usually too much of a power draw to use at anchor.

*Dinghy Wheels* – You'll kick yourselves if you go without them. If possible, find a pair that slide into a track and lock themselves. Those that need to be secured with pins become a pain after the second trip to the beach in a day. And the larger the tires, the better better-off you will be!. Following is a shot of the beach and dinghies in Zihuatanejo. See any dinghies without wheels?



*Dinghy Lifts* -- Have a way to get your dink and outboard out of the water at night and do it religiously. They do have a tendency to disappear. Davits are the method of choice but an added expense. There are several good davits on the market but, whichever ones you get, make sure they have a 6 to 1 purchase (or increase it to that) so people without a great amount of upper body strength (like wives and kids) can help lift the dinghy. An alternative is to lift the dink with a halyard (see the photo of *ENCORE* in the last chapter; we used the spinnaker halyard to save the cost of buying davits.) and lash it along the toe rail, preferably the slotted kind discussed earlier. In some areas you will want to actually lash it down on deck. Always - ALWAYS - lock your dinghy and outboard at night.

*Long Range Communication* – The ability to gather weather info and/or communicate long range in an emergency **is a must**. The optimum would be to have both a satellite phone (SAT) and single side band (SSB) radio, but that begs the question of expense. SAT phones remain somewhat expensive to purchase and operate but can give Internet access and the ability to communicate from a life raft if ever needed. SSBs are older technology but still serviceable and, with a Pactor modem, also offer email capability through either Winlink or Sailmail. Either an SSB radio or a SAT phone will allow you to gather weather information any time, day or night. Boats with only SAT phones are limited to communicating with other people or boats that have SAT phones, but boats with SSBs and VHF can communicate with most other boats and keep track of one another via the various cruiser nets operating south of the border. When you broadcast on both SSB and VHF, everybody whose radio is on can hear you. The ability to receive real-time reports of conditions from boats hundreds of miles up the road can be invaluable to one's own timing/routing decisions. Phil and Nora did the bash back up the Baja with eight other boats. All but one had an SSB and maintained contact on a predetermined schedule. The one with only a SAT phone couldn't talk to the others once they were out of VHF range. The other boats lost track of and worried about them for several days. Once they were found, they said they'd never go south again without an SSB. There are always new developments in this technology, get up to date information.

*Chartplotters* – Don't leave home without at least one. We also like to fully chart our passages **before** departure. You'll always know exactly where you are which is much different than trying to figure it out in zero visibility fog as you enter a bay. Also, set the plotter to save a track of your entire trip. You'll probably return to many places (e.g., home) by the same routes in reverse and having them already in the plotter makes life way more simple. And don't forget to carry at least one backup, or battery driven GPS (with lots of

spare batteries), in case you lose power or the main plotter just fails. It doesn't need to be fancy or expensive. Speaking of batteries, we brought mostly rechargeable ones.

*EPIRB* – This little piece of space age technology can obviously save lives, as in “yours.” The old adage of “don't leave home without it” remains good advice. You might also want to consider getting a personal EPIRB for your life vest.

*Radar* – Old salts might not list radar as a “must have” but when you can't see in the fog, or in a storm or gale, or when it's pitch black at night, you'll think otherwise.

*Life Rafts* – Ditto the above. We've heard people say that a dinghy will suffice for coastal cruising, but Phil and Nora once sat out a 50-knot gale with 20-foot seas while bashing up the Baja and didn't think being cast adrift in a dink in those conditions would have been a whole lot of fun. If your raft is stowed in a cradle on deck on a sailboat, there are two schools of thought. One holds that your raft should self inflate when and if it contacts water. The other is that it should not self inflate if there is any possibility it would still be in its cradle when it is inflated AND the cradle is positioned under or close to rigging above it (e.g., a backstay, boom, etc.). The concern is that a self-inflating raft so positioned might get caught in the rigging above it rendering it useless as the boat sinks under it. Check around and ask cruisers how they decided this issue.

*Autopilots* – You'll think so highly of it that you'll end up naming it as if it were a family friend, and he/she will drive almost all the time. Consider taking a spare if you'll be doing anything other than coastal cruising. Pat had such a fantastic experience with a CPT autopilot coming back from Hawaii that he gave them a clip of it for their website. Take a look, you'll see what we're talking about.

*Self-Activating Fire Extinguishing Systems for the Engine Room* – You don't want a fire in the engine room to sink your boat, taking your life raft and EPIRB with it, when there's nothing but water in all directions.

*Water Makers* – These are nice to have, but they're expensive, a big power draw and probably the most labor intensive item on a boat. Bottled water, though sometimes a pain to transport to the boat, is readily available in Mexico. That is less true in Central America, but Phil and Nora managed to catch enough rain there so that water was never a problem. They once put 30 gallons in their tanks in just a few hours in Costa Rica.

*Full Cockpit Enclosures* – Though listed here as a "nice to have," some regard them as essential. Nights at sea can be cold, even if not foggy. When foggy, they can be unbearable and parts of Mexico have a lot of fog. The McCalebs used theirs at night from San Francisco through much of Mexico and were often cozy in shirt sleeves while companions on boats without enclosures froze even when layered with everything they had. You'll want it made in sections to roll up easily during the day.

*Solar Panels* – Even boats with gensets should have an alternative/back-up way of generating power and solar panels may be the best choice for Mexico. The reasons are simple. Solar panels offer maintenance-free power at no cost after the initial investment. Gensets require fuel and maintenance, are generally noisy, and create heat in cabins that are typically already hot. Similarly, wind generators are noisy and don't work too well when there's no wind, which is often the case south of the border.

*Sewing Machines* – Even if you've never sewed in your life, buy a commercial grade sewing machine and take a lesson early enough and you can do all of the sun shades, canvas work, etc., you want before you take off, saving thousands of dollars in the process.

Take it with you to do your own sail and canvas repairs en route to save even more and avoid the delays of having to wait on professionals, assuming you can even find them. A drawback is that they are heavy and bulky and can be difficult to stow on a boat – and they definitely need to be well secured when under way. Carole and Pat took a 1960's vintage Kenmore sewing machine, with all-metal parts. Using heavy duty "denim" needles, this machine sewed on sail material, Sunbrella, and even Fifertech sunscreen fabric. It lived under the salon table on some non-skid material commonly used under rugs.

When you get loaded to go, you may need to change your waterline. There are some simple reasons for this: 1. She is going



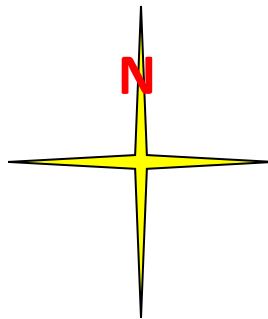
to sit a bit lower in the water, and 2. She is going to develop an area of yellowish scum just above where the water meets the hull from being out in the salt water and sitting at anchor where waves and wakes from passing boats will continually splash the hull. While prepping your boat to go, don't forget to review, and get to know **all** your systems well before you finally cast off.



Prepping the boat with all the bells and whistles you want can get expensive fast. One way to soften the blow is to look for things used. Sailing swap meets and flea markets can be a good source. Most yacht clubs have them, but the best items go fast so be there when they start. "Latitude 38" will list swap meets in their "Non Race" calendar, usually in early spring. Look for items also in Latitude's "Classy Classifieds," or on craigslist or e-bay. Don't be afraid to buy used. You can get almost anything you want at a fraction of new prices. You can also pad your kitty by selling things you already have but won't be taking cruising. Getting the boat ready is both time consuming and expensive. Start early, but remember, you still won't be completely ready when departure day comes, and a lot can be done "out there".

**As time gets short prior to "D" day, stow your tools *and* the to-do list. You can do lots of small jobs and maintenance at anchor, between beers, naps and sailing where the water and the air are warm. You will *NEVER* get everything done.**

**When it's time to go, GO. just GO!**



## ***Selecting The Crew***

The same is even more true about any crew that will go with or join you along the way. We have married friends who made a passage to Hawaii with their third crew member being her former husband. This may be a little more crew “intimacy” than is usually necessary, but you need to really know you can depend on and get along with

**Often a “cruising-crew” may be just a couple. But if it’s two or eight, for only a few days of a passage, a charter, or something BIG like the “Puddle-Jump,” as the skipper YOU have the responsibility to ensure the crew is ready and capable.**

**Unfortunately, choosing to have somebody along only because they are a friend or relative will likely get you into more trouble than it’s worth.**

**Don’t let your boat and voyage become a**

everybody in your crew. Don’t assume they’ll learn to sail or run the boat along the way. Their skill level will remain pretty much the same as when you first leave the dock. The same is true of the boat’s owners. Be sure, for example, that everyone is comfortable with watches, overnight passages, doing galley duty, or any other expected chores before you cut the dock lines. Inexperienced crew can be more trouble than they’re worth. Follow your gut feeling, not what you simply hope for. If you need crew we have two recommendations for you:

- (1.)** Talk to people, and tell them you are looking for *GOOD* crew; word of mouth gets around quickly from people on the dock or from friends.
- (2.)** Check the “Latitude 38” crew lists (and other sites as well). Having good crew is essential. Listening to some sailor’s

tales of bad crew will certainly motivate you to avoid that situation on your boat!

Make sure everybody knows the boat – how it sails in all conditions, what works and what doesn't, etc. We have friends who had never anchored their boat until Turtle Bay and found that the windlass didn't work. The McCalebs bought *Shiraz* in Seattle and sailed it to San Francisco and around S.F. Bay for three more years before ever pulling their emergency tiller out of the bottom of a locker. They were startled to learn it didn't fit because the builder got too much fiberglass in the opening around the head of the rudder post, requiring several hours of filing. Phil also had to redesign/rebuild the handle to make it reasonably functional – not a process one would want to perform in a frenzied moment at sea.

We've mentioned the importance of reading lots of material and talking with lots of sailors who have cruised, but here is probably our most important tip: Go sailboat racing, and not necessarily on your own boat. When you race on somebody else's boat you will pick up ideas and techniques for sail handling and tweaking the boat you have not begun to dream of. That experience will make you a better and safer cruiser. In our opinions, this cannot be overstated.

At some point while you are cruising you will be trying to out run a storm front, arrive before nightfall, and sail in some very congested situations. Your, or your crew's, racing experience will not only get you through in great shape, but just as important, it will provide both you and the others on your boat with a high level of confidence in your ability to handle adverse situations that come up. That combination of ability and shared confidence will bring you through just about anything you are going to come up against while coastal cruising.

A case in point: Pat was the crew on *Bright Angel*, an older thirty-five footer, in the 2003 Baja Ha Ha. The owners were relatively new

to sailing. They had taken all the classes at one of the S.F. Bay's better sailing schools, but didn't have a depth of sailing experience, and had no racing experience. The captain was more schooled at using the GPS for plotting and planning than Pat, but Pat had done a lot more sailing, and had a good amount of racing experience. A combination of the two is a good mix of skills to keep in mind when looking for crew.

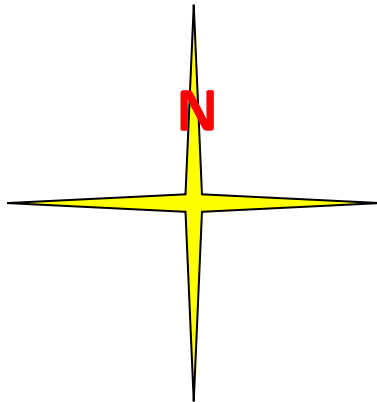
Not long after leaving Bahia Santa Maria on the last leg to Cabo San Lucas, the captain mentioned that they were going to arrive at Cabo after dark the next day, and he did not want to enter a strange port at night. So, this meant they would get close, but then stand off all night until the next morning before going into the marina. The three of them had been on a thirty-five foot boat for nine days and Pat didn't want to make it stretch into eleven days by being even an hour late for sundown the next day.

Pat started tweaking, trimming and shaping the sails, paying closer attention to wind angles and adjusting to wind shifts instead of ignoring them. By applying some racing skills, and getting maximum speed out of the boat, they arrived several hours before dusk rather than several hours after dark. The boat was washed, they were showered and having dinner in a nice restaurant on land rather than being hove-to and eating leftovers within sight of Cabo's lights that night.

Getting to Cabo before dark was a rather benign reason to "race" the boat, but it could just as well have been because of something really important. You may need to get someplace quickly because someone is injured, you have engine or electrical system problems, or other emergency situations like an approaching storm. You should know how to make your boat perform. That doesn't mean you need to sail fast very often, but you do have to know how to get the most out of your boat when you need to. Racing will help you learn those skills. Don't put this off; it is going to take a bit of practice and time, so get started.

Meanwhile, shove off and wave back to the folks on the dock, and go make that big turn to the south.





## ***Provisioning and Recipes***

Being well fed with food we like to eat has always been important to us. When you're out on the water and maybe some things are not going particularly right, or you're tired and cold from a difficult passage, having a good dinner can really lift your spirits. We've put together some ideas that have worked for us; maybe they'll be a springboard in your thinking as to what might appeal to you.

To start with, here are some basics to keep in mind, especially if you are preparing for a multi-leg departure: **a)** what type of food will you want for the length of time, weather conditions, and sea state you are heading into? **b)** how much should you prepare ahead of departure, and how much should you have with you? **c)** how much *EXTRA* water, food, spares, supplies should you have on board just "in case"? Be prepared for it to take much longer to reach your destination than you expect it will! For instance, if crossing the Sea of Cortez from La Paz is expected to take two days, a weather delay might keep you in Muertos for three more days. Or the +/- 36 hour non-stop trip from Barra de Navidad to Puerto Vallarta is an enjoyable three day hop in benign conditions, but it can be a three-day "bash" interrupted by several days at anchor coming north, and take an additional couple of days just to get around Cabo Corrientes if conditions turn nasty.

**1.** Take a look at your storage capabilities – your cupboards, your refrigerator and/or freezer space, underneath the floorboards and behind the settees; read and talk to others who have cruised and are preparing to go. Cruisers are a great source of information on what works and what doesn't. Also, attend seminars at the various boat shows in your area. The speakers often have lots of experience and we picked up some good tips there; we also met fellow cruisers; it sure adds to the enthusiasm when you meet other people who share your passion.

**2.** First of all, plan for your immediate passage from San Francisco or San Diego south.

- a) Cook some bland food ahead of departure, like chicken and rice or pasta.
- b) Have foods to combat possible seasickness like chicken noodle soup mix, cling peaches, soda crackers, ginger and ginger tea, ginger ale and 7-up, rice and instant mashed potatoes. Instant oatmeal in individual packs is great, even while out sailing, as you will use less fuel cooking it and won't heat up your cabin.

**3.** San Diego is a great place to provision or re-provision before you head south. In addition to Costco and Walmart, there is a very complete Von's Market in the same shopping center as a Trader Joe's; both are in Liberty Station, a shopping center converted from the former Navy Training Station on Rosecrans Street, about 1.5 miles from the San Diego Yacht Club, in the Point Loma neighborhood. Also in Liberty Station are restaurants, a hardware store and some tourist type shops.

**4.** Shopping in Mexico and Central America can vary depending on where you are. Big towns and cities will have markets and sometimes the very large supermarkets will have everything from a pharmacy to electronics to fresh tortillas and ready prepared foods, beer, wine and liquors. More than once we happened upon a tequila tasting in the market. The smaller towns will often have little "tiendas," similar to a corner grocery store; the selection will vary, but that's all part of the cultural experience.

Most towns will have fresh produce markets; seek them out as everything will be local and very fresh. The downtown market in Mazatlán is a "do not miss" experience. You can sample smoked marlin and smoked tuna, buy fresh meat and fish as well as some



prepared foods, ice cream and paletas – those refreshing fruit-flavored popsicles. There are also souvenirs and t-shirts.

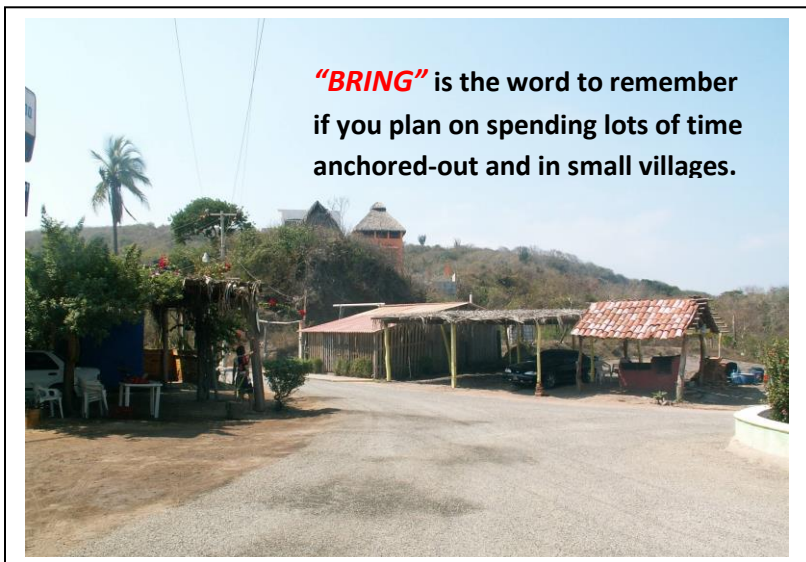
5. Zip-top bags of various sizes are great for leftovers and even for encasing tools and t-shirts in the Mexican humidity; we had a pretty substantial freezer and we put extra fish in the zip tops. We bought lots of just the cheaper house brand of zip-top bags which worked just fine. The 2.5 gal size and larger we used for blankets and sweaters when we no longer needed them. Take zip-top bags out of the cardboard that you buy them in as they will store easier and will not absorb moisture.



6. TP and paper towels – Bring what you need for a little while, but it's all available in Mexico. It may not be the same quality as you're used to, but it's OK.

7. Flexible cutting boards store easily, are light and can be used in lots of places including out by the barbeque. If your barbeque takes the LP canisters, bring extras; they are available, but expensive in Mexico and beyond. Note: CNG is not readily available south of the border.

8. Bring some specialty items that you can't live without; we brought 24 jars of marinated artichoke hearts and poured the whole thing over salad and used it as the dressing. We also brought dark chocolate, good coffee beans, Trader Joe's rice mixes, nuts, dried cranberries, chocolate chips, white flour and whole wheat flour, cookie and brownie mixes, Pam spray and Joy dish soap. Joy "suds" in salt water and we had a salt water pump in the galley to extend our fresh water supply as we had no water maker



onboard. We also brought several cans of smoked oysters. We later found coffee roasters in both Mazatlán and Zihuatanejo and every year there are more and more possibilities for good quality coffee at a variety of locations, even in Barra de Navidad.

**9. Wine:** We brought some of our favorites because we had space, but we found some nice enjoyable wines – some Mexican, lots from Australia and South America. See the Nitty Gritty section for suggestions on storing wine.

**10.** Bring cookie mix and brownie mix; it's great to have on hand when you're invited for dinner. We also made chocolate chip cookies for several harbormasters who were especially nice, for a fruit vendor in Santa Rosalia that we connected with, and for some little kids in Agua Verde; it goes a long way toward being a good guest in a foreign country.

**11.** The barbeque chickens sold all over Mexico are a great value



and convenient, and they eliminate the worry of carrying raw chicken around; buy some tortillas and avocados and tomatoes and you have a meal. Also, try out the various salsas that are available; one of our favorites is the *Herdez* brand of salsa casera and salsa

verde, both available in small cans. For about 50 pesos you can try them out. We also used the salsa on scrambled eggs. Another Mexican product that has become a mainstay of our kitchen both at home and on the boat, is *Tajin*, a chili and lime salt that can be found in the produce section of many markets. They use it on fruits like pineapple, watermelon and mango and we also use it on veggies like cucumber, jicama and carrots. At home we sprinkle it liberally on skinless chicken or on fish before we put it on the barbeque.

**12.** Eggs are sold by the kilo and may be purchased one at a time; there is no "carton" except in large super markets; bring a plastic egg container like one sold at West Marine or in camping stores.

**13.** Lettuce is mainly available at supermarkets; try cabbage sliced thin with the avocado, red or white onion, tomatoes – all available everywhere – and you have a very acceptable salad. We poured the whole jar of marinated artichoke hearts over it.

**14.** Pasilla peppers are similar to poblano peppers and are typically the peppers used when making chile rellenos. They are a dark green, long pepper and are very mild. We started buying them in Mexico and using them when sautéing onions, garlic and zucchini; they have a lot of flavor, more so than a green bell pepper. See the Recipe ideas section of this book for some great cooking ideas.

**15.** We bought fresh fish from fishermen who were out in their pangas; we just waved them over and asked if they had fish. We often gave them a soda or a beer or a can of Spam in addition to pesos; trading t-shirts may have been in vogue at one time, but everyone we talked to wanted cash. Some wanted cigarettes too, especially the guys on the shrimp boats, but we didn't have any.

**16.** This may not technically be a “provisioning” item, but high on our list of must haves on a boat or RV, is a couple of good knives. Just as you want the right tool to change a zinc or pull a prop, you



want good knives in your galley. You won’t need the whole knife block, but bring a couple that you know you’ll use.

**17. Find room** for snacks you like. You will find peanuts, including chili-lime flavored ones, but if you like a certain kind of trail mix or dark chocolate, you’d better bring them. We have noticed that more of our favorite things from home are starting to find their way south, but they are usually stocked only in the stores in the larger cities along the coast. That said, many of the local cookies and snacks will be pleasant surprises for you; so much so that we now search for Canelitas and Polverones (cinnamon and orange flavored cookies) even when we are stateside.



## ***Recipe Ideas***

One of our approaches to cooking and eating aboard a boat is to adapt our menu to what's available wherever we happen to be. We've used the already cooked barbequed chickens a lot; in fact we bought several before we left San Diego and put them in the fridge and freezer. They came in handy for sandwiches and wraps while we were underway. This will keep your crew from having to snack on the flying fish they'll be finding on the decks in the morning.

While in Mexico and Central America we used the **barbequed chicken** in tacos, in pita sandwiches, on tops of salads; we made a chicken salad mix with onions and celery, some chopped pasilla pepper and maybe some peanuts. Mix it together with some mayonnaise to hold it together and you've got a great sandwich filling. Chicken can also be added to pasta and to pasta salad. In addition, we readily found canned, white meat chicken that, when combined with pasta, chopped olives, celery, condiments, and/or whatever else could be found onboard, made a great "make ahead" cold meal for long passages. It was ready for eating without the need for any additional prep other than dishing it up. Remember that chicken noodle soup mix we talked about taking along in case of seasickness? Add some extra chicken and a can of drained black beans and you've got an interesting soup. Spoon some salsa on top for some extra kick. Sprinkle with cheese.

We also took along several cans of tuna, sardines and smoked oysters which came in handy for snacks and quick meals, but only take them if that's what you will enjoy eating. Of course, canned tuna is widely available in Mexico. We had a propane barbeque on the back deck which we used extensively for the fish that we bought from the local fishermen. It was on the barbeque in a flash. Very simply, we would oil a piece of foil, sprinkle the fish with salt and pepper, or the *Tajin* we mentioned earlier and maybe a dash

of olive oil and it was barbequed in just a few minutes. The leftovers made great fish tacos.

**Limes:** These are inexpensive and plentiful; buy lots; you will use them in cooking, in margaritas and even limeade.

**Shrimp** is available in many markets; Mazatlán bills itself as the shrimp capitol of the world, and a visit to the “shrimp ladies” in Old Town is a must. They have shrimp in various sizes in large tubs and you can buy them by the kilo. Our favorite method is to shell the shrimp and sauté them in butter and garlic, finishing them off with a liberal squeeze of lime. You can also add some white wine to the



**MAKE SURE YOU DON'T HAVE TO SETTLE FOR DECK FOOD!**

pan if you have it. Shrimp can also be barbequed. They'll barter back and forth on the price while you look at the size in the tub, then reach way down for your handful. Tell them you want the ones on top, not the smaller ones down where you can't see them.

**Smoked Pork Chops:** We were first introduced to the smoked pork chops by a guy who was land based in Santa Rosalia. He took us to a butcher shop where we could indicate how thick we wanted the butcher to cut our chops. They are fully cooked when you buy them, so they warm-up quick to use right away, or keep very well. They can be heated up as a main course, or cut off the bone and fried with eggs.

**Machaca** is a shredded dried beef that is available packaged in large markets, but is available by the pound in some fruit and veggie markets. A Mexican lady gave me these cooking instructions: Sauté part of an onion and about half a Pasilla or poblano pepper, or a red bell pepper. Add a couple of diced plum tomatoes and about a handful or more of Machaca. If it's dry, add some water. Heat it through and it makes a wonderful filling for tacos or can be added to scrambled eggs. Be sure to have salsa to put on top. In fact, most shopping trips included a couple of cans of salsa; we used it that often.

**Pasilla and Poblano Peppers** were mentioned in the Provisioning section of this book. They are flavorful, mild, long green peppers, often used in chile rellenos. We started using them instead of bell peppers and really liked their depth of flavor; now we buy them when we're home, too. One thing we like to do is sauté up a chopped onion and 2 cloves of chopped garlic in some olive oil along with a chopped pasilla or poblano pepper. Add 3 or 4 sliced **zucchini**; we like the pale green ones as the skin is thinner. When they are almost cooked, add a couple of chopped tomatoes and salt and pepper to taste. This is a very good vegetable dish. You can also scramble 3 or 4 eggs and pour them over the veggies; cover and cook slowly 'til the eggs are done and you have a frittata! Enjoy!



Here are a few recipes of some easy meals to cook on a boat, or to “share” at get-togethers.

**Shrimp Appetizer**

1 ½ lbs. of cooked shrimp  
½ tsp. grated lime peel  
¼ c. lime juice  
¼ c. white wine  
½ c. catsup  
3 or 4 drops hot pepper seasoning

Place the cooked shrimp in a bowl; mix remaining ingredients and pour over the shrimp. Cover and chill at least 4 hours or overnight. If you’ve left the tails on, they will be easy to grab, or serve with toothpicks.

**Guacamole** is a favorite of the cruisers as avocados are plentiful, cheap, and very good. Just mash a couple of avocados, add some lime juice and salt and you’re good to go. You can spice it up by stirring in some salsa. Tostadas are available all over; just break them up to use for your dip.



Mix everything together, adding the avocado and tomato just before serving. Serve with tortilla chips or break up the tostadas that you can find all over Mexico. We also use this as a salad. It's become our "signature" dish to bring to potlucks or gatherings on the dock. We always have these items on board, and most of the time we double this recipe.

**Pasta Salad courtesy of Patty from *S/V Mystique***

1 chopped onion (use ½ red and ½ white)

3 or 4 cloves of garlic chopped fine

3 or 4 limes squeezed over the onion and garlic to cover

Let this sit for 2-4 hours

Cook and drain about 1 lb of pasta – any kind

Add the onion and garlic mixture to the pasta and any other ingredients that you like in your pasta salad – like olives, artichoke hearts, cubed cheese, chopped red pepper, broccoli, some diced cooked chicken or shrimp or other meat you might have. Toss it all with olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Before serving add some chopped fresh cilantro or basil and some sliced green onion. You won't have to worry about it in the heat and it's delicious.

**No-Bake Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies**

2 cups sugar

½ c. butter

½ c. evaporated milk

1 tsp. vanilla

2 ½ TBS. unsweetened cocoa

½ c. peanut butter

3 c. rolled oats

Combine first 5 ingredients and cook over medium heat. Boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in peanut butter and oats. Using a tablespoon, you then spoon quickly on to wax paper or aluminum foil. The cookies will harden as they cool.

**Almond Coffee Cake courtesy of Carole from *S/V Encore***

1 ½ c. sugar

¾ c. butter

2 eggs

2 tsp. almond extract

1 ½ c. flour

1 tsp. baking powder

1 – 2 TBS. slivered almonds

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9" round cake pan or spray with cooking spray. Cream butter and sugar; add eggs one at a time and almond extract. Mix flour and baking powder and gently stir into batter until combined. Spread batter into prepared pan and sprinkle with slivered almonds. Bake 30 to 40 minutes and cool in pan.

Note: We brought the almond extract and slivered almonds with us as they are not readily available in Mexico and beyond.

**Five-Minute Chocolate Cake courtesy of Krista from *S/V Fantasia***

1 ¾ c. flour

2 c. sugar

¾ c. unsweetened cocoa

1 ½ tsp. baking soda

1 ½ tsp baking powder

1 tsp. salt

2 eggs beaten

1 c. milk

½ c. vegetable oil

1 tsp. vanilla

1 c. boiling water

Combine dry ingredients and mix. Combine all wet ingredients except boiling water. Add wet ingredients to the dry and mix just to combine. Stir in boiling water. Pour into a 9 x 13" greased pan;

bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes. When cool, top with your favorite frosting or sift on some powdered sugar. (We were looking for powdered sugar in the small village of Chemela in 2006; by trial and error and lots of pantomime, we did find it. It's known as "azucar glace.")

**Chocolate Chip Cookies, also from Krista**

$\frac{3}{4}$  c. butter

$\frac{1}{2}$  c. sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$  c. brown sugar

2 eggs

1 tsp. vanilla

1 c. flour (use  $\frac{1}{2}$  white,  $\frac{1}{2}$  whole wheat)

2 c. rolled oats

1 tsp. baking soda

1 12-oz. pkg. chocolate chips

1 c. chopped nuts

Mix dry ingredients together and add to butter mixture; finally stir in chocolate chips & nuts. Bake at 350 degrees, 10-13 minutes until golden. NOTE- Bring chocolate chips from home, they are expensive south of the border. Also, we usually baked a dozen+ cookies at a time and froze the remaining dough in 1tbs portions for another time; it worked out great.

**Whole Wheat Bread, courtesy of Dorothy from *S/V Begone***

13 oz. lukewarm water

1 TBS. yeast

1 tsp. honey

2 TBS. oil

2 c. white flour

2 c. whole wheat flour

1 tsp. salt

Mix honey and yeast into water. Add oil to dissolved yeast mixture. Mix flours and salt in a bowl; pour yeast mixture into the

center. Mix thoroughly with a wooden spoon and knead in the bowl. Shape into a loaf and put into an oiled loaf pan. Let rise in a warm spot to slightly over the top of the pan. Bake at 350 degrees, 30 – 40 minutes.

Optional additions: raisins, cranberries, nuts, prunes, etc.

### **Mustard Baked Chicken from Cynthia on *S/V Ten Ten***

2 – 3 lbs. chicken pieces

1/3 c. brown mustard

1 TBS. oil

1 TBS. soy sauce

2 tsp. sugar

Remove skin from chicken and place in a greased rectangular baking dish. Bake at 425 degrees for 15 min. Stir together the remaining ingredients. Remove chicken from the oven and generously brush mustard mixture over chicken. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes more, brushing with additional mustard mixture.

### **Gingerbread Cake**

½ c. shortening or butter

½ c. sugar

1 egg

½ c. molasses

1 ½ c. flour

¾ tsp. salt

¾ tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. ginger

½ tsp. cinnamon

½ c. boiling water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease an 8" x 8" baking dish. Stir shortening or butter to soften; add sugar and cream well. Add egg and molasses, beating well. Combine dry ingredients and add to butter mixture alternately with boiling water, beating after each addition. Bake in greased pan for 35 – 40 minutes.

Note: We brought molasses and ginger with us; cinnamon (canela) is available in Mexico.

**Damiana Margarita courtesy of a waiter in Todos Santos**

2 oz. tequila

1 oz. Triple Sec or Controy, an orange liqueur made in Mexico

1 oz. Damiana liqueur, also made in Mexico

4 Mexican limes, squeezed

8 ice cubes

The above makes one very good drink!!!

**Deviled Eggs courtesy of Nora from *S/V Shiraz***

6 eggs

¼ cup mayo

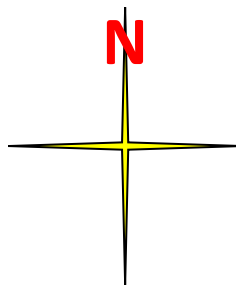
1 teaspoon mustard

1 teaspoon vinegar

paprika (optional)

Slice cooked eggs, remove yolks into a bowl. Add other ingredients to yolks except paprika. Mash with fork and mix until blended. Fill egg whites with the mixture and sprinkle with paprika, if desired.

There are many recipes for deviled eggs so use whichever one you like. Eggs are readily available just about any place in Mexico. This is an easy dish to make, it is always received as a great treat for sharing, and the amounts can easily be increased.



## ***Nitty Gritty***

This section contains assorted tips from years of cruising: some are from us and some are from other cruisers. They are in no particular order, but you'll find some that are helpful to you no matter the size of your boat or how you will cruise.

1. Solar shower: We filled it each morning and put it on the deck to warm; at night we hooked it up through the hatch in our shower. It saved water as there was no waste while adjusting the shower temperature.
2. Backpacks, boat bags and sturdy grocery bags are handy to carry



your groceries and laundry. Carole and Pat used a rolling, collapsible cart the first year, but found that due to the dirt streets or the cobblestone streets and uneven sidewalks in all the small towns, it was not really useful. However Nora and Phil used one



quite a bit. This issue is sort of like bringing bikes or choosing ice cream; it all depends on what you like.

3. Good sunscreen is important. Bring several tubes and keep one in your ditch bag, another in your backpack, and one in the head or wherever you will likely use it, and *USE* it all the time.

4. Bring a sun hat with a broad brim. A baseball cap won't cut it!

5. Polarized sunglasses for eye health are very important; there's a lot of glare off the water. Be sure to have them on a leash. Bring extra prescription glasses in case your dinghy goes over as ours did. One member of our group, who shall remain nameless, disregarded this advice and lost his glasses when the dinghy flipped in a beach landing! You can have glasses made for about half price or less in Mexico, so bring a current prescription with you.

6. Get a boat binder where you keep all the boat papers, insurance, boat documentation, etc. Have several copies of everyone's passport as well as the vessel documentation as you will submit them at some ports. Laws are always evolving re visas and what is required. You may be able to find current information from the "Latitude 38" website just before you leave.

7. If you use a seasick medication try it out first on dry land and see what your reaction is. There is a pill sold in Canada and the UK called *Stugeron*. It is available online from Canadian pharmacies. This particular medication seems to be effective and does not usually cause dry mouth or sleepiness, however, try it for yourself. The most favorable dosage is 15 or 25 ml. A 75 ml. pill is sold in Mexico, but it has caused adverse reactions in people, and we would not recommend that strength. We should also note that an American cruising doctor we knew also felt that *Stugeron* should not be used at all, though we're not sure why. Check with your

doctor before you use *Stugeron*, your doctor knows your history and what you might react to!

**8.** Have some presentable clothes to wear when you go to see the port captain; a collared shirt is a good thing and maybe even long pants. Be respectful. It's their country and they set the norms and make the rules you have to live by. We went to a concert in



Mazatlán and were glad that we had something a little better than shorts and t-shirts. The ladies brought a couple of skirts along which were also cooler than shorts in some warm places.

**9.** Carry a water bottle everywhere; it's hot and you sure don't want to get dehydrated.

**10.** You're going to need some place to dump your garbage unless you're in a marina; be sure to ask if it's OK to dump some place before you do. Most towns have blue barrels around that are for trash and garbage; ask somebody where they are. Garbage is "basura" in Spanish. Lots of times local kids will come out to your

boat and ask if they can take your trash, for a tip. Unfortunately, often times they just dump it somewhere out of sight instead of taking it to the dump, so usually we don't give it to them until we find out from another cruiser if they get rid of it properly or not.

**11.** Bring your prescription meds and try to have what you need for the length of your trip. Even though you will see various medications advertised, purporting to be a brand that is advertised in the U.S., it's anyone's guess as to how effective they are or what they are. The adage, "let the buyer beware" is what we recommend. We have purchased some OTC allergy medications that proved to be just fine; one was prescribed by a Mexican doctor and was similar to what we had purchased at home.

**12.** In addition to prescriptions, put together a First Aid kit of things you might need: antibacterial cream for cuts and scrapes, hydrocortisone for that itch when the "no-seeums" bite, Tylenol, aspirin, an anti-diarrheal medication, a mosquito spray, and anything else you can think of. Although some of these things are available, we were shocked to see a price of about \$22 for cortisone cream. For simple meds like aspirin, we found the Farmacias Similares to be good. Loosely translated, it's a pharmacy of generic drugs; the ones we've been to (and probably all of them) have a computer where we told the clerk what we wanted in English and she did a google translate on it – pretty effective.

**13.** Several of the major towns that you'll sail into will have cruisers' guides available in either the marinas or online, as is the case in La Paz. These are a wealth of information for people who do your canvas work, work on your engine, fix something electronic, clean the bottom and just about anything else pertaining to a boat. There is also a list of English speaking doctors, dentists, hair dressers, massage therapists, etc. We have been the happy beneficiaries of this local knowledge.

**14.** Laundry can be done for you even in the smaller towns; it's about \$5 per kilo (2.2#) for wash, dry, and fold at lavanderias located all over. Unless you like heavily scented clothes, ask for soap that is "sin perfume" or bring your own laundry detergent.

**15.** Bring pens, color crayons, tablets, etc. to give to the kids or to the fishermen in the small towns; try a Dollar Store for some values. We're glad we didn't bring sidewalk chalk as the places we went had no paved streets, for the most part, let alone sidewalks. There is a little preschool in Agua Verde and in any other small village that can also use a new soccer ball or just about anything else; bring something down and watch the smiles grow.



**16.** If fishing is your passion, this is certainly the place for it; you can get a fishing license before you go, but the rules often change.

Check some Mexican websites before you go to find out what the rules are. We love eating fish, but we found it easy to just wave over a fisherman and buy fish at about \$8 to \$10 for a large fish, filleted and ready to barbeque, and then there was no clean up, either.

**17.** To wash or not to wash, that is the question. Yes, of course take a shower! We're talking about vegetables here! The first year we washed everything in water to which we added a few drops of "microdina," a cleaner that includes inorganic silver that is sold in small green bottles in the produce section of markets. If we can peel it we don't wash it, but if we're cutting through the outside skin we do. We scrub the outside of pineapples and papayas with a vegetable brush before cutting into them. If it's a cabbage, we remove the outside leaves. We don't wash the romaine lettuce that comes three to a sealed package. Lots of people wash the vegetables in just clean water. It's wise to be careful; a stomach upset is no fun.

\*We enjoy eating at the small street carts and stands, but you need to know your own tolerance and find out from other cruisers in the area what the "scoop" is on the various street-stands and restaurants.

\*A good first clue whether to pick a stand or not, is if there is no water source at the food stand, maybe it's not a good idea to eat there. Also, we do not use any condiment that is sitting out; the radishes and salsa are probably ok, but not the crema, the Mexican type of sour cream, or the guacamole sauce.

**18.** Potlucks are prevalent and crop up at a moment's notice; think about a "signature" dish that you can prepare with things you are apt to always have on hand. See the section on "Recipe Ideas" for some suggestions.

**19.** Bring dominos if you have them; so many of the cruisers play some version of *Mexican Train*. As you will see when you gather, it



**Out of lay-back afternoons like this, potlucks evolve and long-time friendships form. This is Santa Rosalia where we were all getting our boats ready to go across to San Carlos and be put up for the hurricane season.**

often includes lots of other activities too. Bring cards and dice and any other portable games you enjoy, too.

**20.** Cruisers seem to read a lot and trade books with other cruisers as they go; there are also informal libraries in the various marinas; just leave a book

and take a book. People are also starting to take electronic readers which will definitely save space aboard. Speaking of electronics, many people are bringing iPads too; it's a lot less cumbersome than a laptop and might serve your needs.

**21.** For wine storage on the boat, we came up with some interesting solutions. Someone suggested using men's tube socks which we did – one bottle to a sock. Then the bottles could be laid side by side under the floorboards or in a large plastic bin and not clank and break. Some also found their way among our clothes which provided a good cushion. We saw a great wine-cellar with bottle inserts made out of the heavy cardboard tubes used as cores for carpet rolls. Of course, these days there is some very drinkable wine available in boxes, and that's the way some cruisers go.

**22.** If you like to cook and bake, bring a binder with your favorite recipes. Be sure that you bring the right cake pans and muffin tins

too, and any specialty ingredients that you will need. See the “Recipe Ideas” section of this book for some of our favorites.

**23.** A sewing machine can be helpful in many situations; both of us brought one and used it for sail cover repairs, making sun shades, table covers and a variety of other items; it’s an option to consider if you have space and have acquired the expertise.

**24.** Get a couple of *dry bags*. These things are a must-have for going places in your car. Remember, your “car” is now that little rubber boat called a dinghy. That’s the one you hop into getting off your boat, and then you take in and out through the surf where you jump in and out of it while you are wading and timing the waves so they don’t swamp you and drown your camera, lap-top, cell phone and wallet. We suggest two of them, one large and one small. You might still want to put some things in zip-top bags as well.

**25.** Most cruisers have boat cards with their boat name, their names and contact information like email and phone numbers. Some have pictures of their boat or of themselves. It’s a good way of keeping in touch and we’d definitely recommend it, along with a binder with appropriate sleeves to hold the cards.

**26.** Are you going “home” for the holidays? When we set out the first time, going home was a question that came up. Our family had some expectations mostly surrounding how things had always been done. Once we made our decision to continue cruising, they were all fine with it. Some cruising friends had given us a bit of good advice: “Don’t come home for the first six months.” They said that it would cause us to set time schedules and travel itineraries that would break the continuity of the whole cruising experience. As it turns out, that is an understatement! In the end, since everyone’s situation is different, you will decide what is best for you.

**27.** ATM machines HAVE BEEN located all over Mexico and Central America and WAS an easy way to get money in the local currency. However, this is changing, we have heard, due to Mexico's changing banking policies regarding money laundering. As of March 2020, many small communities, including Barra de Navidad, are without an ATM machine and no answers have been forthcoming as to when this situation will be rectified.

Our suggestion is to be sure you have about a weeks-worth of necessary cash (pesos) safely tucked someplace where you won't forget where it is. This will be your "safety-net" for when you have unexpectedly run dry. Be sure and find a working ATM machine several days before you *NEED* it, or when you would have to go to your "stash". Do not carry/show a wad of big peso-bills with you when you are shopping. Plan ahead and have enough small bills, or only a couple of large denomination bills ready for shopping. We think Mexico is very safe; just don't make yourself a target by being dumb.

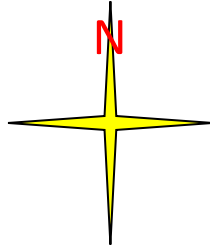
Be sure to notify your bank that you will be accessing an ATM machine in a foreign country and check to see what their limits are per day. Also check the foreign transaction fee. Some credit unions charge a lot less than a bank and it might be a good idea to use that type of card if you belong to a credit union; those fees can add up.

**28.** Over the course of several years of cruising we have donated several cameras to the "Gods of the Sea." We now have waterproof digital cameras. We just offer up this thought, because waterproof cameras don't cost much more than regular ones.

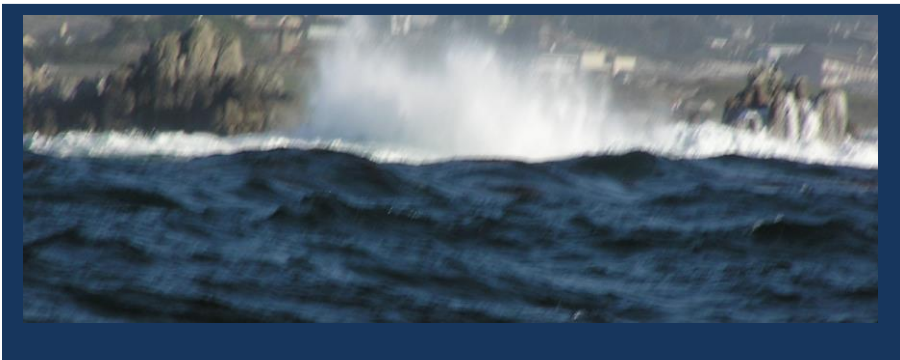
**29.** Closed-cell cushions have been our cockpit cushions of choice; we have had **BottomSiders** on two boats so far. In addition to being very comfortable, closed-cell cushions are not affected by sun and



salt, and they wipe-up easily and dry quickly from the overnight dew while your morning coffee is still brewing. They still looked great when we got back home and sold *Espiritu*.



The next section is about anchoring. this is a topic where everybody



has an opinion, and they become rabid when their opinions are questioned. We are going to stick to the basics, and throw in some lessons learned and good ideas that have been sent our way. The No.1 rule is: practice, practice, practice, and practice in crappy weather! The No.2 rule is: Don't anchor in a situation like the one above, a LEE SHORE LOOKING FOR A CATASTROPHE TO HAPPEN!

## ***Anchoring***

You've bought the boat, prepared it for cruising, and provisioned; now it's probably time to think about making it stay wherever you decide to put it. While we don't claim to be anchoring experts, we have devised methods that have worked for us. Though we try not to be judgmental, we've also witnessed some pretty dysfunctional efforts by some cruisers, and believe we've at least gained some collective insight in the process. There is a learning curve, and the time to practice is definitely before you take off cruising.

Some boats are rigged so skippers can deploy and retrieve anchors single handedly and entirely from the cockpit. But most are not, requiring two bodies – one at the bow, the other at the helm. One thing is beyond question – it helps to have a system and hone it to the point of being second nature. It must include an effective method of communicating. Simply trying to yell back and forth doesn't really work well as you will usually be doing this over the noise of an engine. Work out and agree on a plan of hand signals. Headsets can also be helpful but windy conditions may cause noise, interfering with communication. Whatever your system, use it religiously.

Most people are wisely disinclined to even consider trying to haul up an anchor by hand. Even if you think you can do it some of the time, virtually all cruising boats need a windlass, preferably powered, to deploy and retrieve the anchor. If your boat has one, disassemble and service it before you leave home or it will freeze up on you when you most need it. If you don't have one, get one.

At a minimum, you need two anchors and three or four is better, especially if you are going long range or blue water cruising. Make all of them one size larger than what is recommended for your boat. Even better, if you have four, make one a storm anchor. If

one is a dedicated stern anchor, you'll probably get by with it being a little smaller than the others.

What types of anchors you take and the size, type, and length of anchor rode will, of course, be matters of personal choice. Rope is light and, even with a compulsory length of chain at the anchor end, is easier to handle and stow, but it can chafe to the point of being severed by rocks and coral. Chain seems the choice of most cruisers. It's strong, will not chafe, and its weight lying on the seabed will help keep loads off the anchor itself and the boat from moving around at anchor. However, chain is expensive and many claim that the added weight on the bow will impact the sea kindliness of some boats.

If chain is used, both its size and type (diameter and length of links) must be matched to the windlass. Rather than attaching the bitter end in the anchor locker with a shackle, consider using a short length of line instead so you can cut it to free the boat quickly in the event of an emergency such as another boat dragging down on you. Also have a means in the anchor locker, besides the windlass, of securing the chain at whatever length it has been deployed. Most cruisers will have some type of metal device in front of the windlass to lock the chain in place. Don't rely on the locked windlass gypsy to hold it.

Consider, as well, attaching some type of rope snubber to a chain rode once it has been deployed. Unlike the chain, this line will stretch as a shock absorber, lessening heavy and abrupt loads on the bow when the chain rode tightens up. Absent a better system, a chain hook on a single length of line cleated at the bow will work. Even better, make a rope bridle with a chain hook (or other bracket designed and sold commercially for this purpose) in the middle. Cleat one end on one side of the bow, place the hook on the chain rode, pull the bridle short enough to allow a loop of the chain to hang inside the bridle just in front of the bow, and cleat the

remaining loose end to the other side of the bow. Again, this bridle will stretch as a shock absorber reducing overall stresses on the bow, and will effectively reduce the load on each cleat and double the strength of the line used.

Here is an un-posed photo of *Charm*, an Island Packet 37 anchored in Agua Verde. This really illustrates the point as to why a bridle is



so important. The water was like glass mid-morning when our friends came into the bay and anchored.

After they set the anchor, her whole crew went ashore. By mid-afternoon they were stuck on the beach and could not get the dinghy through the surf to get back to the boat. They were using the bridle we've been describing to you. You can see with a 3 to 4 foot wave action coming through, that the bow is forced way up in an elevated position. Here are some compelling reasons to use a bridle: (1) the chain is not running direct to the anchor at an angle off the bow sprit (2) the double lines coming from the foredeck are

acting as shock-absorbers protecting the gear on deck and preventing excessive strain on the anchor's hold on the bottom, (3) even with the greatly elevated bow there is still enough loop in the chain below the bridle to ensure that the bucking action of the boat won't dislodge the chain from the bridle. After seeing this picture Doug reminded me that he is also using a sixty pound anchor, several sizes larger than the "recommended" size for his boat.

Of all the recommendations within our "ANCHORING" section, this bit of info is probably the best: use a bigger anchor than the charts recommend! Remember – the only thing keeping you connected to the ground is your anchor. This one bit of information will help you sleep well at night.

Anchoring etiquette dictates that the "first in has first rights." If other boats are anchored when you arrive, it's up to you to anchor so you will not interfere with them. You have a duty, of course, to use whatever length of rode the conditions require for safety. To avoid swinging into them, you should not deploy more rode than adjacent boats already anchored. You will need to move if there isn't enough space between boats.

Your ability to judge anchorage spacing will improve with your experience, but when in doubt, relocate; it's not appropriate to ask others already anchored to adjust for you. Take care to also avoid dropping your hook on top of or close to other anchors or their rodes. Untangling them can take considerable time and effort. Depending on the wind and tide conditions when you need to untangle, it might also result in some dangerous situations.

Stern anchors will often be used to keep boats from swinging in crowded anchorages. In some anchorages where the tide and/or the breeze do not flow in a similar and steady direction, the sterns of boats at anchor can swing into each other. This problem

confronted Phil and Nora at Cedros Island, as the following photo shows. At the most unexpected time the current or wind in an anchorage will sometimes cause an eddy, and the boats that are normally a good distance apart will actually swing their sterns into



each other. Look closely and you can see Phil in his dinghy, fending off the dark hulled sailboat at Cedros Island. Pat and Carole experienced this in several small coves in the Sea of Cortez, but especially in Escondito.

Stern anchors may also be used to keep boats from lying abeam of moderate to heavy swells which, without them, would translate to a night of heavy rolling and little or no sleep. Chacala, the small bay south of San Blas and north of Banderas Bay is prime example. Boats using stern anchors do not mix well with those who are, and the “first in has first rights” rule applies. However, stay away from any boat that is not using a stern anchor, because they don’t have

a very bright captain and crew. You NEED a stern anchor here or your boat will turn sideways to the swell and the Admiral won't sleep, and there is always a swell. Oh, almost forgot. Even when you arrive late at night, drop in your stern anchor and take the time to be sure you have secured it to the rode! There are some good stern anchors down there that have been abandoned because somebody didn't take the time to adequately secure them before deploying them.

Just as communicating effectively should be a mainstay of your anchoring system, so too should your method of deployment. Trial and error will help you find what works for you but, in the end, make sure the anchor is set if you expect it to hold.

### ***Comments by Phil***

We knew of a couple that spent more than a small chunk of change buying a succession of different types of anchors trying to find one that would keep them from dragging. This puzzled me because one they had tried was a CQR, which we used as our primary anchor without ever dragging. It wasn't until we watched them anchor one day that we realized what may have been their problem. As they headed into the wind to approach the spot they'd chosen, the crew on the bow let the anchor go when the boat was still moving forward. They continued to coast forward over the anchor for nearly the length of the boat with the crew playing out the rode as they went. When the boat finally stopped, the skipper shifted into reverse, easing the boat back with the crew letting out more rode. When they had what the skipper believed was enough rode out, he shifted to neutral and allowed the anchor to stop the boat.

On another occasion, a skipper parked his boat directly in front of *Shiraz*, walked to his bow, dropped his anchor and piled his chain directly on top of it. He then walked back to his cockpit and popped a beer.

The first skipper had at least put some strain on his anchor by allowing it to stop his boat from moving backward, but neither skipper had really done anything to be sure his anchor was set – a recipe for disaster. Moreover, probably the best and quickest way to foul an anchor is to tangle it with rode. The first skipper had pulled approximately 35 feet of chain back over his anchor while reversing and the second had dumped even more chain directly on top of his anchor. Neither anchor was properly set and both were very likely fouled.

When you are coming into a crowded anchorage like the one pictured next, you need to be prepared and practiced; this is not



the time to experiment. Work out your system so things work smoothly and everybody involved with anchoring knows what to expect and how to do their job. The system we've devised over the years puts Nora at the helm and me at the windlass. Watching the depth sounder, we first circle the boat through the entire area we want to anchor in to get a feel for the depth and contours of the bottom and to select a spot to drop the hook. With the boat headed into the wind, we shift into neutral, if under power, and



drift forward to a stop. As the boat begins to slide backward in the wind (or reverse under power if there's no wind), I drop the anchor and start playing out rode. Waiting to drop the hook until the boat is drifting backward ensures that the anchor is down before any rode is deployed, thus avoiding the risk of fouling the anchor with rode.

When enough rode is out to allow the anchor to set well (usually 60 to 70 feet), I snub off the rode and let it stop the boat. Nora will then check our lat/lon position on the chartplotter while I take visual bearings of objects around us (rocks, trees, boats, etc.). Then, by headset, hand signals or both, I will ask Nora to shift to reverse and begin pulling on the anchor – starting at 1,200 to 1,500 engine rpm's – to set the anchor if it's not already down securely. She'll watch our lat/lon position and I'll watch my visual bearings to be sure we're stuck. When we're satisfied the boat is not moving, I will ask Nora to increase the rpm's to about 1,800 and we again confirm that we're not moving.

By now the action of the boat in the water churned up by the prop gives us another measure of whether the anchor is indeed set. If that's the case, I ask Nora to increase the rpm's to around 2,300 and we spend several more seconds pulling on the anchor to be sure it won't break free before we reduce the rpm's to idle. We then play out whatever additional rode we think is warranted, put our bridle on, note our lat/lon readings in our log, shut down the engine and relax. Noting our lat/lon position in the log can help us determine later whether we're dragging – as in the middle of a moonless night. If we're still not sure, we'll start the engine and pull on the anchor again while watching our position on the chartplotter.

We like all chain rode – it just gives us a level of comfort we don't feel with rope. *Shiraz* carried about 300 feet as our primary rode and my rule of thumb was to put out 150 feet regardless of the

depth we were in. This is often overkill – we once held in 50 knot winds with only 100 feet out in a crowded anchorage, but I was nervous. I’m a firm believer that more is better than less and it doesn’t take much time or effort to deploy or retrieve a little extra. We’ve never once drug anchor in more than 15,000 miles of cruising.

Last, but certainly not least, it is important to keep an eye on the depth sounder throughout the entire process of anchoring. You can easily drop the hook in 25 feet but, because of bottom contours, by the time you’ve played out 100+ feet of rode find yourself in only five feet of water. Be sure also to factor in any tidal changes in the area when deciding what depth to anchor in. We forgot to factor in a potential tide drop of 13 feet one night in Nicaragua and later found ourselves bouncing on the bottom.

You might also start to anchor in 25 feet of water but not notice your depth sounder picking up a zero by the time you drop the hook into a 250-foot-deep underwater canyon.

*NOTE: We have interrupted this discussion to bring you Phil’s unabridged description of the above referred to incident.*

*The following story is reprinted with the author’s permission: ON THE WIND by Phil McCaleb (encore press 2014, ISBN:978-0-9906340-0-3). It has been included here replacing the prior, extremely short paragraph by Phil, regarding the need to pay close attention to your equipment, the depth of the water and the drift of your boat when anchoring. In Phil’s defense it should also be mentioned that this incident took place in the earlier rather than in the latter portion of their cruising.*

“It should go without saying that any honest rendering of life at sea must include not only the “good” but the “bad and ugly” as well. We had momentarily thought of discretely omitting any reference to a particular anchoring “incident” we experienced but, upon due consideration, we accept that honesty is in fact the best policy and requires full disclosure.

That said, however, desiring to protect the sensibilities of those involved, the writer will refer to the participants by title rather than name. Indeed, recognizing that similar incident disclosures may occur in later chapters, the author may employ such creative license wherever he deems appropriate to protect even the semi-innocent.

Boat anchors are, of course, those heavy things designed to sit on the sea bed and keep the boat in one place while the crew blissfully slumbers below. Attached to the anchor is chain, which lives in the anchor locker in the bow of the boat. In the case of Shiraz the chain runs from the locker to the anchor through a metal contraption about two feet long and four inches square - we'll call it the "tube."

When a Skipper looks into an anchor locker, he/she sees what is normally regarded as an infinite amount of chain in a big pile. In fact, the pile is not infinite - there is an end to it, hidden somewhere in the bowels of the locker. That end is normally referred to as the "bitter" end. We don't know why it's called the bitter end, but we have surmised that it could in some way relate to the Skipper's outlook on life if an "incident" occurs. Regardless, the prudent Skipper will ensure that the bitter end is affixed to the boat in some fashion. Being a proper seaman, the Skipper of Shiraz had done so. Both the Skipper and First Mate had likewise gloated over having perfected their anchoring skills years before the night in question.

Shiraz was anchored and her crew happily sipping wine in the cockpit late in the evening when two boats anchored too close to her in windy conditions. While a concern, this was not an immediate problem until one of them began to drag on her anchor, straight at Shiraz. We decided to relocate. Searching for a new location we found one at a depth of twenty-three and a half feet. Perfect! As is our normal

procedure, the Skipper went forward to drop the hook, surrendering the helm to the First Mate.

The windlass is an electric winch that raises the anchor upon command. We have no idea why it is called a windlass but that is of no relevance to our discussion. Peculiar to Shiraz is a characteristic that the chain can jump off our windlass as the anchor is dropped and the chain is fed out. This is normally not a concern when anchoring in twenty-three feet of water. The anchor will soon hit the bottom allowing the Skipper to easily manage the weight of that much chain with one hand while returning it to the windlass sprocket with the other hand. He can then ease out whatever additional chain is desired. On the night in question, however, the First Mate either did not notice or failed to disclose (the Skipper hasn't been able to determine which with certainty), that before actually deploying the anchor and chain, the decimal point on the depth sounder at the helm had disappeared from the figure, presumably because Shiraz had moved over an underwater "canyon" while maneuvering during the intervening moments. With an air of confidence, the Skipper let go the anchor and, as one would expect, the chain jumped off of the windlass sprocket, placing anchor and chain in what can loosely be described as a "freefall." Compounding the problem was the law of physics which dictates that anchor, plus chain, plus increased distance, equals increased chain, which equals increased weight, which equals increased speed. Put another way, the stuff had hit the fan and was gaining momentum.

The Skipper noted that the normally infinite pile of chain was disappearing at a blistering pace and, after due deliberation, concluded that something should be done. The image of the pile disappearing completely and the bitter end of the chain tearing off the entire front of the boat flashed before his eyes and he had no desire to take a swim at that hour of night. The

most apparent remedy was to take hold of the chain, stop it, and put it back on the sprocket. He did the former, but not the latter, finding himself instead being sucked by the chain into that four inch "tube," seemingly headfirst, with his feet straight in the air. He concluded that this simply would not do when he smelled something burning and noticed that the rubber gloves he was wearing were smoking (well, maybe "shredding" is more accurate). Upon finding that it was too late to extricate himself, with dispatch he calmly and politely called to the First Mate to come forward to assist him and requested that she please do so with a certain degree of haste. He then waited patiently, blowing on the gloves during the interim. When the First Mate did not appear but rather stuck her head out from behind the boat's dodger to inquire what he had asked, the Skipper, raising his voice ever so slightly just to make himself heard, repeated his request. By the time the First Mate reached the bow, the Skipper, legs straight out, was well into the tube and in fear of losing consciousness. With the utmost diplomacy, he then asked the First Mate to find the safety chain hook in the anchor locker and place it over the chain, thus ending its descent.

"What?" she asked.

"The hook, the hook," he repeated calmly, but with emphasis. The First Mate, looking between the Skipper's legs, rifled around in the anchor locker, and ultimately came up with "This hook?"

"Yes, yes!" he replied with renewed enthusiasm, "The chain, the chain!"

With some fumbling in the darkness by the First Mate trying to decide exactly where she should put the hook, (though she later reported that by then she had a pretty good idea that the best place for it had something to do with the Skipper's anatomy) the chain was stopped, its then seemingly several

hundred pounds retrieved, the boat saved - and the Skipper extricated.

Once the boat was re-anchored, though bruised and bloodied, the Skipper quietly, if not sheepishly, went below not to be heard from again until morning. The basic laws of physics being what they are, he decided that repeating the above scenario should never again be in his repertoire.

The calamity of the whole ordeal was not lost on us. We arose the next morning with renewed dedication to plug the leaks in our communication between the helm and the and the anchor locker and pay closer attention to our depth.

Reality Check -

I should have had Nora watching and calling out the depth to me if it changed drastically from what it was when we started our anchoring procedure. We had simply gotten too relaxed in this regard.

Under normal circumstances I don't have to worry about such issues because we test the depth of an entire area before anchoring. I know the depth and if I lose the chain it will be a non-issue because I am aware of when the anchor will hit bottom if I don't catch it. In this instance I thought I knew the depth to be only twenty-five feet and was not concerned, which is likely why I let the chain get away from me. But, uncharacteristically, we had moved a few hundred feet in a straight line without checking the new footprint of the entire area before dropping the hook again.

Not having a system to prevent the chain from jumping the sprocket or a brake other than on the sprocket itself is, of course, not a good idea. But I suspect that many Skippers simply get comfortable with what they have, just as I had. In other words, our calamity on this night was not that we didn't have the best designed system - it was human (read "Skipper") error. We had not scanned the entire area, had

gotten too complacent in not keeping a more constant eye on our depth as the anchor went down, and I didn't react as quickly as I should have when the chain jumped the sprocket. For whatever reason, on this night I also did not have the brake handle in the windlass sprocket where it should have been. When Nora came forward she should have been able to simply grab it and tighten the brake rather than fumble around in the anchor locker trying to find the hook to put on the chain. Even better, though I had to hold the chain with both hands, I could have simply set the brake with my foot. We have since never had a problem, simply because we have remained more diligent." [End quotation -](#)

### ***Comments by Pat***

When we changed our plans and stayed in Mexico rather than continue through Central America, the Panama Canal, Caribbean and East Coast, we modified our anchoring system to fit the needs of Mexico. Our anchors were similar to Phil's, but our primary rode had 125 feet of chain and 250 feet of line. The secondary anchor was larger, around 60 lbs, with about 30 feet of chain and 300 feet of line. Our third anchor was a lighter weight (but large) Fortress, and most of the time it lived in a locker. We used it as our stern anchor when we needed one, because it was very light for its size and holding power, and was not hard to either deploy or retrieve in the dinghy if need be.

We typically anchored in +/- 25-foot depths, so we used the chain and sometimes a little of the line. Whenever we deployed line we *always made sure it was protected from chafe*. On one occasion in the Sea of Cortez, we rigged the secondary anchor as a kellet to give the primary anchor better holding on a normal scope. We were having sustained strong blows for a few days, alternating from the north and the south, so we hunkered down in Puerto Ballandra, a

small cove across from Loreto, to wait out the winds and steep waves. Reading a guidebook for the cove, it warned about the steep sided walls of the canyon running through the anchorage and that in strong north or south winds, boats have been known to drag when anchored near this steep gradient. So here we were, hiding from alternating “northers” and “southers” with another boat, in a relatively tight anchorage with steep sides and little room to swing.

With the kellet deployed we did great for a four-day stay, while the other guy gave up and had to cross the channel and make for Puerto Escondito in less than perfect conditions. It was a pain to have to pull up and shift locations within the cove when the winds changed directions, but it was a whole lot better than spending the better part of a day beam-on or rear quarter to big, square white-capped waves, just to go to another anchorage with questionable holding. The point here is this: The ONLY reason you have an anchor is to keep you stopped. Make sure your equipment and system will more than do the job, and that you can deploy it effectively and efficiently, especially in the worst of conditions.

Mark your rode at 20-or 25-foot intervals. If you have line, you can get preprinted markers that you can attach. If you are using chain, use paint. Devise a system like one red stripe for each 20 or 25 feet, and a white stripe each 100 feet. Don't get expensive paint because at least once a year you are going to need to repaint it. Now comes the important part: Write down your code and have it taped onto the nav station someplace and write it where it is visible in the anchor locker or on the bottom of the hatch cover so it is visible when the hatch is open. This way if somebody besides you is deploying the anchor (or if you forget it) the code for the markings is visible.

OK, now you are anchored, and it is set. The next thing we suggest you do is take a couple of readings on the surroundings. Take your bearings on landmarks so you can check later to make sure you are



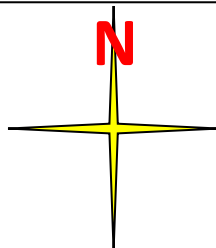
not dragging the anchor. Now comes the important reading, the **"OH S\_T-BEARING"**! Take your exit heading, and write it down at the helm along with any other pertinent information, like where there might be rocks, a sand bar, or other boats anchored. This is the heading you will take in the middle of the night, or storm, or fog, or rain, when in the midst of everything "hitting the fan" and going wrong, and you say, **"WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, NOW!"** Remember, it may be "0" visibility and things will be hectic, the boat will have shifted around with the wind or tide, and adrenalin will be pumping, and you may not be fully awake and thinking clearly. When it is your turn to have this happen, you will be very happy to have this heading written down and it will make you look like a real pro as you calmly maneuver out of the anchorage.

There are some important reasons why you need to practice your anchoring skills. You will undoubtedly be visiting some places where conditions are less than optimal. Each will present its own challenges for getting your anchor set. In some of these places it will be equally hard to get your anchor back on board as well. We once pulled up a lobster trap made of rebar along with our anchor; unfortunately, it was very old, very empty, and very hard to get off the anchor. You'll need a wider variety of anchoring skills than you ever thought necessary, so be sure to practice.

Earlier, Phil said to save the testosterone and use a windlass. We have to cut him some slack here because his back is not in good shape. For those of you who don't have that excuse and who may be used to doing some kind of working out, hauling up the anchor will give you some good exercise that the cruising lifestyle can be a bit short on. Do it! It will help you feel good, and, after fellow cruisers find out that your windlass is not broken, they may start telling you they wish they could do it, too!

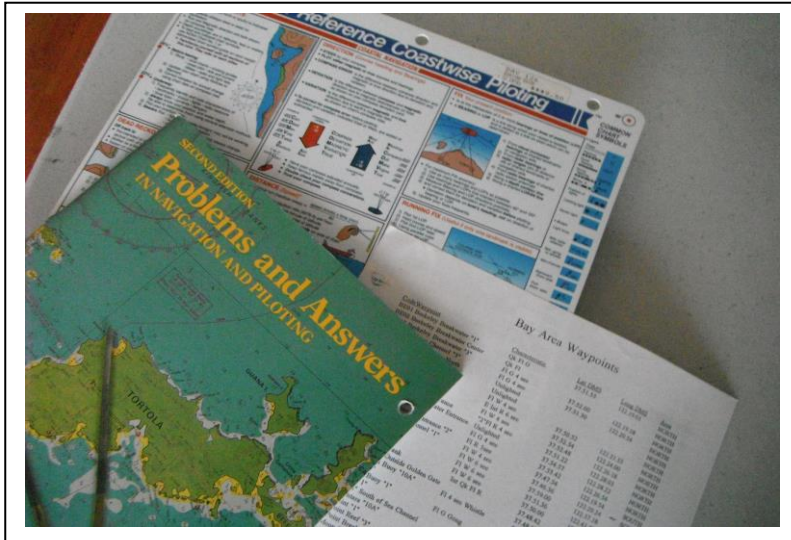
One last thing, - let's say you have been anchored for a week or more, at a "nutrient-rich" spot. The day before you are going to pull your anchor, let out an additional amount about equal to the depth of where you are. The swinging of the boat will drag your chain around on the bottom and clean it up pretty well, and you won't have near the mess on your hands, on deck, or in the anchor locker. This doesn't work as well where there is a muddy bottom.

Oh, one more "last thing". Some anchorages will develop a "Fly-zone" better described as a "No-anchor-zone". This tends to happen when bait-fish school-up and the birds find them. Here's a picture I took of Phil and his boat one day in "Z-town". It gives a bit more prospective of why you do not want to anchor in an area like this, unless you like cleaning your boat.



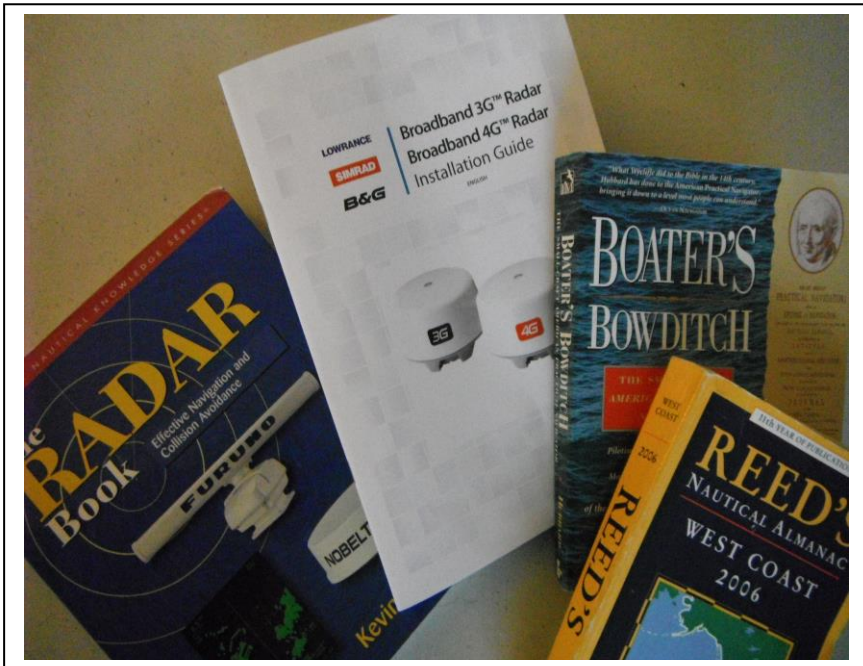
## Navigation

The subject of navigation covers a lot of areas: hardware and software, the art of figuring out where you are and where you are



going, plotting, communicating this information, and piloting your boat where you want it to go. There are whole courses and lots of books on this subject. You must be proficient at basic navigation before you head out or you'll likely end up as a statistic, or, if you are lucky, you will just have a terrible, long, worrisome, maybe scary, time going down the coast. Notice that we said proficient, not expert. We suggest your minimum preparation would be to take a couple of navigation courses including coastal navigation, and read and understand a book on using radar and on GPS plotting. Practice sailing at night and in areas where there are currents, boat traffic and tides you are not familiar with. If you do these things, and add a little racing, either on your boat or as crew with someone else, you should master a level of proficiency required to go.

Phil and Pat include their individual thoughts below, not because they are out of the ordinary of what you will hear from other cruisers, but because they are ordinary. These are the situations you will encounter, the places you are going, the decisions you will be making, and the great times you will be sharing. There is no substitute for being prepared in this category. Don't take our ideas here as the only way to do things. Consider these ideas, but also talk to lots of sailors who have "been out there" and get their ideas too. One of the great values of going to boat shows is that you can get a huge amount of information in a short period of time by hitting specialized seminars and various vendor's booths. Then, based on what kind of sailing you intend to do, your budget, your



comfort level regarding the "bells and whistles" of various electronic components, and your judgment as to who was giving you the most accurate information, you are ready to spend the "boat bucks."

***Comments by Phil***

In the dark of night, in the fog, even in broad daylight, a prudent skipper will want to know – at all times – exactly what space on the surface of the globe he occupies.

The old school “sextant” approach to navigation worked well during its day but technology has, as they say, moved on. The magic of small electronic boxes that now reach into space to read things floating around out there has relegated sextants to use by die-hard sailors.

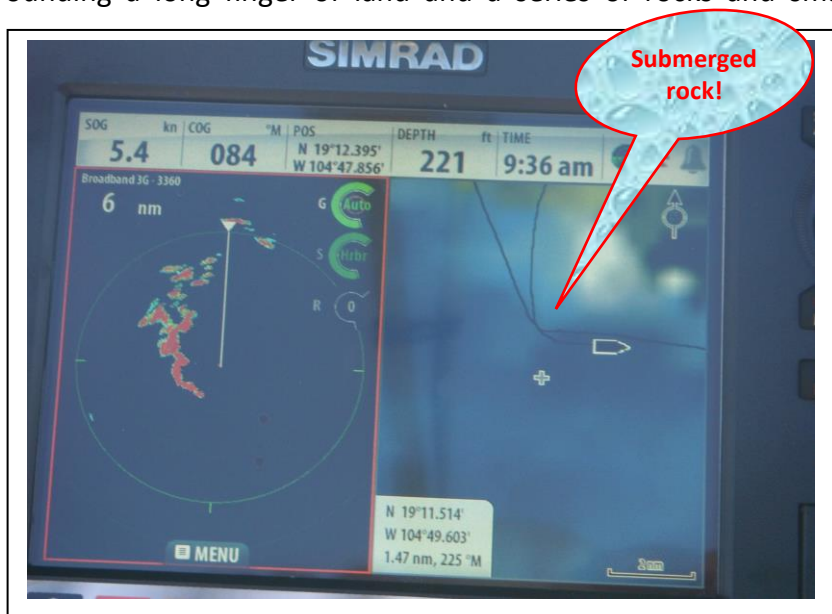
That is especially true when one of those magic boxes will not only tell you, within a gnat’s eyebrow, exactly where you are but also how fast you’re going, both through the water and over ground; it will give your compass heading, where you’re going and how soon you’ll get there; it will tell where you’ve been, and whether your boat is being set off your desired course. It will store routes you’ve plotted and lay and store a continuous track of your trip. If tied to your autopilot, it will actually steer the boat for you. If you’ve also tied it to radar, it will tell you if you’re going to run into anything, or anything is going to run into you. In short, given today’s technology every modern cruising boat ought to have a functioning chartplotter on board. It should also have at least one or two GPS backups, one of which should be a handheld that should be battery powered in case your electrical system fails or, worse, to take with you if you have to leave the boat. Lots of spare batteries should be kept with the handheld. It’s also a good idea to have at least one handheld backup to your ship’s compass. Although many skippers today may think of paper charts as old school, they can serve as a final backup that needs no electricity at all. They also tend to give you a quick total picture of your route without the need to be able to zoom in or out.

Radar is another “must have” navigational tool. There is fog even in Mexico, but equally important, small islands, and rocks; even small unlit fishing boats tend to become invisible on moonless nights in Mexican waters. We’ve even seen small boats with running lights that were reversed so you couldn’t tell for sure which way they were going. We also knew of a boat in the Pacific on a moonless night years ago without functioning radar that was on a direct collision path with an island. The skipper later reported that he was less than a mile from the island and would have hit it if a buddy boat sailing behind him hadn’t seen the island on radar and radioed to warn him. Radar can also warn you of approaching squalls, and the new systems can be overlaid onto your chartplotter to give you a total picture on one screen.

Our approach to navigating is to first plot the waypoints for an entire course on electronic charts on a computer, noting the latitude and longitude of each waypoint and the compass heading and distance between them in a journal. This can be done either on or off the boat. The journal entries can then be used to plot the waypoints on your boat’s chartplotter. We compare our paper charts to our electronic charts in this process to look for deviations between the two. To save energy we rely only on the chartplotter and do not keep the computer on under way unless things begin to look dicey. We also do not take the time to plot routes on our paper charts knowing that we could easily and quickly do so from our journal entries if the need arose. We do, however, keep the applicable paper chart open on our chart table under way to give us a quick overview of our entire route.

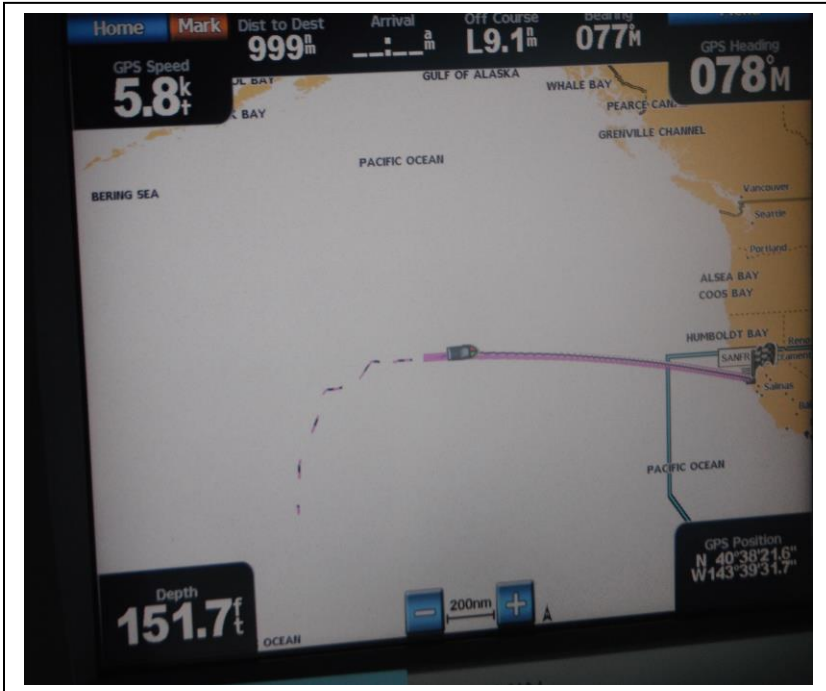


Two other things we do that we consider essential are keep our ship's log current under way and lay a track on our chartplotter as we progress through an entire route. The track will tell you if the boat is deviating from your plotted course, and saving the track allows you to know exactly where the boat has been at all times, which is useful for backtracking – either the entire route for a return trip or to make an emergency exit from a dark bay in the middle of a moonless or fog-bound night. Here are the radar and GPS views heading back to Barra de Navidad from Tenacatita after rounding a long finger of land and a series of rocks and small



islands. A short distance off the last visible rock is a submerged, but *serious* last rock that you do not want to hit. Placing the necessary waypoint into your GPS will ensure that whoever is at the helm will be aware of the point, and the proper course around it. A quick glance lets you know if you are in trouble or not, and what direction to head if you are! You can see we rounded at the right spot both on the way out and on the way back in to Barra.

The screen shown below is the route Pat sailed in 2011 on *Capricorn Cat* coming around the Pacific High on the way back from Hawaii. The screen said they had 999 miles to go to reach the Golden Gate, and all they had to do was to follow the track. It took



almost another week following that line before the view of the Golden Gate (\*see the picture approaching the Golden Gate Bridge Pg 216) hove into view from behind Pt. Bonita.

The one time we had our chartplotter off and therefore weren't laying a track as we entered a bay to anchor, was a time when we needed to make a hasty exit in the middle of a night with near zero visibility. Fortunately, we were able to follow another boat out on radar, but it was a discomforting half-hour ride.

The ship's log will aid in dead reckoning if you lose your electronics. We like the entries to include the time, lat/lon position, course



heading, speed, distance run, engine hours, and weather and sea conditions including a barometer reading. This may seem cumbersome, but it gives a watch crew something to periodically help break the monotony of an uneventful watch. The approaches to navigation are probably as varied as the number of skippers out there doing it, but as with all things boating, it helps to have a system.

There is nothing magic about our approach but it does give us the comfort of multiple backups and has served us well. The important point is to devise a plan that works for you and stick to it religiously.

### ***Comments by Pat***

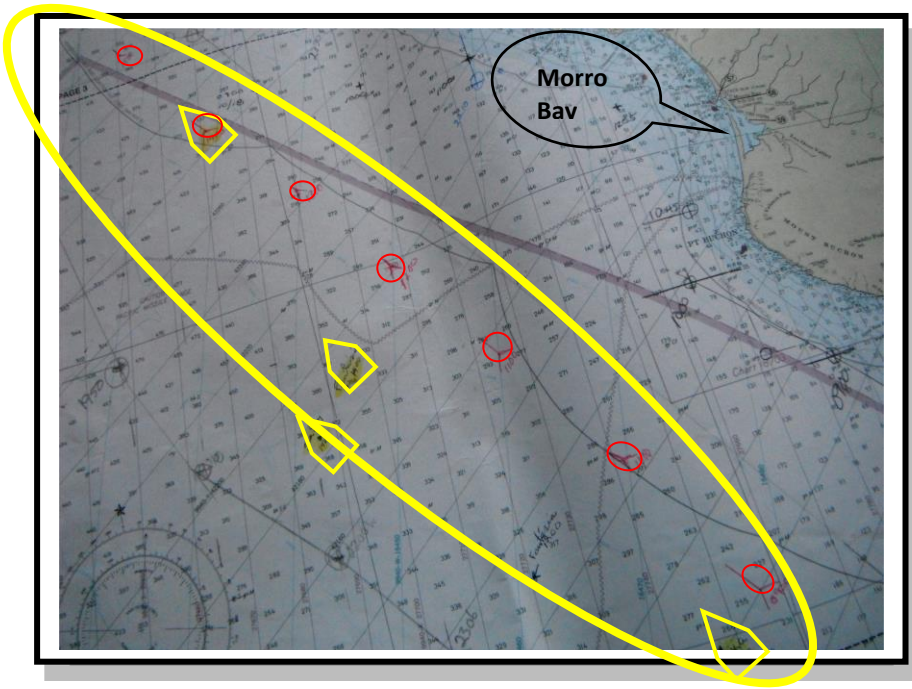
We learned first-hand the reasons why you should have paper charts and spare batteries on board the first night out of San Diego



on the 2006 Baja Ha Ha when we suddenly lost **ALL** power on *Espiritu*. Because we update our location on paper charts each hour, we knew exactly where we were, and it was easy to keep current for the next day and a half while we tacked back up-wind to Ensenada, Mexico to get things sorted out. There was no fog and

a good moon so the lack of radar was not a problem. Our trusty little Garmin 176c GPS was a fantastic backup working on batteries. With a handheld VHF radio and a BIG battery-powered spotlight, we were able to warn everybody – from other Ha Ha boats to a passing cruise ship – where we were. We could see them, but they could not see us unless we shined our light.

There are other very good reasons why paper charts will be great to have on board and use. This is a picture of our chart showing a



portion of the area south of Pt. Sur and north of Pt. Conception along the California coast. Morro Bay is in the top-right corner. It is a great place to stop either coming or going when rounding Pt. Conception. You can see our marks close-in and further out to Morro Bay from other trips along the coast, but the marks in red are those from our north-bound trip on May 15, 2008. The elapsed time of this portion of the trip was approximately seven hours. The

notations at 1400 hrs. are highlighted with yellow, and at a glance you can see our position (top left) on *Espiritu*, and also the positions of three other sailboats. Four of us, *Fantasia*, *Sea Story*, *Goalka* and ourselves were buddy-boating north from Santa Barbara where we had all been waiting for a weather window to round Pt. Conception.

Once we got around Pt. Conception the wind and sea conditions calmed down, and it was a smooth motorboat ride going north. Since we were all different sizes and types of sailboats, and had left Santa Barbara between 1800 hrs and 2100 hrs the day before, we were a bit spread out by this time. It is often a good idea to buddy-boat along stretches of open water or when rounding capes to ensure good communications, in case of a problem on board, and to have someone to talk to during night watches in case you get drowsy. If you don't have radar on board, buddy-boating with someone who does have radar may be very important, as Phil pointed out. They will see things you can't and will be able to call you on the VHF and keep you out of harm's way.

It was not until after the experience of losing complete power when heading down to Mexico that we added battery-powered running lights to our list of extra gear. Those extra running lights came in handy one night on our approach to Mazatlán.

As will happen at the bow of a boat that spends lots of time bashing into waves full of salt water, a connection on one of our running lights developed some corrosion. It was just bad enough to give us an occasional intermittent outage. For the most part it would start up again when I went up to the bow and gave the light a whack or two. Most of the time, as you will find out, when you approach Mazatlán at night there can be a lot of shrimpers out doing their thing. We were sure happy to have a battery-powered running light to tape on to the bow that night. Even with it, things were a bit dicey because it was not a very bright light and could not be seen

very far off. Today I would want to have my backup running lights be bright LED lights rather than the regular dinghy lights that we had that night. I could tell by the actions of the other boats there was still some confusion when they could only see one running light, even when we were coming straight on to them, until we got pretty close. We could not talk with the shrimpers because we don't speak Spanish, but with what lights we had, including a spotlight to shine on our sails, and making obvious changes of direction so they could see we were trying to avoid them, it all worked out.

The configuration of our on-board electronics on Espiritu was done before we bought the boat in 2004, and we were very happy with the way they were set up by the original owner in 1995. Both the



GPS and the radar had been cockpit mounted at the wheel. We added the dual station VHF radio. I've crewed on several boats where these instruments were located inside at the nav station. That's not bad and might be the norm, but I like them better outside where they are readily available when you need to check

them in a hurry, or often, and you can stay at the wheel to change course if you need to. Most of the time, you have time. There are, however, those times in a narrow spot and there's traffic, or you are short-handed, or you are maneuvering to dodge a thunderhead or squall, or some other of a myriad of situations where you don't want to leave the helm – and you do want some updated information.

Look at our following two photos. The first photo is of Phil and Nora's nav station. Although their radar and other instruments are below, they could look in through a window from the cockpit and check them without having to run below.



The second picture (on the next page) is of a friend's new setup. It is a GPS/radar and all his readouts. It looks better than our setup, and most new configurations are this way, but, if the wrong

component goes haywire you can lose everything all at once. Have some backup systems!

Talk to people who have been out cruising and sailing, and ask them why and where they have their instruments set up the way they do. Take it a step further and go sailing with folks who have things in



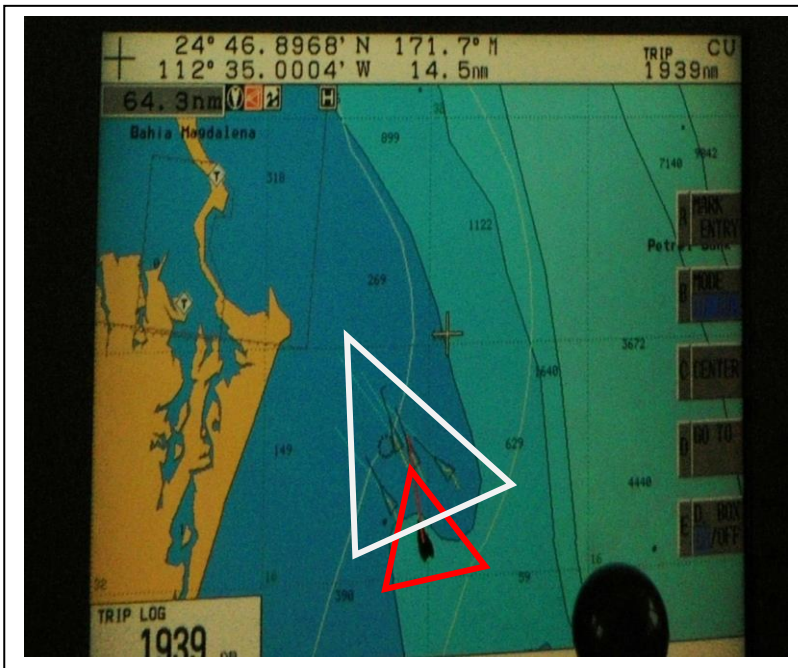
different configurations and see which you like the best; then set up your electronics that way if you can.

One more thing we need to touch on is AIS. These automatic identification systems have been around for a while, but within the last several years are becoming more common on cruising boats. We have friends who have the entire two-way system, some friends who have the read-only system, and lots of friends who have purchased new radar/GPS systems and not added AIS as part of the overall new electronics package. It is expensive, but the



prices are coming down as the technology becomes more common. Chris and Robyn, who have the Island Packet 35 *Robyn's Nest*, did the '06 Baja Ha Ha and then completed their West Coast voyaging by spending a few years doing the Pacific Northwest and the inland Passage to Alaska before sailing back to San Francisco; they love their AIS system.

We had a read-only AIS on the 53' Selene trawler *Watermark* that we helped take south to La Paz in late November of 2011. It



certainly was helpful in keeping track of the other boats also doing the *FUBAR*, a powerboat rally to Mexico.

Above is a shot of the AIS screen as we were approaching Bahia Santa Maria on the outside of the Baja. We (within the red triangle) were going south into building seas and wind and could tell at a glance that the four boats around us (within the white triangle)

were changing course and were no longer continuing south on the previous heading, but instead were heading to Bahia Santa Maria. As we continued on we watched them look at the anchorage and decide not to stay there. They Instead went around to the protected anchorage at Man-O-War Cove in Magdalena Bay. In the this display, our boat is depicted as a solid black hull with the red line showing its course; the three boats around us are the outlines with the white lines showing their courses.

When Wayne upgraded all the electronics on *Capricorn Cat* prior to the Hawaii trip, he chose not to include AIS; we didn't miss it on the crossing, but there were a couple times we would have used it and would have been able to hail a passing ship by name rather than by latitude and longitude. It is a nice thing to have, but like everything else related to sailing, it's a trade-off, a compromise. Our friend, Chris of *Robyn's Nest*, says it is indispensable in any congested, foggy, busy, area like the inside passage to Alaska or the approaches to harbors coming down the coast. We certainly didn't have those conditions coming back from Hawaii.

If we had to make a choice between radar and GPS for cruising, we'd get radar, especially since most new VHF radios have a GPS component included. In fact, Carole and I were faced with that choice when we bought *Encore*. I'm surprised at the hesitation I had in making the choice, putting my words into action (or rather, putting my money where my mouth is). It took me longer than I thought it would to pay the money to get the new radar. Carole had *lots* of good, practical input, too. When we bought *Espirtitu* the boat already had radar, GPS, autopilot, wind instruments, gen-set, and an SSB with Pactor modem. *Encore*, our "new to us" 1981 Cheoy Lee sloop, is a good, basic, sailboat. She has a "not too old" GPS unit with depth-sounder/fish finder included, and an older vhf radio. There was no radar, and no wind instruments, and no reliable GPS.



### ***What We Did***

We've purchased a brand new G-3 radar/GPS/sonar chartplotter to install on *Encore*. It was not inexpensive. And just like you who are reading this, it was not easy for us to shell out the "boat units." However, if you don't do it you may wish you had.

### ***Why We Did It***

We remember several occasions out cruising when we mentioned radar was most important to our feeling of safety and comfort. Phil, Nora, Carole and I preach at our seminars: "Get a good radar, learn to use it, rely on it." If our advice is worth anything, then we better take it ourselves. The only reason we were hesitating was because of the cost. When getting electronics we believe you should not buy something that is already obsolete; you should buy the best product the situation calls for. We bought the boat so we can continue our Mexican coastal cruising for a while longer, and it's an older boat; we are not getting ready for the 'Puddle-Jump' in an expensive and extensively equipped boat.

What we bought is a new generation broadband 3G, 16-mile radar, and coupled it to a 7" color multifunctional display unit that can give side-by-side or overlay display, show us the bottom, go to instant-on from standby, and have low power consumption. The broadband radar is also people friendly in that it is not dangerous for people to be near it while it is operating like the older units are. Also, if we ever feel the need, with a special adapter, this radar will also show close-in/close-up targets on one display at the same time that it displays distant targets, and it can have AIS added by plugging in another adapter, too. (Isn't it great how owning boats allows you so many great ways to spend money by planning

ahead?) But, all kidding aside, radar is important – for safety, for peace of mind, and just for ease of cruising.

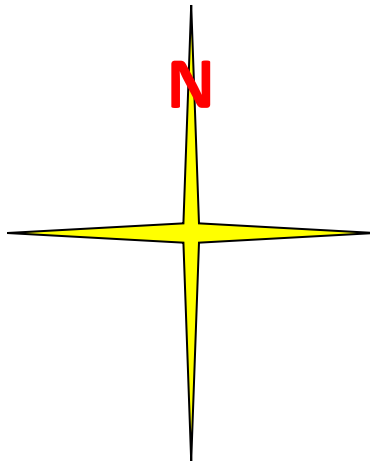
One last thing, go back and read Phil's comments about plotting your waypoints before you take off. That is very important! Often there is some kind of headland you will be rounding out ahead of your present position. Very often it will be soon after you have left a bay or harbor as you head north or south along the coast. You, as the skipper, need to make sure all of your crew who will be coming on watch know where the waypoints are for beginning planned course changes. This is crucial! By showing the crew where your waypoints are on a paper chart and explaining why you chose these waypoints, you vastly reduce the risk of something going wrong due to either a misunderstanding or to some equipment failure. The cruising guides all do a pretty good job of including waypoints for everything from obstacles along the way to entrances for small anchorages. It is up to you to do your homework and make sure these rocks, shoals, breakers and waypoints are noted where the on-duty crew can refresh memories in an instant with a quick glance. Sometimes we've used post-it-notes or circled a spot on the chart; whichever we've used, we include the latitude/longitude as a quick reference, and sometimes also jot it down in the log as well.

As you can tell, we are not "paperless." Also, based on our experiences and those of our many cruising friends, your enjoyment out cruising will reflect your navigating skills and abilities. Get the most out of your cruising time; be ready!

The tools of navigation are rapidly evolving. Every year new "must-haves" come along that were not dreamed of a few years ago. But, these items can be very expensive. Our advice is to get what you need in order to be safe, and comfortable. Don't get the things you will not need for where you are going cruising. When we first took

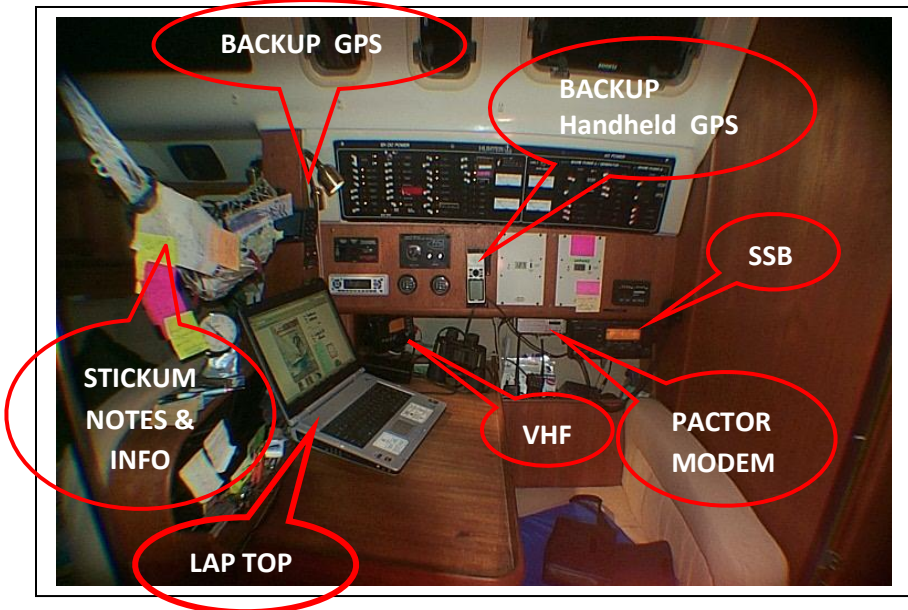
off cruising AIS was not even an option. Now there are experienced cruisers who say they wouldn't go without it. With the add-ons available through sources like Active-Captain and others, things like AIS and interactive programs can bring both safety and enjoyment to your cruise. Just remember to take good care of your money tree in the back yard. And one other thing, stash a set of paper charts onboard, too!

Technology is expanding in this field. What was new last year may be surpassed by what's new this year, and within a couple of years who know what may be available. Do your shopping after you talk with current users, and see how various systems work, and compare that with what you need and how you will use it.



## ***Communications***

Normal concerns of cruisers include: How do we connect with other cruisers while we're out cruising? Will VHF and SSB (single side band) do the trick? Shall I get a SAT (satellite) phone? What about a cell phone? While we leave it up to you to answer some of these questions, we will present some scenarios that may be helpful in making such decisions. This shot shows an SSB radio with



the pactor modem used for email, and the VHF radio that is tied into the GPS for emergency broadcast of our location, if necessary.

Onboard radios certainly serve a safety function and everyone on the boat should know how to use the VHF and SSB. The VHF is for short range, mostly line of sight, and is used as well for the local nets while in port. When buddy-boating we often keep track of each other via the VHF radio, making sure to use the hailing channel, Ch 16, to call another boat, and then switch to an open working channel to carry on our conversation. Don't expect this to

be a private conversation, however, as people have been known to “lurk” (listen in); they just heard you say that you’re going to channel 23, for example, and there may be a temptation to follow you there.

The towns where there is a large gathering of cruisers often operate a local net to share information and just keep in touch. In La Paz, Mazatlán, Banderas Bay, Tenacatita and Barra, for example, there are daily morning nets. When you arrive, just get on the radio and ask for local information about the time of the net. You can check in with your boat name and names of people onboard and begin the adventure of meeting new people while out cruising. Maybe you’ll find out about the beach bocce ball played in the afternoons or a dinghy raft-up for snacks and libations. The “nets” are controlled by a “net controller” who guides the process so no two boats are attempting to speak at once. The controller will also proceed with a list of categories, such as medical or other emergencies, tides, weather, new arrivals, departures, local information and swaps and trades. Often during the check-ins you will find that some cruising friends are among the new arrivals so it’s reunion time.

For long-range communications, including receiving weather faxes and sending emails, the SSB comes in handy. There are daily SSB nets in Mexico that also cover weather information and the comings and goings of cruisers; because they can be heard over long distances, depending on the time of day and the radio frequency, we have heard vessels on Easter Island and other distant ports. Part of the check-in information on SSB nets is giving your boat name, current location in latitude and longitude, with wind and weather conditions as well. The net controller keeps a log of this info as well as the names of persons aboard; when and if an emergency arises, the last location is known. Because of the nature of this long-range communication, it is often possible to

contact other boats that are not in the immediate area; sometimes a relay is used between two boats.

The three SSB nets in Mexico are the Southbound Net, the Bluewater Net and the Amigo Net, broadcasting daily at various times depending on your location and the time of the year. For up-to-date info, we suggest that you download an article by Gordon West that appeared in the October, 2012 issue of "Latitude 38" ([www.latitude38.com](http://www.latitude38.com)) called "*Idiot's Guide to Marine SSB.*" Within the article is also a chart with the times and frequencies of the various nets; if you need frequencies for locations besides Mexico, check out the Dockside Radio website at [www.docksideradio.com](http://www.docksideradio.com).

The Gordon West article provides a wealth of information, more than we can include for you here. He speaks to the issues of licensing, use of the SSB radio and the benefits of a modem which will let you send brief, text-only emails. There were many times, especially during passages, when it was so much fun to pull up emails from family at home or from cruisers in far-off locations and to send them news of our adventures. The world is very small when you can receive news even out on the water. The West article also addresses the Ham nets and licensing and the possible benefits to you.

Although neither of the couples who are contributing to this book had a SAT phone, we have had experiences with their use compared to an SSB for long-range communication. At this point we tend to still like the SSB because it is open communications and lots of folks can hear you

***Comments by Phil***

Among the boats who once bashed up the Baja with us was *Starplath*, a Nordhaven 40 that carried a SAT phone but no SSB. The boats, five in number, were tightly grouped as we snuck out from behind a fog-bound Isla Cedros before dawn to speed north on the first morning of a tight weather window. The chatter among us was frequent via VHF during much of the first day, but *Starplath*, slower than the rest of us, gradually fell out of VHF range. Anticipating that the boats would eventually spread out, we had agreed to our own informal “northbound SSB net” on a regular schedule to maintain contact after we lost VHF range but, without an SSB, this didn’t help us with *Starplath*. We tried to maintain contact with them by asking via SSB nets that any other boats then transiting the Baja try to reach them by VHF and relay their progress to us by SSB. Unhappily, this effort was unsuccessful. No other boat was ever able to make contact with them during the several days it took us to reach San Diego, and we and the other boats with us worried about them the entire time. *Starplath* told us later that, despite having a SAT phone, they would not leave home again without an SSB.

The optimum, of course, would be to go with both a SAT phone and an SSB, but that begs the question of expense. SAT phones remain somewhat expensive to purchase and operate but can give Internet access and the added safety of communication from a liferaft if you ever need to abandon ship. But, as with *Starplath*, they are limited to talking only with other SAT phones or cell phones, the latter most often being out of range at sea. SSBs are older but still serviceable technology and, with a Pactor modem, also offer email and weather gathering capability.

Either way, the ability to receive realtime reports of conditions from boats hundreds of miles up the road can be invaluable when

making timing and routing decisions. It can also add a level of comfort to know where other boats are in case of trouble.

### ***Comments by Pat***

*Espiritu* had a fiberglass whip antenna rather than a back-stay. If you have a whip antenna, bring a can of white spray paint along, because after a while the coating wears off and anytime you touch it you will start to have fiberglass stickers in you, on you, and on your clothes. Naturally a whip will be close to your dinghy at the stern, or to a cleat, or the shore power connection. These should all be surmountable problems.

Make sure your ground installation is done correctly; don't cut corners here, or you won't be happy with your transmission and receiving. Also be sure your SSB is on its own circuit; it uses a lot of power when transmitting. Watch out for malfunctions of your auto pilot when transmitting with your SSB; this could be caused by the placement of your systems and can often be remedied with a little work and experimentation. If you are using the SSB while you are charging batteries, you will probably put out more noise than your voice will overcome, and somebody will bring it to your attention, especially if you are talking on the net at the time.

We suggest you get expert opinions regarding the new types of phones available for off shore use, the pros and cons of the different types, and how they will perform where you will be sailing and with the specific use you will expecting to use them in. Should you rent or buy? Check it out!



**NOTES:** 1) The following information is now dated, but is included to remind you to check and update all your communication information before you head out. Make sure your handheld VHF radios are up to date with international channels for Mexican waters.

2) Also per 'Electronic Latitude March 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 edition, NOAA conducted hearings regarding the continued use of paper charts. Check their website as to inputting your thoughts or on the status of paper charts vs electronic charts. If you have any "raves or gripes" regarding this topic, Latitude 38 would like to hear from you.

***SPECIAL NOTE:*** *The following information was printed in the July 31, 2013 edition of 'Electronic Latitude. It is included here by permission. We urge you to ensure your onboard communications reflect this, as well as any other update information.*

**Distress Frequency Change for U. S. C. G.**

**July 31, 2013 – Pacific Coast of North America**

Offshore sailors make note: Effective Wednesday, August 1, the US Coast Guard will no longer monitor voice frequency 2182 kHz for International distress and safety. They will also drop 2670 kHz for marine information and weather broadcasts, and they will discontinue monitoring the International Digital Selective Calling (DSC) distress frequency 2187.5 kHz .

"This termination decision was made after a review of Coast Guard medium frequency (MF) communications sites revealed significant antenna and infrastructure support degradation that put the Coast Guard at risk of not being able to receive and respond to calls for assistance on the 2 MHz distress frequencies," said a Coast Guard spokesman.

Radio guru Gordon West responded, "This is actually a good call. Atmospheric noise on 2 MHz causes even the best of radio systems to not hear much beyond 30 miles ground wave, and 30 miles to shore is the typical maximum range of the Coast Guard's excellent Rescue 21 VHF channel 16 coverage. "U.S. Coast Guard Communication Stations (COMMSTA) and Communications Area

Master Stations (CAMS) will *continue* their guard of the following High Frequency safety frequencies:

VOICE	DSC
4125.0 kHz	4207.5 kHz
6215.0 kHz	6312.0 kHz
8291.0 kHz	8414.5 kHz
12290.0 kHz	12577.0 kHz
	16804.5 kHz

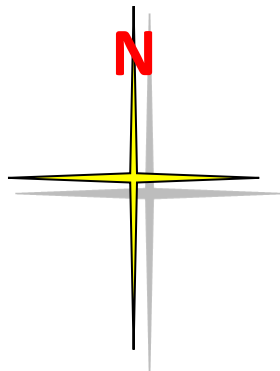
"VHF Channel 16, 156.800 MHz, will CONTINUE to offer the Coast Guard's Rescue 21 fabulous coverage throughout boating areas of the United States from Coast Guard units, on land, at sea, and in the air. VHF Channel 70 will CONTINUE to be the DSC call up channel to the Coast Guard." Only Medium Frequency 2 MHz, here in the U.S., is being dropped by the Coast Guard for a continuous radio listening watch.

"Internationally, 2182 kHz remains the International distress and calling channel. It will still be an on scene distress working channel, and will continue to be an authorized calling channel," writes Gordon.

Should you want more information, the entire SAR list here:

<http://www.pacificpuddlejump.com/pdf/PacSAR.pdf>

- latitude / andy



## ***Safety Issues***

Some common sense, safe sailing practices should always be kept in mind. While those below are not earth-shaking in nature, they are time tested, and will help you have more fun and fewer accidents while cruising.

When you are headed below, go down facing the ladder not facing the salon, and use both hands. Going down this way (especially in rough weather or a sea way) will better protect you from slipping and causing a serious injury to your back, or the back of your head.



And it makes it a lot easier to bring breakfast dishes up and down, too. Just as an aside, we ate most of our meals in the cockpit, enjoying the view of wherever we happened to be.

Some cruisers suggested adding an extra life line in rough conditions, and/or if short-handed where fatigue can set up a careless accident. When necessary, the temporary security of an extra rope life line at an elevated height can make working on deck

safer and less stressful. Tie it off using shrouds, fore and aft cleats, or other stout spots. Don't tie off to anything with "give," like another line or even jack-lines.

If you develop a leak at or near the waterline, raise the leak up by tacking, or heave-to so the damaged side of the boat is raised out of the water and has less water pressure against it while you make temporary repairs. If you are under power, shift as much weight as possible over to the opposite side from the leak. Depending on sea conditions, putting weight at the end of the boom and swinging it out can be very helpful in tipping the boat, similar to what you might do in trying to get off a sand bar.

Another good idea is to carry a two-part epoxy that will cure under water. Friends of ours hit a reef and holed their bow under the waterline heading into Ixtapa at night. They got on the radio and called into the marina for help. While they were stuffing everything they could find into the hole, trying to stem the tide, several other cruisers came out, one of whom had underwater epoxy. Before they made it into the marina he went down and patched the hole for them, which held until they could get the boat to a yard and have it hauled out. Our friends say there was no question they would have lost the boat had it not been for that epoxy.

When you are sailing in rough or foggy conditions, change your watch schedule around. If you have at least two people per watch, try rotating positions about every half hour. Without the luxury of a large crew, schedule some "overlap" times. Carole picked up this tip while doing a passage on the *Alaska Eagle* with Orange Coast College. This did a lot for keeping the crew alert, fresh, and avoiding careless mistakes.

When passing another boat and you intend to change course, make your course correction early and obvious. It will help the other

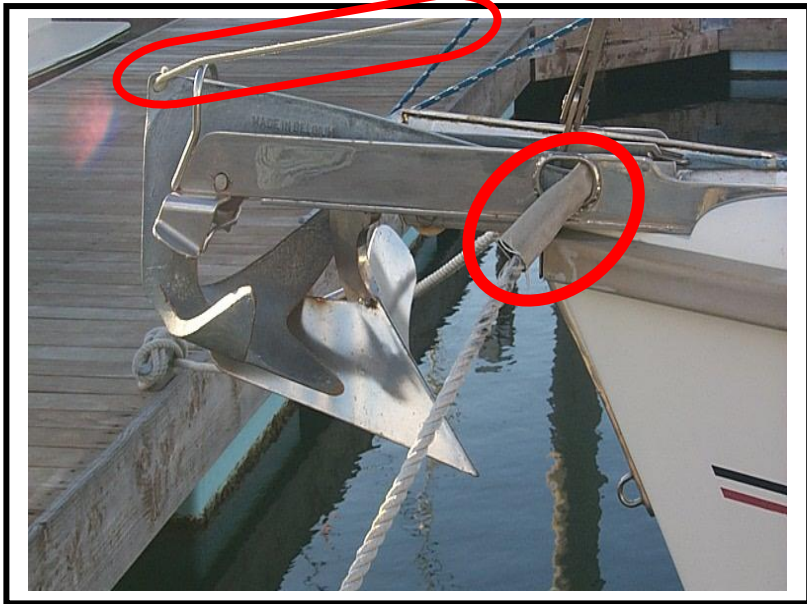
skipper if you make an exaggerated change of direction so there is no doubt of your intentions. After your intentions and new course are understood and reacted to by any other vessels, it will be only a short period of time before you can come back to your original course, if necessary, and safely continue on your way.

Keep yourself sharp whenever you are underway but especially when you are approaching a situation that will need direct attention and quick thinking. This might include entering an anchorage or a marina, or crossing the path of an oncoming vessel. If the other vessel is going much faster than you are, guard against letting yourself get caught by surprise as he approaches. On night passages we tend to walk around, do some exercises, stretch and generally keep ourselves focused. We also review the steps to be taken in changing course or taking evasive action, sometimes with other crew members. One night while Carole was on watch the autopilot quit unexpectedly; she got the boat turned to an approximate course by remembering that the moon was over the rear quarter, starboard side; fine tuning to compass headings took place after that. When something unexpected happens, you will have prepped yourself on what to do to save the day. Also, you will be alert and equal to the task. With any situation, think it through ahead of time, and when you are faced with the real thing and it's time for a decision, you'll probably make the right choice.

When anchoring, especially in a crowded spot, tie a line with a float on it to your anchor shank. In an emergency you might have to cut the anchor line (or let all your chain go) in order to leave. There are a few important things this will do for you. The float will serve as a mark so you can retrieve your ground tackle later on. The float will also mark your anchor so it will be less likely to be fouled by somebody else when they are anchoring. If your anchor becomes fouled on the bottom, you may be able to raise it easier by lifting it

up from the flukes. Please be sure to spend plenty of time reading our complete section on anchoring.

Always use good strong chafe protection. Do this not only in the marina, but also whenever you anchor using rope rode. It won't take very long for the rocking motion of your boat to saw through or weaken your anchor rode, especially if your boat is being moved around by strong wind and waves. Also, note the line from the top



of the anchor tying it in place. The line secures the anchor in place on the roller at the bow so it cannot accidentally come off the roller in a rough sea leaving an anchorage (or in 'The Bash') or any other accidental deployment. This line stayed on the anchor. In case I wanted to tie a retrieval-line to the head of the anchor. It was readily available so I didn't have to go looking for one if the situation dictated I needed one.

Remember, it is your anchor line that keeps your boat connected to your anchor, or your dock line that keeps your boat from hitting

other boats or docks in a marina. Protect it. We've used old fire hose for several years, but in an emergency we've used gloves or even fenders to get us through, temporarily. Also remember to use chafe protection on your running rigging wherever lines come in contact with each other on passages, and check them on a regular schedule.

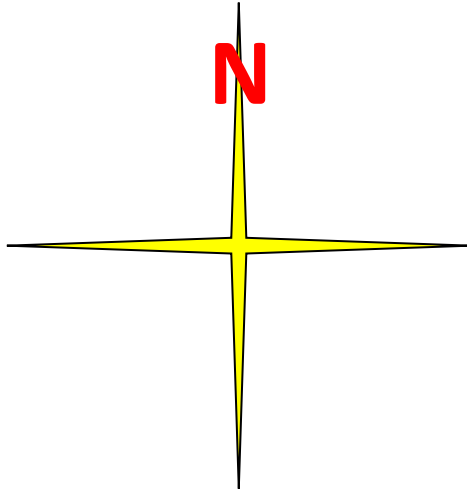
Every day, walk your deck and look over your standing rigging and



running rigging, but don't just look up. Be sure to look down at the deck; that's where you will find a screw, a nut, a cotter pin, or some other clue that something might be amiss. Do this as a regular chore, not on a hit-and-miss basis, and look at any spots where chafe is likely to occur.

Remember, it's not *if*, but *when* things happen while you are out on the water. Thinking things through and keeping a cool head will ensure you are ahead of the situations when they occur. The very first time the unexpected occurs, you will discover that you really

can handle the situation. At that point cruising becomes even more fun. As you continue, the added self-confidence you gain will help you relax and enjoy your cruising dream.





## ***Cruising With Kids***

While neither of us has actually cruised with our own kids, prior to going cruising we've done a lot of camping, RVing, and sailing with our kids and their friends. What follows here is taken from some of our experiences, but most importantly is what we have observed from many miles of buddy-boating with "kid-boats" and interviewing several boating families in preparation for this section of the book. You can update ideas on sailing with kids very easily by checking articles on the "Latitude 38" website. One article that comes to mind appeared in the July, 2012 issue in the "*Sightings*" section about a family with two kids aged four and seven who are out cruising the world. If you are thinking about going cruising with your kids but are not sure if it is the right thing for you – or them – you need to read what this Mom has to say.

### ***Comments by Phil***

We were sipping coffee as the Grand Poobah closed an early morning radio net for the Baja Ha Ha Ha cruising rally. Within seconds after he'd finished, a soft, young, yet clearly extroverted female voice filled our radio. We knew immediately who it was – nine-year-old Jacquelyn Day of the Pearson 38.5 *Daydreams*. She had taken command of the airwaves to announce that she was single handedly organizing a morning radio net for the kids among the Ha Ha Ha fleet. She planned to broadcast immediately after the adult net each morning. We weren't surprised.

We first met the Days – Joe, Melinda, Joseph Jr., and Jacquelyn – when they arrived on our dock in Alameda, California, to prepare *Daydreams* for the Ha Ha. We were in the process ourselves of making *Shiraz* ready for the trip south, so the obvious connection was immediate. We soon learned that Melinda had home schooled

Jacquelyn and Joseph from early ages and they had previously cruised as a family in Mexico for a year, so the whole home schooling thing didn't pose the concern for Melinda that other cruising parents must feel when facing the challenge for the first time.

Knowing that history and having bumped into the Days for a couple of years all over Mexico, made it clear that Joe and Melinda were managing to raise a couple of pretty phenomenal kids. Hence, they were automatically our "go to" experts on cruising with kids.

While cruising with kids may not be for everyone, the Days feel that sharing the experience together, and

bonding as a family, can enrich lives in ways like nothing else. Melinda adds that even the process of home schooling is eminently doable if parents remain dedicated, explaining that the real key is consistency. She warns against trying to make the boat like a classroom and didn't require homework of her kids, but the school day on *Daydreams* consistently started at 9:00 in the morning and continued until the day's work was done, usually well past noon on each of at least four days a week. The motivation that kept her kids



**These are the Days in their costumes going to the Ha Ha send-off Party in San Diego. Welcome to *GILLIGAN'S ISLAND* everybody!**

focused and moving forward was to plan “fun things” for the afternoons that the kids knew wouldn’t happen unless and until their school work was completed. “Fun things” might include getting together with other cruising kids, crafts, snorkeling, diving, beach volleyball, surfing or trips of “discovery” ashore. Such trips often punctuated the kid’s studies.

Geography could be learned by visiting volcanoes, ruins, jungle villages or cities. History could be found in museums or walking the streets. The bell shown above is at the location of the first of the California missions. The plaque commemorates the missions, started in Loreto in 1697 and finally culminating



in Sonoma, north of San Francisco, in 1823. Culture can be soaked up in local art, music, dress or by visiting local markets and interacting with street vendors of all stripes – jewelry makers, basket weavers, potters, bead smiths, leather workers – even cigar rollers.

Life aboard the boat was likewise instructive. Math could be honed by hands-on use of the boat's navigational equipment – a compass, GPS, electronic and/or paper charts – used to plot and follow



courses. Even the task of changing dollars to pesos can be a learning experience. The young Days also became capable of and

were expected to assist in driving the boat, standing watches, dealing with the anchor, helping with navigation, raising the sails, operating the boat's numerous systems, and using the SSB.

When not hosting a morning radio net or writing in her daily journal, Jacquelyn devoured the ship's library, replenishing it whenever cruisers' book exchanges were in sight. Gathering the cruising kids together for group classes can also be helpful. Cruisers will quickly learn that kids on boats develop internal radar to spot other people of sizes similar to their own on surrounding boats.

Below is a gathering of the kids on boats in Barra de Navidad serenading us with Christmas Carols; a little later *everybody* was singing, and a bit after that the musical instruments started showing up. It's hard to imagine this happening at home!



Nature will quickly take its course and a swarm will be a dinghy ride away. According to Joe and Melinda, other cruising adults, even some without kids on board, will also help with the schooling if they



have particular expertise that is needed. Although there are entire educational curriculums to be found online, Melinda speaks of times, for example, when she felt a little additional insight into

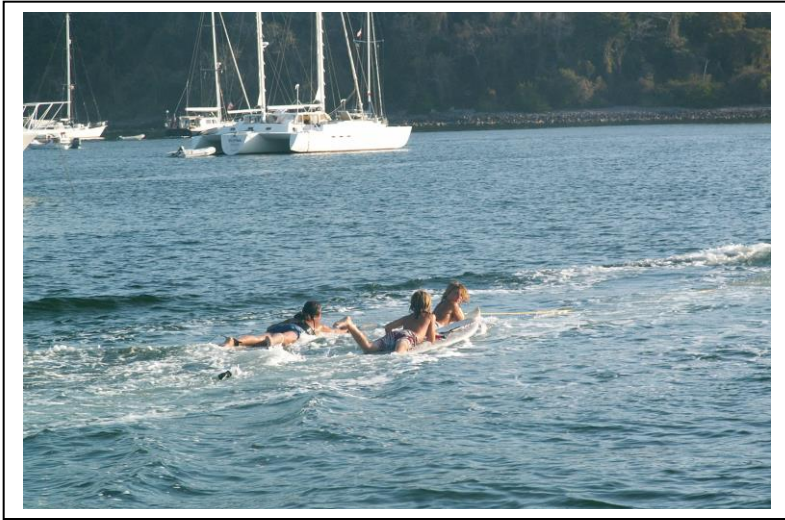


subjects like algebra II and chemistry was called for and other adults stepped up.

Local schools and/or their districts will likely have specific preplanning, coordination, testing and periodic contact requirements that will have to be agreed to and met. But, even then, cruising parents will typically have varying degrees of success with home schooling. In the case of the Days, Joseph and Jacquelyn were both able to return from their years on the boat to enroll in the grades for which they were age appropriate. Friends of theirs, on the other hand, had to repeat whole school years. Melinda estimates that the number of those who have to repeat years when returning home is about 50 percent but, in the same breath,

reaffirms that the factor most important to success is consistency, driven by will-power.

An added plus noted by Joe and Melinda was that kids on boats worked like magnets that brought all of them together with many more adults than they would otherwise have met in their travels – adults with whom they have maintained lasting relationships. More importantly, they believe, without equivocation, that their years of cruising were a positive, life-changing experience for their kids, both socially and educationally. As Melinda explains, their kids were exposed to and immersed, culturally and otherwise, in a whole new world to them. They can now interact comfortably with



virtually any adult, “sit still through rotating watches, plot a course, plane a dinghy, catch and clean fish, raise an anchor, understand and perform sail changes, identify many kinds of marine life, prepare meals in a galley, speak a little Spanish,” and in the case of at least one of them, host a morning radio net.

Kids on boats are, in other words, like sponges soaking up every new life experience within reach. Bottom line – Joe and Melinda’s advice to sailors with kids is, “Do it now!”

***Comments by Pat***

Phil has covered it pretty well, but there are still a couple of other items Carole and I would like to make sure you are aware of.

Every year on our wanderings with the cruising community in Mexico we seek out kid boats to see what's new with the kids and schooling. It never ceases to truly amaze us how kids out cruising tend to be very comfortable around adults, and in general are very well adjusted and happy with themselves. We have played bocce ball with kids on the beach; how many kids at home would be content to play something like that with a group of "seasoned cruisers," let alone have fun doing it!

Cruising kids have learned many skills they never would have if they had not gone cruising, and they have a self-confidence that comes with having developed these skills and put them into use. Lots of these kids stand watches, read and understand radar, become effective listeners and comprehend details and situations on the radio.

Stateside, parents tend to worry as kids start to go out, whether it's in groups to various day or evening school activities or social events. When they start driving, that worry accelerates. For cruising kids who begin socializing, it mostly happens in a very public arena.

We were almost laughing out loud sometimes as some of the guys and gals were setting up swimming, snorkeling, surfing, water-skiing or movie times. Remember, these "dates" were all made over the VHF radio – not exactly private! So as time approached and a dinghy drew near to a young lady's boat, everybody knew who was coming over and where they were heading. All of a sudden other cruisers were like an aunt or an uncle looking over



the scene, being a little protective of the kids as they were off. It was fun watching the kids as they had real fun with each other and with so many of the adults within the cruising community.

*S/V Fantasia*, with Jeff and Anne and their two young daughters,



Julie and Krista, was another kid boat. We harbor hopped off and on with them from November of 2006 to June of 2008, and we still keep in touch. It was not uncommon for Jeff to be teaching various levels of math to a group of kids all at the same time. It really caught our attention one time, because the kids were getting on the VHF and checking some problem solutions. He had them doing celestial navigation. Kids were taking sightings, working with tables and doing complex computations. Anne told us just a few years ago, that in California, school districts have well defined programs available to families for curriculum augmentation as well as complete home-school courses. There are also online schools with recognized programs from kindergarten to 12th grade, including certifications that are available, whether you are out cruising or

not. Check out the school districts in your area; by now they have even more programs available.

This photo shows Krista at about 13 years old making a cake for Carole's birthday. The party turned out to be five boats representing three different countries, with five kids aged from

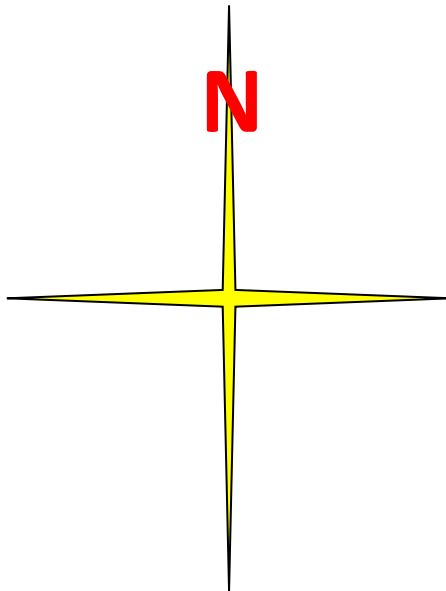


about 3 to 13. We were all “holed-up” in Turtle Bay waiting for a wind to blow itself out. Everybody, including the kids, had a great time. Julie, with her inquisitive mind and love of animals, was enthralled with investigating the wildlife, from iguanas to snakes, an appreciation no doubt fueled by her time cruising. She was the resident naturalist and brought life to any group she was with.

Before the end of 2012, both Joe Jr. of *Daydreams*, and Krista had completed all their requirements, and had received their USCG Captain's Licenses. Krista taught sailing, has crewed on South Pacific deliveries, done coastal deliveries, and since 2015 has been signed to a position on a tall-ship for educational cruises based out

of the Netherlands. Joe has finished college and is doing deliveries and teaching sailing.

Judging by the families and kids we've seen, we think taking your kids cruising will give them an outlook on life that will help them in uncounted ways. Besides that, you will enjoy them – and they you – in a way that is virtually impossible while staying at home with all the distractions that continually bombard us.



## ***Cruising With Pets***

It is not uncommon to see pets of all shapes, sizes, and colors on cruising boats. People who have pets typically regard them as members of the family who often can't be left behind. We could have been counted among them had we owned a pet when we eased away from the dock. Thankfully, we didn't, because the decision to take pets is sometimes not an easy one, for a myriad of reasons. Not the least among them is that animals can't tell you how they feel and there's no reason to assume they are immune to seasickness. We humans can choose to bite that bullet but pets don't have the benefit of choice.

Dock neighbors of ours once owned two big dogs and a small catamaran they wanted to sail east, through the canal and the Caribbean to Florida. One of the dogs enjoyed the boat; the other hated it and refused to even climb aboard. He would instead lie on the dock beside the boat for hours until it was time to go home. The owners tried their best to wait until the dogs, both of which were advanced in age, were no longer with them, but the dogs didn't oblige and circumstances finally dictated that the owners couldn't wait any longer, raising the sometimes agonizing decision of whether to take the animals or perhaps forego the dream of cruising. The decision, of course, can depend on the particular animals involved, but pets can clearly survive on boats and will put up with virtually any conditions to be with their owners. In the case of a beloved pet considered part of the family, the question of whether to take them most often probably doesn't even arise. Even with such "family members," pets on boats raise issues that cruisers should consider. Asked about the do's and don'ts of cruising with pets, Barbara Miller of the Tayana 36, *Hurrah*, says the big "DON'T" is don't cruise with a dog; that "there is absolutely no plus in doing so – no matter how small, they still should be walked on shore three times a day, no matter how bad the weather or the

beach landings.” We knew of a boat with two Portuguese water dogs who dealt with that problem somewhat by training the dogs to jump from their boat, swim ashore, do their business and return to the swim step on their boat’s stern. Of course, that meant the owners then had two very large, wet dogs on their boat – three times a day. The owners didn’t seem to mind, but the disadvantage is obvious. Other downsides to that approach are that other cruisers and/or the locals might not enjoy the fact that the dogs are not leashed and there is no one to pick up after them when they are ashore.

There are lots of stories about what people have trained their dogs to do on boats, but it has been difficult to check the validity of some of them. As shown by the adjacent photo, dogs can fill out the crew, but we’re not sure if he has just tied this knot, as the owner



indicated, or if he's just doing the morning walk-around inspecting the rigging.

Another "boat-dog" we heard of was not properly trained to go to the bathroom on the boat, and simply refused to do so at all for more than 42 hours on a long passage – neither healthy nor humane for the dog. Those dogs that will bathroom on the boat will typically pick a certain spot which they'll continue to use, but this creates a cleanliness issue. Pee pads or grass-like door mats, available in virtually any pet store, can be one solution, especially when the pet is a still-trainable puppy.

Cats are, of course, easier to deal with than dogs on boats, as Barbara Miller indicates. They can be left alone easier and longer, and are more sure footed on boats than dogs. They won't bark incessantly when their owners leave them and their bathroom etiquette can be dealt with by a simple sandbox.

The heat of the tropics can also be problematic, especially for animals with long fur. We saw a large catamaran in Nicaragua that came north from Colombia with a Siberian husky puppy aboard that was not weathering the heat well and the owner apparently either did not want or think to shave it. Owners must also be ever mindful of the need to keep pets hydrated in such heat.

Regardless of whether boat pets are dogs or cats, owners need to take responsibility and care for them. Dogs should not, for example, be allowed to destroy the serenity of a quiet anchorage by barking at every passing dinghy. But a far more serious (spelled "inhumane") example of an utter lack of responsibility was a small terrier on a boat in a slip next to us at Puesta del Sol, Nicaragua. It had been left on its boat, purportedly in the care of friends, while the owner flew to Africa to work in construction. Of course, the caretaker friends soon found greener pastures and departed,

leaving the dog alone on the boat. The staff members at Puesta were kind enough to feed, walk and spend what limited time they could with the dog each day, but it was clearly suffering from loneliness. It had to be left locked inside the boat most of the time and cried so much at night that we had to change slips to be able to sleep. We left *Shiraz* to fly home for a couple of months, but found conditions for the terrier hadn't changed when we returned. We've never forgotten the little guy's cries or his sad face peeking from portholes in his boat's cabin.

The last time we checked, Mexico required health certificates from veterinarians with a record of the shots animals had received within 12 months, before allowing pets into the country. Barbara Miller reports no similar requirements in Colombia or the countries of Central America but it might make sense to either research the issue online or talk to the consulate of any country on your itinerary to be sure things haven't changed.

The Millers had three cats on *Hurrah* while they cruised Mexico and Central America for eight years, one of which they unfortunately lost at sea – a devastating event for them. Barbara's bottom line is that if they had it to do over again they would not take pets along, nor would they adopt them along the way. She explains that, "If you plan on doing inland travel it is almost impossible with pets." If you had a pet and wanted to take it along, even south of the border, many hotels don't allow them. She adds that the cost of flights for pets from foreign countries is also a major consideration. As Barbara points out, owners will have to accept it as a fact of life that having pets with them on a boat will impact virtually everything they do and likely limit their travels.

But that said, since returning to life on terra firma we of *Shiraz* have welcomed a Goldendoodle to our family that would, without question, be aboard if we were to cruise again.





**Coco, aboard Shiraz**

***Comments by Carole & Pat (non-pet owners)***

Although we are non-pet-owners, several of our boating buddies have been dog or cat families, and have gotten along fine on the high-seas, at anchor, and in marinas. From our perspective as non-pet owners who are observing rather than participating with pets, it appears that the ones who really enjoy the pets, and are used to doing all the things on land to get the most out of the pet and to make the pet's life happy, continue to do that while on a boat. The situations that have been less than ideal on land tended to go down-hill when out on the water. The folks who took very good care of their pets before they went sailing, gladly went out of their way to continue to take excellent care of the pet when out on the water.

The problem areas Phil has pointed out are the most common ones we have seen also. If you enjoy your pets, and enjoy the routines



of taking proper care of them and being with them and it upsets you to see them uncomfortable or in unhealthy conditions, you will probably do fine with them out cruising. You know the territory, and the demands and restrictions, and that's part of your life with pets. What you need to do is start talking with other pet owners on the dock to find people who have been out with pets like yours.

We have many boating friends who have sailed thousands of miles with dogs and cats and wouldn't do it any other way. Alan and Mac and their cat on *Effie* are the first ones who come to mind. John and



Mary on *Java* had had a German Shepherd and a cat on board at the same time, for several years. Thinking of John, reminds us of a story he told in the marina in Ixtapa. He was sitting in the salon of his boat one afternoon when he heard a splash. When you are living on a boat you *always* look around when you hear a splash, so he went out to the cockpit to look over the boats and dock to see what was up. It didn't take long and he saw ripples in the water next to the powerboat in the next slip.

When he looked closer he noticed the cat from the neighboring boat trying like mad to get back out of the water. He jumped onto

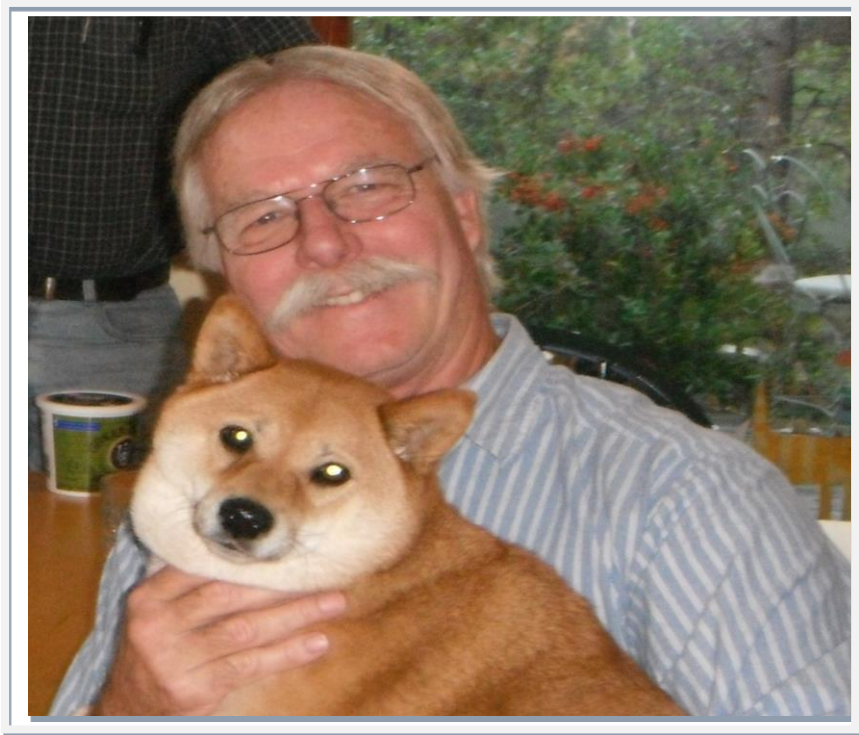
the dock and quickly reached down and grabbed the cat. Just as quick, or a split-second quicker, the cat turned his head and grabbed John's hand in the fleshy part between the thumb and his index finger and hung on! John said it took some persuading to get the cat to let go. Cat bites are bad news, and a bite mixed with salt water from a marina is *really bad*. Fortunately the Mexican Navy Hospital in Ixtapa is not very far from the marina, so John got quick, good attention. Even so, it was several months before all the infection was gone and he had the full use of his hand again. Even being a cat lover, he thought he might think twice before trying to rescue an overboard cat again. So, if you have to rescue a cat, or maybe even a small dog – DON'T USE YOUR HANDS - use a net!

The classic "pets onboard story" is from the sailboat *Wisp*. Ron (pictured on the next page) and Bette have been sailing Mexico and beyond for several years, with a dog and a cat aboard. They have sailed from central California to Mexico, Central America, through the Panama Canal, and up to Florida. At the end of the 2011 season, getting ready to leave their boat in La Paz, they were found by a little Mexican street dog, and yes, little *Chica* has been very successfully adopted into the family by the other pets. They've all done several successful road trips up and down the Baja's Route 1 because they asked around and found other pet owners who also drive Route 1, and found out which motels are pet friendly.

On the other end of the spectrum, we have been berthed near a boat where the owners left their two dogs on their boat in the old marina in Puerto Vallarta for a few days. The sight and smell of day's worth of dog droppings all over the topsides was a clear indication to us that evidently these people sure didn't care about their pets enough to either change their scheduled plans or provide for the pets' needs. It also suggested that they didn't care about the people around them either. In this instance, and with the

example Phil mentioned, plans might have been in place to care for the pets, but things go wrong sometimes.

So, when and if that happens and you have brought these pets along because they are like your kids, our suggestion is that you should be ready to make the necessary choices just as if they were your kids. Otherwise, leave them with grandma and grandpa.



Cruising with pets will bring with it a whole new set of demands and problems. Be sure you do your research *before you decide* to take your pet along. Check with all the countries you will be visiting to find out if it will be quarantined and if so, how long, and what all the costs will be. A boat leaving for the South Pacific decided to

find a new home for their cat in Zihuatanejo rather than deal with the quarantine rules of some of the ports they intended to visit.



We have met sailors with birds, iguanas, and all types of breeds of cats and dogs, so it certainly is not only possible, but people do it



all the time and have fun. Plan well and you, your pets and the other cruisers you meet will all have a good experience.

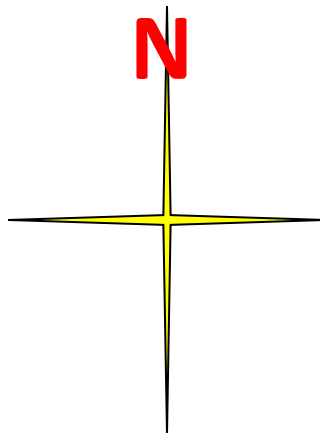
However, if you want to enjoy the native “pets”, just keep looking around your boat. There will be jumping/flying rays, frolicking dolphins, whale sharks and whales,

monkeys on shore, alligators swimming by and loads of life in the tide pools, for just a start. Don’t forget the endless sightings of sea

birds flying by, and you'll probably never get tired of watching the pelicans diving for fish or flying in formation over the tops of the



waves. And, you don't have to feed them, clean up after them, or find a pet-sitter for them when you leave the boat for a few days.



## ***Enjoying Mexico While You Cruise***

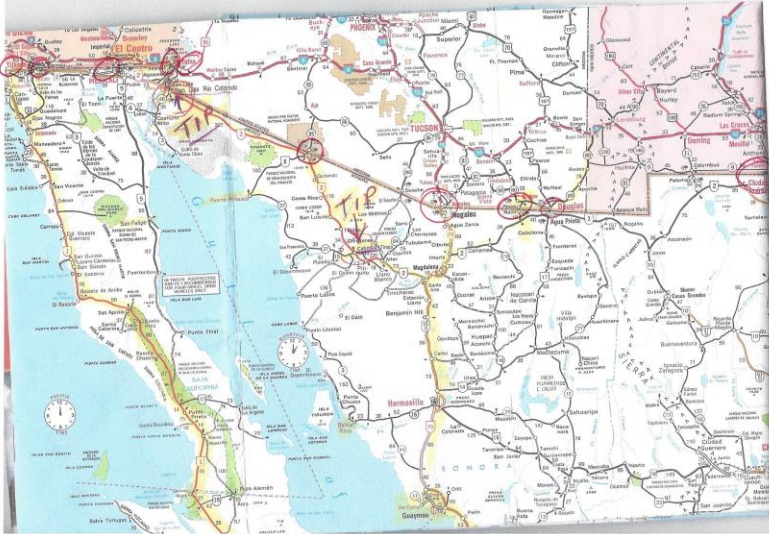
### ***getting around by Cars, Busses, Ferries, Trains and Planes***

This chapter provides you with some general information you need about border crossings if you are driving to and from your boat in Mexico, import permits and various options for getting around once you have arrived in Mexico. We will also cover some specific data that will save you time, money and frustration in getting around in Mexico. Some of the information and data included here or available through various traditional and on-line sources may quickly become dated, but they provide excellent places for you to start your searches. Just be sure to confirm the current (WHEN YOU WILL USE IT) accuracy of all information you intend to rely on, whether from this book, our seminars or other sources. Things have a way of often changing quickly south of the border, corona virus or not, and we cannot guarantee its accuracy. Routes & things change.

It is impossible to completely re-verify or update all of this data prior to each new printing or seminar. However, we actively review and update this data with other cruisers and with our continued travels throughout Mexico and Central America. All users, by using this information, accept the responsibility of verifying the data as of the date of its use, and Cruising



## **BORDER CROSSINGS**



### **RESEARCH YOUR BORDER CROSSINGS**

#### **ARE YOU PLANNING TO STAY IN A TOURIST ZONE?**

The most common border crossing points for California and Arizona are: Tijuana, Tecate, Mexicali, Algodones/Andrade, Yuma, Sonoyta, Nogales, Naco, Agua Prieta/Douglas.

Not all border crossings have the same hours and operating procedures for crossings. Locate the TIP (temporary import permit) vehicle check-out station for the route you are taking, usually 20 to 25 miles before you get back to the border. Check the procedures for crossing **BOTH WAYS** before you cross into Mexico. Remember, that includes checking the road conditions in the area and the weather conditions you will most likely be encountering, also.

Pat and Carole have traveled to Mexico virtually every year since 2003. Many trips have been by sea, but they have driven “The Baja” numerous times and the mainland south of Puerto Vallarta to Barra de Navidad and Manzanillo several times. Coming or going over the years, they have used six separate entry points in California or Arizona. Either the McIntoshes or the McCalebs have also flown in or out of most of the usual airports in Mexico or Central America that have regular flights to California. They’ve all used about everything except a burro or a wheelbarrow, and only once been marooned on the side of the road. That was in February 2018, and only three blocks from where they were getting off the bus anyway, in Barra de Navidad.

Pat and Carole have rented cars in several Mexican regions, including going wine tasting a couple of times in the “Valle de Guadalupe” a short distance north of Ensenada. This is a side trip and a region you don’t want to bypass. It’s like going to the Napa Valley in the 1960’s.

There are several recognizable U.S. car rental companies in Mexico, and many rental agencies you have never heard of. Our recommendation is that you talk to several people you may have come to know and trust, in the area you are going to rent the vehicle, before you rent a car. Talk with other boaters, the harbormaster, expats in the area. Another good contact is a real estate agent who does property management, because they regularly deal with visitors who will be flying in and renting vehicles. They will know the good and the bad, and can save you time.

Various regions of Mexico have unique styles all their own. The common thread in most areas, are their taxi’s. All the taxis have an



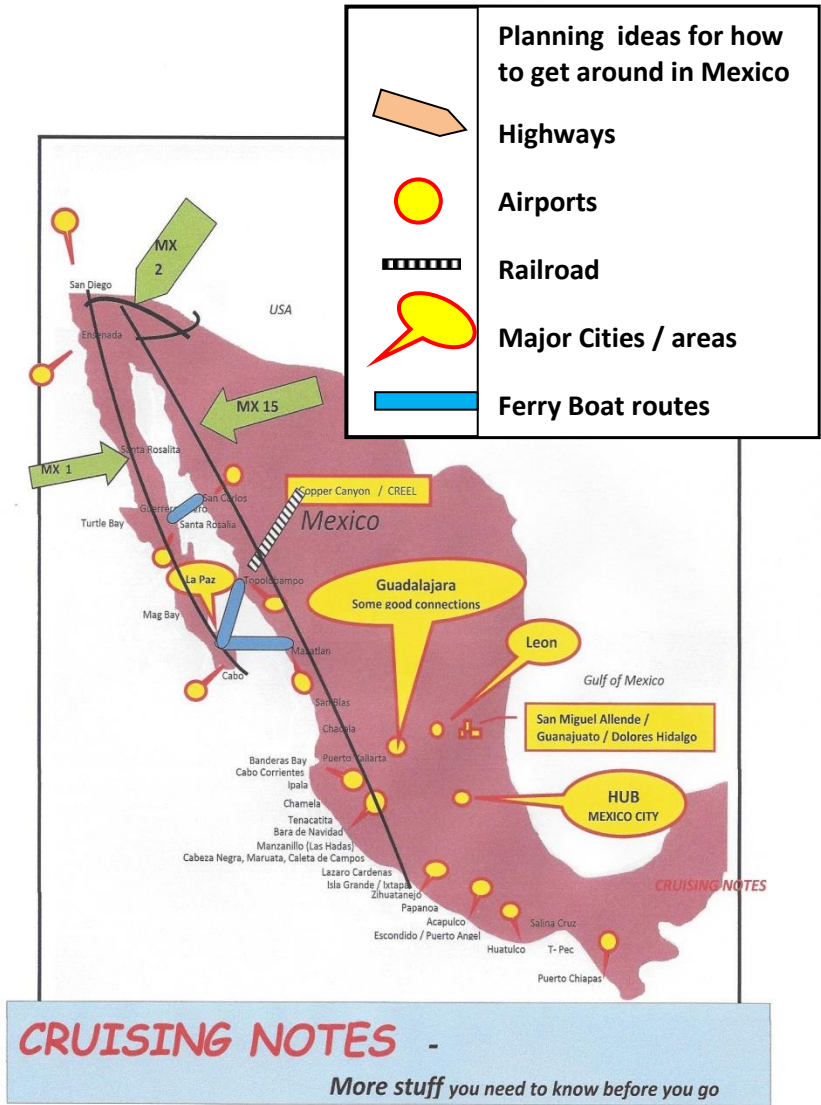
identifying number painted on them, and all the drivers must be licensed by the state / municipality where they drive. In the big cities it is not uncommon for a taxi to run 24 hrs a day, with three different drivers taking shifts. Occasionally you will find a driver who owns his own taxi, but that will probably be in the smaller communities, and the driver may also be a guide. Being a guide and owning your own taxi (especially if it is a van) gives the driver an edge over his competition. When you are in a tourist area like La Paz, Puerto Vallarta, Barra de Navidad or Zihuatanejo, etc, see if you can locate a taxi owner/ guide. If so, you will probably have a wide selection of travel time, destinations, total number of people who can be accommodated and other details that will make your tour special. There's even UBER, LYFT and a new twist.

OK, let's look at the basics of getting around in Mexico. This information should get you feeling comfortable and familiar with traveling using the Mexican infrastructure. In many ways getting around in Mexico is better and easier than using busses and everyday systems in the U.S. or Canada, because in Mexico most "transit systems" are used by a vast majority of the people. They rely on them, not on their own cars. Busses go where the people want to go, and they are affordable. In fact if you are a senior citizen, they can be downright cheap. We have taken the 1<sup>st</sup> class bus between Melaque and Puerto Vallarta, an approximately 3 to 4hr (150 mile) 1<sup>st</sup> class luxury bus ride with seats like in 1<sup>st</sup> class on an airliner in the U.S. for approximately \$18.00 (U.S.). On that particular trip the agent gave us the resident senior citizen rate, assuming that we had resident status. This year when we made the same trip the agent asked for the resident form, and since we don't have one, the trip cost approximately \$36.00, still cheap! I forgot to mention, that includes a small box lunch with a bottle of water,

and a movie, also. The trip would have been much more expensive and probably taken a trip via Mexico City had we done it by air.

We are going to deviate from our typical format for this section of Cruising Notes, because the regular schedules of Mexican modes of transportation and the individual needs of cruisers tend to be more fluid than most of the topics included in the book. Naturally we will cover many of the same experiences and pitfalls you will encounter, but we will concentrate on giving you the insights and tools used by both ex-pats and cruisers alike in getting around in Mexico. We will provide a “road map” of sources, google searches, phone numbers and other tips for you; BUT, this information tends to be a moving target sometimes. We have found it sometimes worthwhile to use a local travel agent rather than a kiosk when getting long distance bus tickets, for instance. Also be vigilant when selecting which bus line to use for various destinations, or which bus terminal will get the bus or disembark from in various cities. Don’t hesitate to talk with other people about how they went from place to place; you will pick up lots of great ideas and tips!

If you are a good driver, don’t be afraid to rent a car and drive in Mexico. Driving in Mexico has been described like doing a waltz. Ride around in a taxi or with an Uber driver and you will get an idea of how the traffic flows and merges. If you don’t feel comfortable with it, you probably won’t want to rent the car.



## Travel by Bus

In the last 15 to 20 years Mexico has invested heavily in their travel related infrastructure. Their highways and bus transportation systems are vastly improved, and traveling by 1<sup>st</sup> class bus is a great



way to get around. The seats in these busses are more like the seats in a 1<sup>st</sup> class section of an airplane than to the bus travel most of us

have experienced in the U.S.

Most bus lines are regional in scope rather than covering the entire country, so you will need to do some



homework for the areas you will be in. We have included some information and links for more information to help you become familiar with, and find, the details for your particular needs. You will be completely

surprised by what you will find online with a few “GOOGLE” strokes to get you on your way.

Although the local busses are more “rustic”, they are a great bargain, are fantastic for getting around in local situations, and rarely are seen breaking down. We have been riding the local Mexican busses extensively since around



1998, several years before we started cruising in 2006. The only time we have been on a bus that broke down was in February, 2018, between Melaque and Barra de Navidad. This was a ‘textbook’ case of how things run in Mexico: the bus was rolling along, and then slowly pulled over to the side of the road, and the driver stopped it. He opened the motor cover, looked in, and tried to start the engine. It quickly became evident it was out of fuel. So he gets out his cell phone and calls for some diesel, and tells us all where to stand on the side of the road so the next bus coming along would stop for us. The next bus stopped and we were on the way. The whole event probably only took four or five minutes.

A new phenomenon we have seen in Barra de Navidad and Melaque the last several years appears to be a cross between a Cushman motor scooter, a Chinese ‘rickshaw’ and the long-time Mazatlán penchant for anything different. These things go by different names, but it seems like everybody knows what you mean, whatever you call them. Call them “putt-putts”



“Mini-Uber”, things, or whatever you want, but for about \$25 Pesos (in 2020), or a little over a buck, you can get a ride anywhere you want in town with as much of a load as you can pile in! On Valentine’s Day one of them became our “Limo for the evening” as we ventured to the *Barra Galeria de Arte & Restaurant* in Barra de Navidad for a delightful evening of dining amongst beautiful photographs and paintings.

As mentioned, we can tell you we have now added UBER to the official list of methods of transportation in larger cities of Mexico. It is working, but it is still developing. Even in places like Puerto Vallarta or other tourist spots, things don’t move at the same pace as at home. And it’s GREAT!



Here’s a view from the back seat of a “mini-Uber”. It’s a good ride for the money. If you aren’t ready for the experience yet, just watch the locals for a few days and you’ll get the hang of it. Flag one down and get his cell number. When you need a ride just call him.

Next, let’s get you going on the busses in Mexico, not just “the chicken busses” but the ones you will find hard to believe! Start by checking out the following article. Then read some blogs and do some ‘googling’ using the information that’s included here.

The following information will help get you up to speed on what to expect and how to research using busses in Mexico. Spend some time on your computer at home and you will get the hang of what is available, schedules, and the differences between the schedules of the first-class busses and the more reasonably priced second-

class busses. The busses are not that different, but the time on the road and the number of stops can be *very* different!

### Web Results

- [Lines of buses in Mexico | Destinations \\*](#)  
<https://transportamex.com/> **lineas-de-autobuses-en-mexico**  
 The best **bus lines in Mexico** \* Services and destinations \*  
 Buying **of** Tickets \* The best **bus lines in Mexico** qualified by users. home
- [Mexico Buses - Timetables Destinations and Rates](#)  
**Mexicoautobuses .com**  
**Mexico Bus** is a community website and a directory **of** all the schedules **of buses** intercity and long distance **in Mexico** .
- [Videos for bus lines in mexico](#)  
[Wow.com/video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twr3YUrgxO0) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twr3YUrgxO0>  
 See more videos for **buses in mexico**
- [Bus ETN Turistar | Safe Purchase of tickets for ...](#)  
[Etn.com.mx](http://Etn.com.mx)  
 Luxury **Bus Line with destinations to Mexico** , Guadalajara, Morelia, ...  
 The services on board ETN Turistar Luxury only apply **in** some routes and **buses** .
- [Lines of buses - Hotels in Mexico & Reservations ...](#)  
[www.zonaturistica.com/ligasInteres/ buses - en-mexico .html](http://www.zonaturistica.com/ligasInteres/buses-en-mexico.html)  
**Bus Lines Information** . Zonaturistica.com. Menu; English English; My ... **in** your Mail. More **than** 32 routes **in Mexico** . Our bus **lines** .
- [Buses to Mexico | Directory of Bus](#)  
[www. Buses to mexico .com](http://www.Buses to mexico .com)  
 The **line of** TAP Royal International Buses has a commercial relationship with TAP **Mexico** , ... 2013 **Buses to Mexico** by **in** marketing llc ...
- [BUSES - LINES OF BUSES ...](#)  
[www.superpaginas.com.mx/Transporte...](http://www.superpaginas.com.mx/Transporte...) [Lines of buses in Mexico](#)  
[co | Top 20 \\* BdeBoleto](#)
- [THE BEST BUS OF MEXICO - YouTube](#)  
[www.youtube.com / watch? V = 1hQOfWS63cg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?V=1hQOfWS63cg)  
 ★★★★★ ☆ **buses 2 story of mexico** Autovias star **of** gold ETN via ado plus **in** the ... **THE BEST OF MEXICO**  
**BUSES ... Autobuses La Linea ...**



[About.com](#) [About Travel](#) [Student Travel](#) [Mexico Buses - Mexico Bus Descriptions and Photos of Mexico Buses](#)

## How to Make Mexico Bus Reservations

How to Get a Seat on a Long Distance Bus in Mexico



### Baja Ferries Website

[www.bajafferries.com/](http://www.bajafferries.com/)

Tarifas · Horarios · California star

**Address:** Ignacio Allende 1025, Zona Central, 23000 La Paz,  
B.C.S., Mexico

**Phone:** +52 612 123 6600

### CUSTOMER SUPPORT

#### PICHILINGUE

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01800 744 5050

#### MAZATLÁN

Mazatlan, Sinaloa 01800 700 0433



**TOPOLOBAMPO** Ahome, Sinaloa 01800 837 5662

Hours of Operation 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Pacific Time)

Monday through Sunday

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Marcelo Rubio, Col. Centro, La Paz, B.C.S.. Factura Electronica: ...

Ferry service times and routes can change due to weather conditions and maintenance requirements. Be sure that you update conditions and schedules as you approach your departure date. This can be frustrating, we know, but the trip is well worth it.

Let's talk flying. If you must fly *within Mexico*, chances are you will be routed through Mexico City unless you use a small regional airline. Check the bus as an alternative.

We are concentrating on the info you will be looking for to "Commuter Cruise" or to come and go to the major tourist areas.



## AIRLINES FLYING INTO MEXICAN CITIES

### Airlines Serving Leon Guanajuato

Aeromexico Interjet Air Comet Volaris

(update this information often, as flights change often)

### Regional Leon/Guanajuato Airports

Del Bajío International Airport is the main airport serving Leon/Guanajuato. This airport is operated by Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacífico and handles the major national and international traffic in the area. BJX offers scheduled passenger services to top destinations including Los Angeles, Atlanta, Cancun, San Francisco and many more. Ground Transportation is available in the form of Rental Cars and Taxi. Research well, be flexible in your travel dates, and double the chances of acquiring cheapest flights to Leon/Guanajuato.

Are you looking for cheap flights from Leon Guanajuato to your dream destination? Here's your chance to enjoy incredible savings on [flights from Leon Guanajuato](#). CheapOair is offering major discounts on flight tickets. What better time to book your return tickets? Hurry, book flight tickets and grab discounts right away!

### Flights to Leon Guanajuato

#### [Flights from Los Angeles to Leon-Guanajuato](#)

- [Flights from Tijuana to Leon-Guanajuato](#)
- [Flights from Chicago to Leon-Guanajuato](#)
- [Flights from Houston to Leon-Guanajuato](#)
- [Flights from Oakland to Leon-Guanajuato](#)
- [Flights from Sacramento to Leon-Guanajuato](#)
- [Flights from Denver to Leon-Guanajuato](#)
- [Flights from Orlando to Leon-Guanajuato](#)

### Flights from Leon Guanajuato

- [Flights from Leon-Guanajuato to Tijuana](#)
- [Flights from Leon-Guanajuato to Chicago](#)
- [Flights from Leon-Guanajuato to Los Angeles](#)

#### **NOTE**

**ALL FLIGHT SCHEDULES  
ARE CHANGING SO FAST  
YOU WILL NEED TO KEEP  
UPDATING THEM EVEN  
AFTER YOU HAVE MADE  
RESERVATIONS!**

- [Flights from Leon-Guanajuato to Houston](#)
- [Flights from Leon-Guanajuato to Sacramento](#)

## Flights to Nearby Cities

- [Mexico City Flights](#)
- [Guadalajara Flights](#)
- [Cancun Flights](#)
- [San Jose Cabo Flights](#)
- [Puerto Vallarta Flights](#)
- [Tijuana Flights](#)
- [Morelia Flights](#)

### Flying from

- [United Kingdom](#): Book cheap flights to [Leon Guanajuato](#)
- [Canada](#): Find discount airfare to [Leon Guanajuato](#)
- [Australia](#): Find discount airfare to Leon Guanajuato
- [Singapore](#): Book cheap flights to Leon Guanajuato

### Airlines flying to Guadalajara (Guadalajara is a major hub in Mexico)

Aeromexico flights

United flights

Virgin Atlantic flights

American Airlines flights

Delta flights

British Airways flights

puertovallarta.net

one click away

Updated 28/06/2015 - [Complete List of Airlines serving this airport](#)

Click titles to access official  
airline sites

Toll free numbers  
(USA) (MX)

Local Vallarta  
telephone numbers

Airport telephone  
numbers

(Add + 52 from outside Mexico)

[Aereo Calafia](#)

01800 560-3949

<b>Aeromexico</b>	800 237-6639	(322) 225-1777	(322) 221-1204
<b>Aeromexico Connect</b>	800 237-6639	(322) 225-1777	(322) 221-1204
<b>Air Canada</b>	888 247-2262	(322) 221-1212	
<b>Air Transat</b>	877-TRANSAT		
<b>Alaska Airlines</b>	800 252-7522	(322) 221-1350	(322) 221-1352
<b>American Airlines</b>	800 433-7300	(322) 221-1799	(322) 221-1927 (322) 221-1799
<b>Canjet Airlines</b>	800 809-7777		
<b>Continental Airlines</b>	800 523-3273	(322) 221-1025	(322) 221-1025 (322) 221-1096
<b>Continental Express</b>	800 523-3273	(322) 221-1025	(322) 221-1025 (322) 221-1096
<b>Delta Air Lines</b>	800 221-1212		
<b>Frontier Airlines</b>	800 432-1359		
<b>Interjet</b>	01800 011-2345		
<b>Magnicharters</b>	01800 672-2424		
<b>TAR</b>	01800 388-3568		
<b>Sun Country Air</b>	800 359-6786		
<b>Sunwing</b>	877 877-1755		
<b>United</b>	800 241-6522		
<b>US Airways</b>	800 428-4322		
<b>Virgin America</b>	877 359-8474		
<b>VivaAerobus</b>	888 935-9848	(55) 4777-5050	
<b>Volaris</b>	866 988-3527	01800 122-8000	
<b>West Jet Airlines</b>	888 937-8538		

Southwest now serves Puerto Vallarta and Cabo San Lucas; just like when we are at home, go to:

[www.southwest.com](http://www.southwest.com)

## **PUERTO VALLARTA AIRPORT INFORMATION**

**Airport Address:** Carretera a Tepic KM 7.5, Colonia Villas Las Flores, Puerto Vallarta  
**Phone numbers:** (322) 221-1298, (322) 221-1325 & (322) 221-1537  
**Fax:** (322) 221-1130

Read

more: [http://www.puertovallarta.net/fast\\_facts/airline\\_info.php#ixzz4cehzpNg6](http://www.puertovallarta.net/fast_facts/airline_info.php#ixzz4cehzpNg6)

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### **Direct from United States to Manzanillo (Barra de Navidad)**

Alaska

United flights

Delta flights

### **Other airlines flying to Manzanillo**

Aeromexico

NOTE: several airlines 'bundle' their schedules when flying from the U.S., so read the schedules *very* carefully. If you have to be routed through Mexico City you have a good walk from where you arrive to downstairs where you will board the domestic flight. This is a great place to fly in / out when you are staying in Barra de Navidad, or having crew meet you in Barra.

There are also great flights from Canada on West Jet and others.

## **Facts about Getting to Loreto, Mexico**

Loreto is a fantastic spot to visit. It is located on the Baja peninsula on the Sea of Cortez, and is accessible by driving, by air, and by boat. There are several tours available from reputable tour companies, including National Geographic and local Mexican companies.

It will surprise you how much information you will find at your fingertips with just a little time on your computer. There are B & B's and boutique hotels, camp sites, and a resort hotel with a golf course.

Close-by is the port of Escondido with a marina.

This is a great place to meet friends and crew, or to leave your boat for a quick trip home.

## **SOMETHING TO CHECK IF YOU ARE FLYING TO MAZATLAN:**

On some trips, we have found reasonable air fares from Phoenix to Mazatlán that we were able to couple with either “deals” or using our points or air-miles to get from home to Phoenix. But if you do this make sure you leave enough time for the connection. Because this gives you an *international* flight connection, it can take more time to re-check bags going, and coming through customs when returning home.

## *Flights to Guaymas / San Carlos*

A few airlines offer flights to [Guaymas](#) / San Carlos Mexico.

[Aeroservicio Guerrero](#) has flights from Guaymas to Santa Rosalia, Guerrero Negro and Loreto. Telephone: (622) 221-2800

[Aerocalafia](#) has flights from Guaymas to La Paz, Los Cabos and Puerto Penasco. Telephone: (622) 221-0511 & 221-0634

NOTE: this information is always changing and being updated. we are always waiting for more information. This will get your search started, BUT REMEMBER, things are always changing and being updated, after you have booked any flight keep updating your information.



**USA TODAY**

### **Documents Required to Fly to Mexico and Canada**

If you are flying to Mexico or Canada, you will need to bring some forms of identification with you to get into the country and to return to the United States. Any U.S. citizens traveling to Mexico must bring along a passport. When traveling to Canada, you can bring a passport, or use certain other forms of identification to enter the country.

#### **BE SURE TO CHECK FOR UPDATED REQUIREMENTS PRIOR TO YOUR TRIP!**

The Mexican government requires that anyone coming into Mexico past the Mexican border towns from the U.S. must carry a valid passport, even children. Everyone over 16 years of age must also present a passport when traveling back into the U.S.

## **GET A PERMIT FOR YOUR CAR TO ENTER MEXICO IF YOU ARE GOING TO DRIVE PAST THE 'FREE' ZONE!**

- **To get this permit, you'll need:**

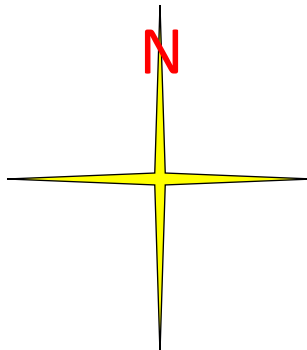
1. Your drivers license.
2. Car registration.
3. Proof of identification (passport or birth certificate)
4. A major credit card in your name.
5. The leasing contract (if you're leasing the car)
6. An immigration form (aka "tourist card")

[7 Tips for Driving in Mexico | Esurance](#)



<https://www.esurance.com/info/international/guidelines-for-driving-in-mexico>

**DON'T FORGET TO GET UP TO THE MINUTE  
INFORMATION ON T.I.P.'s FOR YOUR BOAT OR YOUR**



## Prepping For Heavy Weather

Whether you're cruising along a coast or crossing an ocean, you want to know what the weather is likely to do at all times – meaning daily – even while you're at anchor. Be sure to also keep abreast of long-range forecasts. If you have access to the Internet there are a plethora of websites providing good weather and sea-state information. If you can't get to the net, turn on your SSB and listen to the cruiser nets or call somebody you have pre-arranged with on your SAT phone. Don't forget to stick your head out the companionway and just look at the sky once in a while.

If you're cruising along a coast and know that heavy weather threatens, look for a safe harbor to duck into. Naturally you know where a safe harbor would be, because in your predeparture planning you spotted them on your chart. Didn't you? Once there, tie up in a slip if you can but, if none is available, batten down and anchor as securely as you can to ride things out. If hurricane strength winds are threatened, you have to make a choice between a safe harbor and heading out to sea – a personal choice that only you as skipper can make. We won't even presume to suggest what that choice should be.

Either way, steps should be taken to prepare. Most are logical but might be easily overlooked in the anxiety of the moment. Start by considering what preparations you should make before ever leaving home; list them with tasks assigned to each permanent crewmember. Keep the list in a plastic sleeve in an agreed upon and readily accessible location on the boat. Your list might, at the very least, include the following in no particular order of priority:

- *Seasick Medication* – Seasickness can be debilitating and all hands may be needed. Any crewmember prone to



seasickness should consider taking medication and/or eating foods that may help, such as ginger.

- *Batteries* – Charge all boat batteries before weather hits. Put new batteries in handheld instruments and other devices, including flashlights.
- *Charts* – Have them at the ready. If you only use electronic charts (a bad idea), but have them on a laptop with a printer, back them up by printing paper copies for all areas you might be in during the storm, and put them in plastic sleeves to protect them.
- *Food and Drink* – Prepare simple meals and drinks, hot and cold, in advance, for whatever period the storm is anticipated to last. You won't want to be working in the galley any more than you have to if the boat is either at sea or rocking and rolling at anchor.
- *Batten Down* – Secure all gear that can't be stowed, both above deck and below. Latch or lock all lockers that can be locked.
- *Lee Cloths* – Attach lee cloths for all bunks that will need them.
- *Seacocks, etc.* – Close all seacocks, hatches, portholes, etc., that don't need to be left open.
- *Jacklines* – Run them the full length of the boat on both sides, even if you plan to remain at anchor.
- *Life Jackets and Tethers* – Make them ready for all crew and be sure that no one goes topside during heavy weather, even if at anchor, without a life jacket on. Always be clipped to a jackline or other attachment.
- *Anchors* – Use whatever anchor(s) and length(s) of rode are appropriate for the conditions anticipated.
- *Tankage* – Provision the boat if you have time. If not, at least fill your water, fuel, and propane tanks.

*If you will be at sea and severe weather is predicted:*

- *Drogue/Para-anchor* – If you have them, make them ready for use. Trying to get them ready after the storm hits will be problematic at best.
- *Storm Sails* – Again, if you have storm sails, when the weather threatens, take them on deck and tie them someplace where they'll be secure, like the base of the mast. When the weather starts to turn, douse the cruising sails and run the storm jib up the head stay and the trisail up its dedicated track on the mast. Note that the method of flying a trisail is different than for the mainsail. If you're not already familiar with it, run the sail up in calm weather at the dock or at anchor to make whatever adjustments are necessary for your boat.
- *Life Raft* – Be sure it's ready to deploy and that you understand how to do it.
- *Ditch Bag* – If it's separate from your life raft, be sure it contains everything you might need, including, but not limited to, water, food, utensils, medical kit, sun block, flares, flare gun, binoculars, two flashlights, at least one knife, short pieces of small line, thermal blankets, sunglasses, hats for all crew, needles, thread, fish hooks, seasick medication, mirror, handheld devices and spare batteries for each (e.g., GPS, radio, compass and/or SAT phone, etc.), EPIRB, special medications taken by any member of the crew, money, passports and ship's papers (the latter three in a ziptop bag). You will presumably already have foulies on, if not survival suits.

### ***Comments by Phil***

When anchoring for storm conditions and there is no storm anchor available, many cruisers recommend deploying two anchors on separate rodes at 45 degree angles off the bow. This will double

your holding power except when the boat swings far enough to one side so it's pulling on only one anchor.

Though it's slight, a potential risk we see in using double anchors in this way is that, when the boat has swung to one side far enough and is pulling on just one of the two anchors, if the anchor under load breaks free and drags, it may grab the rode of the second anchor either causing that anchor to also pull out or fouling both anchors and/or tangling their rodes. If the boat is dragging dangerously toward any obstacles and the anchor rodes are tangled, the chance of untangling them in time is minimal at best.

If two anchors are to be used, an option is to attach them both in line on the same all-chain rode. We could do so on *Shiraz* by removing the rope from our secondary anchor rode, leaving 50 feet of chain. The bitter end of that chain could then be shackled to the primary anchor, taking care that it would run freely when deployed. Once the secondary anchor was deployed and set (see discussion under "Anchoring"), the chain on that anchor would drag the primary anchor and chain rode off the bow roller. When the second (primary) anchor was set, all remaining 300 feet of chain could be deployed. Two anchors so configured on 350 feet of chain would offer a lot of holding power without tangling or fouling one another. The anchors could be easily retrieved by simply reversing the process. This approach would leave our storm anchor free to deploy in addition, either on the same or a separate rode, if we felt the circumstances warranted doing so.

### ***Comments by Pat***

We have been very fortunate and have not garnered much experience in heavy weather sailing. For the most part we follow the age-old rule: when in doubt, don't go out! When that rule fails us, the next rules you **must** put to use are: (1) if you have to ask

yourself if it's time to take in a reef, you are already late. And (2) since boats usually only break apart when they bump into the shore, get yourself some sea room.

Here is an important sailing technique, one that you can use to ride out bad stuff at sea and keep somewhat rested rather than wearing yourself out. You can also use this technique on a nice afternoon of sailing when it's time for lunch and you'd like to park the boat to settle things down. Tack into the "*hove to*" configuration. Before you do this, make sure you have lots of sea room for drifting. Read up on this technique, and then make sure you have plenty of practice so you can set your sails properly for your boat. No two boats will hove to exactly the same due to weight, top-side wind obstructions, sails, etc. So even if you have had lots of practice on another boat, practice on this boat; this is the one you will be sailing in heavy weather.

We told you that we don't go out in heavy weather. More correctly put, we try not to go out in heavy weather, but it still gets us sometimes, and it *will* get you too, ready or not. We strongly suggest that you go sailing in bad weather – *really bad weather*, before you take off cruising. We got hammered and had absolutely no warning this was coming.

In mid November of 2004, right after we bought Espiritu, we were on our way to Mexico and had stopped in San Diego to let my "delivery" crew off. My buddies jumped off and Carole joined me here. The two of us were taking the boat to Ensenada, Mexico. This was to be an easy overnight jump and a pleasant few days before we had to fly home. We were at the docks of the San Diego Yacht Club preparing for the 60-mile run to Ensenada in the morning. The last thing we did before turning in at 9 p.m. was check the weather in the dock master's office, and it indicated a nice day coming, with NW winds of ten to twelve knots. It looked like a great day going

south, but we might need to motor sail some of the time to arrive on our schedule, due to sparse winds. We were up and headed out of San Diego Bay a little after two a.m., with a beautiful start and a breeze of 8 or 9 knots. We thought that was a great way to start a day of ten to twelve knot breezes, a little early for breezes, but within the forecast range, and who were we to question a nice warm breeze coming off the land? However, within a couple of hours the winds were up, and they kept climbing. Then the rain and low clouds started coming in, the winds shifted almost 180 degrees, then some lightning and big clouds, big winds, and big waves. Rather than from the NW, this was all coming from the south and southwest. Great weather forecasting; we're glad we checked it a few hours ago, gives us confidence!?

Then the Coast Guard got on the radio and started the announcements about mariners' warnings for the waters off Southern California, with 50-mph winds, lightning, hail, and water spouts. That got my attention – water spouts! Even though we had just crossed into Mexican waters, we weren't sure the storm gods knew they were supposed to stay in Southern California waters and leave us alone. Those winds sure didn't observe international boundaries. This was an unexpected weather phenomenon that caught lots of people by surprise in Southern California. It covered from the Santa Barbara and Long Beach areas, Catalina and the other Channel Islands, to south of San Diego, and continued across the border another thirty miles! Boats were sunk or swamped at Catalina Island, and there was lots of mayhem. No one saw it coming.

We reduced the sail area to a hanky-sized jib. Being only six to eight miles off a lee shore and not knowing how long this was going to continue, there was no way I was going to hove to. It didn't take long to realize that the boat could handle these conditions with no problem, the weak-link here was the crew. I was busy trying to

remember the details of a heavy weather seminar from a boat show, and all I could recall were two items: 1. Head up into the crest of the waves at a bit of an angle. 2. Stay away from the rocks on shore. We were sure glad we had stretched the budget and gotten a bigger boat than we had first planned for, because the ride was really pretty good for the “washing machine” sea conditions, and we felt safe. Well maybe not at the time, but in looking back on it we did.

After around three or so hours of this stuff it started to settle down. It was an exciting few hours of learning how to, first spot thunderheads on radar, and then second, how to avoid them, and other things about tying down sails in a “breeze”, and stowing everything even if it is going to be a “short and calm” sailing day. We pushed ourselves to limits we had not experienced prior to preparing to go cruising. When we



finally arrived in Ensenada, as this shot proves, we were ready to begin our adventure a lot wiser than when we left San Diego, and, fortunately, none the worse for wear, and even smiling again! It gave true meaning to what was to have been a “shakedown” cruise.

As Phil said earlier, we learned the lesson of making sure everything is ship-shape and stowed before we head out, even if we think it is going to be a calm and easy day. At least we’d had the hatches closed.

Another thing you need to do is practice some night sailing. You will be doing many hops where your destination will be 12 to 14 or so hours away, and you don't want to be coming in to strange



landfalls in the dark. You need to be experienced at picking out boats' lights or channel markers from the background lights, and you need practice at picking out moving boats by concentrating on the lights in the

background as they flicker with the inadequately (or unlit) boat traveling past between you and the lights.

Another aid for you navigation skills will be developed from talking with other sailors who have been in and out of places you may be heading towards, and reading articles, the cruising guides and local supplemental guides *before* you



go, with a quick re-read before you get there. Also, be well practiced at reefing, at night, or in a single-handed situation, too. Your wife / husband / crew will appreciate not having to be woken up unless it is really necessary. And one more final thought - it

doesn't matter what type of boat you sail, make sure you can handle your boat in situations where someone may be incapacitated by unexpected injury or seasickness for a while.

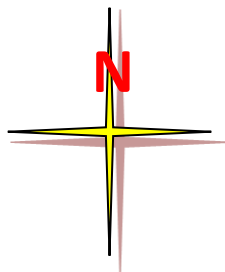


Whatever your cruising style, whatever kind of boat you sail, remember that “heavy-weather” may be different things to different people. You need to be prepared for where you will be sailing and for the conditions you find yourself in! Get some



practice sailing in bad weather at a location you are familiar with. Then go someplace else and sail in a big blow. That way when it hits you along the coast or up in the Sea of Cortez you will

be ready for it and confident you can handle both, the boat and the weather.





## ***Laying Up For Hurricanes***

Mexico and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Central America, is hurricane country. Be sure to know and keep in mind the limitations dictated by your insurance policy about when and where your boat can be during hurricane season. If anything, insurance companies have tended to become more restrictive with recent changes in ferocity and latitudes being reached by hurricanes.

Central America is also plagued by the infamous *Papagayos*, fierce winds that sweep west out of the Caribbean across the relatively flat landscape of Central America and then hammer boats on its west coast. Because they come by land rather than water, they offer little if any warning. If you are relatively close to shore, there may be no telltale fetch buildup to help you see them coming.

Whether you're laying up for hurricane season or a particular blow, as with buying a home, the three most important factors to be considered are location, location, and location. We're not recommending *the* place to leave your treasured boat but, that said, San Carlos, on the mainland side of the Sea of Cortez has long been a favorite for cruisers where boats can be left either in the water or on the hard, and has long been considered to be above the hurricane belt. However, the nasty twisters have reached further north into the Sea of Cortez in recent years.

There are also other good locations. Puerto Escondido on the Baja side of the Sea is a nearly landlocked bay, long considered a hurricane hole, but a number of boats drug anchors when hit there a few years ago. Because of its configuration, it is well protected from sea surge, but the wind remains a threat.

Puerto Vallarta in Banderas Bay (mid-mainland Mexico) is considered by many to be somewhat protected by hurricane-busting mountains. Several insurance companies recommend

Banderas Bay for boats they cover. Check with your insurance company.

Further south on Mexico's Gold Coast, the businesses and hotels along the beach front at Barra de Navidad were recently hit hard by a hurricane. However, just inland enough to be protected by coastal mountains, the marina at the Grand Bay Hotel may have more protection than any location along that stretch of coast. While it may be somewhat protected from surge, the lagoon adjacent to the marina at Barra is very shallow and has a mud bottom that is not great for holding power. Deploying adequate rode could be problematic when it's crowded – a likelihood when a big blow threatens. In February 2019, I know the 'norm' among cruisers was about 100' of chain even though it was only 12 to 15 feet deep. They wanted the weight of the extra chain to help hold, just for the afternoon breezes!

Two other locations, Mazatlán and La Paz, are popular places to leave your boat during hurricane season. Mazatlán is on the mainland at the south end of the Sea of Cortez, and La Paz is on the west side of the Sea of Cortez near the south end of the Baja peninsula. Both of these locations also have active cruising communities during the "off-season." While you are cruising, seek out people who leave their boat, and at least as important, people who stay on their boats all year, and pick their brains. Find out what they do and why they do it. Wherever you are, gather all the weather information you can, including listening to the cruiser nets on your SSB, and keep the info updated as the storm progresses. It will help you decide where to run to. Many marina harbormasters keep an up-to-date posting of information on hurricanes available during hurricane season.

There is, of course, often a choice to be made of whether to try to outrun big weather. Whatever the situation, if you're looking for a hidey hole, consider the wind from all directions, water approaches, the protection available from both wind and sea surge,

the type of bottom if you'll be anchored, the proximity of other boats and how well they seem to be preparing, how well you can secure your own boat, surrounding terrain, the nature of and potential for flying debris, the amount of time you have to prepare, and anything and everything else you can think of.

Once the boat is secured, depending on the likely severity of the blow and time available, strip the deck of everything removable – sails, dodgers, biminies, solar panels, wind generators, dinghies and outboards, surfboards, kayaks, radar reflectors, flags, jerry cans, and anything else that can create wind resistance. Fix or plug areas of potential leaks, including dorades. Secure all hatches and portholes. If you'll remain aboard, be sure to have adequate water and prepare some meals in advance to ride out the storm.

The above is a good starting list whether you are laying up for a single storm or for the season. If the latter, add the following considerations:

*Covers* – Put them on as much of the boat as possible. The sun in the tropics can be brutal, both to the deck and interior of your boat. Covers will help keep the inside temperature down.

*Rubber Items* – Remove all of them you can from the boat, e.g., spare raw water impellers. Leave old impellers in your pumps, which you should assume will be ruined by the heat and in need of replacement upon your return to the boat. Pack such items to be left aboard in Vaseline when possible.

*Interior Wood* – Oil all interior wood to help prevent it from drying out and splitting due to interior cabin heat. Consider also leaving some water in buckets inside the boat in dry climates for the same reason.

*Mold* – Boats left in the tropics can quickly develop mold inside. If possible, ventilate the boat while you're gone. Be smart. Leave screens on open ports. We once saw a boat with all its windows

left open and unscreened during the rainy season while the owners returned home for several weeks. It didn't prove to be an optimum solution for the need to ventilate. We've also heard that cruisers will use charcoal briquettes to suck the moisture out of the air, but they can spontaneously combust, so that's also not a good plan.

*Windows* – Cover the interior side of windows to keep out the sun's heat. We like using thin Styrofoam backed whiteboard if you can get it or take it with you when you leave home. Simply cut it to size to fit the inside of windows. We knew of a couple who had heard that lining the inside of windows with tinfoil to radiate the heat outward also worked, but when they tried it, one of their Plexiglas windows got so hot it became concave. It didn't leak but looked funny. Lots of cruisers also used the windshield sunshades easily and cheaply found in auto parts stores at home before you leave, or in Mexico. Carole and Pat used this method when they put their boat on the hard at Marina San Carlos; it worked well.

*Cockroaches* – The word "tropics" is synonymous with "cockroaches" – prolific little critters who'll take up residence in your boat if you let them. Even if you think you're winning the battle to keep them out, you'll quickly lose the war if you bring any cardboard on the boat. Roaches love to lay their eggs in cardboard – cereal boxes, wine boxes, containers for six-packs of beer – whatever! The solution: When you exit the bodega after buying your provisions, empty all cardboard containers – no exceptions! Transfer the contents to ziptop baggies if the boxes have no interior packaging. If you don't discard the cardboard before you leave the store, make sure you do so before you get back on your boat.

If any of the pesky critters do make it aboard, mix some powdered boric acid with sweetened, condensed milk and put some in bottle caps or other containers all around the inside of the boat. Do this as regular maintenance also, but especially when laying up the boat for hurricane season. It works!

*Stainless* – Polish it to prevent rust while you're gone.

*Wax the Boat* – This will protect it from the sun.

*Fuel Tanks* – Top them off and put additive in the fuel to prevent contamination and condensation.

*Jerry Cans* – Empty them.

*Water Tanks* – Empty them too, but make sure there will be a water supply available for your use when you recommission your boat the next fall.

*Thruhulls* – Close them, except for the ones that will drain off the rain water that will pour down during the hurricane season.

*Running Rigging* – Protect it from the sun. Remove and stow what you can below. In the case of halyards, tie knots in the bitter ends of all but two and allow them to run freely to the masthead where they'll be stopped by the knots. Tie old, sacrificial lines to the two remaining halyards and allow them to also run to the masthead, leaving only the sacrificial lines exposed. Bag or otherwise cover the lines now piled at the bottom of the mast. When you return, pull the sacrificial lines to retrieve the two halyards, disconnect them and use the halyards to go up the mast to retrieve the others.

*Batteries* – If you leave them solar powered or plugged in and turned on in a slip, put some draw on them by turning on some interior lights. We prefer turning the batteries off and, since we will have removed our on deck solar panels, we keep the batteries charged by using small solar panels used to charge car batteries while being shipped from overseas. They're available online for only a few dollars.

*Leaks* – Fix all known leaks before leaving the boat.

*Extrusion Holes* – Plug all holes in the mast or boom that birds, bees, wasps, etc., may want to nest in while you're away. We knew cruisers who returned to discover a bee hive inside their mast that proved difficult to remove. Birds also like to nest in sail covers.

Remove and stow all exterior electronics possible to prevent theft or sun damage. Cover any that can't be removed.

If you're leaving the boat on the hard, in addition to covering the deck, cover the rudder if possible. Because of the way they're constructed, they can be damaged by the intense heat of the tropical sun. Pay attention also to the proximity of the other boats around you and how they're supported. You don't want your boat to become a "domino" if one or more go down around you. Ask the boatyard what type of precautions they are taking to avoid the "domino effect." Many boatyards are doing this.

If you're leaving the boat in a slip, use all lines possible, with chafe gear as needed, to secure the boat from all directions. Don't rely on cleats alone; use winches or other solid deck fittings as anchor points for lines. Stagger your mast so it isn't in line with masts of other boats in adjacent slips. You don't want the masts beating each other to death if things get to rocking and rolling. If you have a choice, select what you believe to be the most protected slip available to you given the surroundings – buildings, trees, other boats, etc. Check the pilings securing your part of the dock. *Shiraz* was hit by a hurricane while in a slip in a nearly new marina in '06. We had been told that the pilings were anchored in bedrock and confirmed ourselves that they were indeed solid before we left the boat. After the hurricane, we checked the pilings out of curiosity and found most throughout the marina, including ours, had been loosened.

If you're leaving the boat in a marina for hurricane season and know other cruisers who will be staying on their boats, ask them to watch yours and contact you if there are problems. Some cruisers staying behind will actually hire themselves out to care for four or five other boats; this is a good idea if you can arrange it.

***Comments by Phil***

We are well aware that the suggestions listed above are extensive. We have spent from seven to ten days completing the things on the list and we will admit that most cruisers do not expend the time or effort to do everything we do. Some do not even remove their sails, but will at least wrap lines around them. Each skipper will have to use his/her own judgment about what precautions to undertake, but in our case, having seen firsthand the devastation hurricanes can cause has convinced us. Once when we were stripping *Shiraz* down, another cruiser watching our efforts commented that that was what insurance was for. We quietly wondered whether, even with insurance, he knew how quickly it might pay for even minor hurricane damage or whether he realized how few sailmakers or canvas people there were south of the border to repair or replace sails, dodgers, biminies, etc., or how quickly they might be able to get to his job – especially after a hurricane. We knew a cruising couple who had to sit out much of an entire sailing season waiting for such repairs.

Though we had left *Shiraz* as well prepared as we could in '06, she was still hit and nearly sliced to the bone by flying debris, presumably left unattended by some other cruiser. A friend who stayed aboard his boat when the hurricane hit told me later that he had watched a hard bimini – something one would assume was well anchored to the boat – lift off the top of a large powerboat and sail across the entire marina, narrowly missing multiple boats. We are believers in trying to prepare as well as possible!

***Comments by Pat***

We left *Espiritu* on the hard in San Carlos for the '07 hurricane season with no ill effects. A few of the boats around us had problems because the owners didn't make adequate preparations. They had not followed the procedures that have been outlined here. Don't just take our word on this; *go to Marina San Carlos'*

website and read what they have posted as the preparation procedures when leaving your boat either in the water or on land. Remember, they know! They are not just visiting with one boat; they live there and have hundreds of boats there in the water and on the hard. Their web address is [www.marinasantoscarlos.com](http://www.marinasantoscarlos.com) .

We started our preparations well before we got to San Carlos. By starting to ask questions of cruisers who had spent lots of time in Mexico, we found out that there are very few places to buy things, *especially marine items*, the further north in the Sea of Cortez that



This was the old marina in Santa Rosalia. Slips were first come first served, so if it's full you just anchored in the harbor until somebody leaves, and then come on in. Stay here a few days and you were sure to meet some real Sea of Cortez characters. The town is considered a "destination location" by folks who know the Sea of Cortez. Santa Rosalia is a great place to start prepping your boat to haul out in San Carlos or Guymas, but now you have to stay in the "new" marina because this one was recently demolished in a hurricane. The "new" marina is to port as you enter the harbor through the breakwater.



you go. By the time you are well up into the Sea, you are out of luck for buying almost anything other than the most basic items needed for daily living. Believe me, there are no boat parts or marine gear in Santa Rosalia, and darn few in San Carlos and Guaymas. If you need any spares or replacement items for putting your boat away, or for getting it ready next fall, you had better have them with you. In fact, we probably started in Puerto Vallarta at Zaragoza Marine buying a spare water pump for a shower sump, an impeller, zincs and silicone. By the time we were in Mazatlán, we were buying various thicknesses of sacrificial-line for retrieving the halyards we'd be running up the mast, and buying some blue plastic tarps. Those tarps are available most places, but in the small outback tiendas, they become *very* expensive. Also, get lots of duct tape. It is a lot easier to wrap up everything and tape it like you have never taped anything at home, than it will be to come back to a tarnished, rusted and sun burned boat in just six months. If you do not have at least one solar powered fan, and better yet would be two, go get them, now, before you leave. They will help the inside of your boat more than almost anything else by providing ventilation and air flow while you are at anchor as well as when you store your boat.

Phil advised you to close your thru-hulls. After you have done that, if your boat is out of the water, from the outside, insert a small amount of either *plastic scrubbers* or *brass wool*, not steel wool. We found this fairly easily in the form of kitchen scrubbers. Before you push this up into the hole from the outside be sure you have some strong string attached to it so you can easily pull it out next fall. This is to keep critters and bugs and spiders from taking up residency, or, if you have forgotten to close the sea cock, *entering* into your boat. The reason you use either plastic or brass is because it doesn't rust.

By the time we got to Santa Rosalia there were several boats waiting to go across the Sea to be hauled at Marina Seca in San Carlos. We asked why everybody was waiting here, and we're sure

glad we did. There is very limited slip space at San Carlos, so unless you like stripping sails and folding them on your foredeck, this is the place to do it.

One more item (actually it should be one of the first things you do if and when you decide to leave your boat on the hard): Call ahead and make a reservation to get your boat pulled. They will know what the tides are going to be like, and depending on your keel, you will be given a date and time according to the tides, to pull up to the dock and be hauled out. And no, you will not be able to come ahead of schedule to work on your boat. Somebody else will be there getting pulled out then, or it will be a bit too shallow for you.



There will be lots of other chores you will be doing before your boat is pulled. It is better to do them in

These shots are of Espiritu coming out of the water at Marina San Carlos. We, and many cruising friends continue to be impressed with both the people and the operations of Marina San Carlos. That's why we asked them to become sponsors of CRUISING NOTES. We want to thank them AND we want you to know what kind of a job they will do for you,

the water rather than in a dusty boatyard going up and down a ladder. This is the time to plan ahead. There is a fairly good sized auto supply and ferreteria in Santa Rosalia



across from the square for last minute items like polish, twine or other small items, but don't wait until you get there to get the majority of things you are going to need.

The fun part of all this is that everybody is doing the same things, from helping each other fold sails to having "empty the fridge"



potluck parties. Strangers become friends, and friends become better friends by joining in this process.

Once we were pulled, and in the work yard at Marina San Carlos, we moved into a small, clean, inexpensive hotel within walking distance of the marina and work yard. A few people stayed on boats, but we are not sure if that is still permitted now. Even though we had lots of things done ahead of time, there were still several full, hot days of work to complete the task of putting her to bed for the season. We hired a cruiser from one of the boats to look in on *Espiritu* weekly and check things like batteries, water leaks, hull supports, etc. It was required by our insurance company, but we would now do it anyway for the peace of mind.

Another thing somebody told us to do was store as much of our electronics as we could in the oven. The theory is that this will protect them in the event of a lightning strike. We don't know if this qualifies as an "urban legend" and we are not sure how much lightning was around but we do know there was tons of rain and all of our electronics were fine (and in the oven) when we got back in mid-October.

By now you should have an idea of what's ahead of you as you start focusing on getting ready to go. If you've been sailing a while, our guess is that right now you've got a handle on what to do next and where to go from here, so it's time to start our next section.

From this point on we will be concentrating on where you are going when you head down the coast. If this is all new to you and you are not yet quite sure where to start, reread our first section before you get into our next section of the book, and at the same time wander through a couple book stores and pick up a book on sailing/cruising that piques your interest and looks like it is about someplace you might want to visit. One other thing to start doing is reading "Latitude 38" and "48 North" each month, and maybe also "Latitudes & Attitudes" and "Cruising World" when you have time. It won't take you any time at all and you will be hooked just like the rest of us, and ready for the cruising portion that follows.

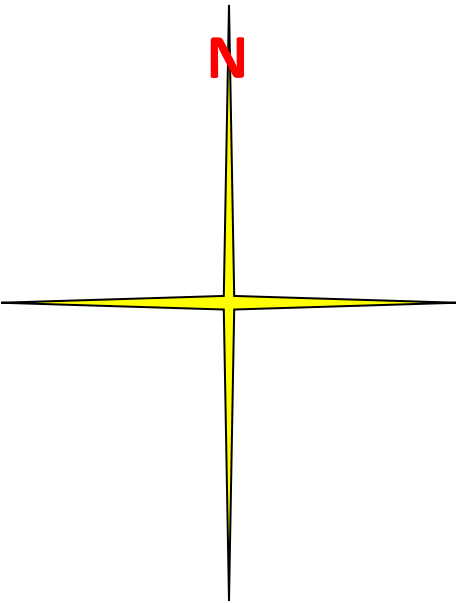
Remember, when going through the process of balancing the money, time, energy, and frustrations of getting ready to cast off those dock lines and head out, you don't need to "reinvent the wheel". Get input from cruisers who have "gone before you" and learn from their mistakes *and* successes.

Also check the "aft-section" of *this book* for more information, and spend some time on our web site –

[encorepress.com](http://encorepress.com)

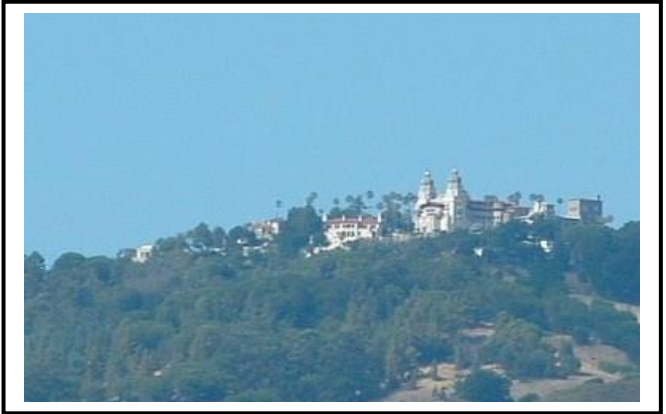
You will find lists of links to websites with information regarding several important categories that will be a great help to you in getting to Mexico and in finding places you want while you are there. The first list is a list of our sponsors. We, and other cruisers have used them. They are known in the cruising community as reliable, and helpful. They are listed proudly and prominently with links to their websites. They are the folks who have underwritten the costs of making our seminars and books available to you. Be sure to tell the sponsors "THANKS" for helping us get this book printed and out to you. They have promised to help take care of you the way they took care of us. Please let us know how they did.

The next list to look for, is our list of links to various services along the Pacific Coast of Washington, Oregon, California and the inland Delta area of California. Some of them are marinas or other services will help you get ready to go; some of them will be helping you when you are on your way. It's a list combining many categories similar to others that are available, and it is on the website.



## Cruising Styles

Some people use the boat as a condo, or a “cabin at the beach,” and move it between marinas and enjoy primarily “day-sailing” or being out for around a week at a time. We have friends who love being in one area for several months at a time, and then heading off to some new metropolitan area, and then using it as their



new base of operations for another extended stay. Others cruise extensively up and down the coast, mostly anchored out in small



bays and at out of the way places. We are sure you will recognize Hearst Castle, above, but did you know about the cove at San Simeon just below it? You don't have to go to Mexico to cruise, although it is a lot warmer in the winter

than just about anywhere else.

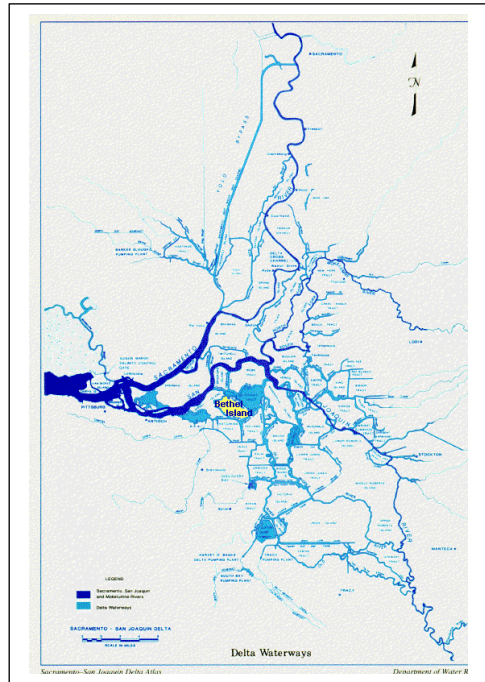
Along the California coast you can find places to be by yourself, or in the midst of a mega-population city. There are bays, inlets, rivers,



and estuaries. If you REALLY want to get in some fantastic “cruising practice”, get away from it all and yet be close to several towns and even I-5, try going up into “The Delta”. It is east of San Francisco Bay, between Stockton and Sacramento, and contains 1,000 miles of navigable waterways!

Go on your own or spend part of the summer cruising the “The Delta” as part of the annual DELTA DOO DAH sponsored by Latitude 38. Everybody likes to sail on a beam-reach, and no matter which way the wind is blowing you can find a place to do that, and be warm!

There are lots of yellow burgees in the next two shots. The first is a shot of Delta Doo Dah



boats converging at Boyd's Harbor on Bethel Island. The two sailboats in the foreground, the dark blue one and the one towing the dinghy, had recently returned from



Mexico. That should give you an idea of how great cruising in The Delta can be. The photo below is one of the anchor-out raft-ups. Some S.F. Bay sailors were finally getting used to being in sunshine. Both of these photos were taken by Latitude 38's LaDonna Bubak during



the inaugural Delta Doo Dah in 2009. The shot of *PEREGRIN* below proves that the Doo Dah even allows "stink-pots" to join in

the fun up in the Delta. Pat and Carole sandwiched the Marine Trader 34 in between *ESPIRITU* and *ENCORE*, the Cheoy Lee they acquired in Barra de Navidad, discussed previously.

The picture below is Cat Harbor in the Channel Islands, just a few miles off the California coast. In Mexico you have some of the same choices, but there is a lot more of the wide open and remote to choose from. Cruising will



encompass any combination of these approaches.

The pages that follow focus on cruising south along the coasts of Washington, Oregon, California, Baja California, the Sea of Cortez, Mexico's coast and on to Central America. The discussions will include what you'll need with you and what to expect as you set sail south ready to fully utilize your charts and cruising guides.

The provisioning you do will be different when you are in relatively large ports with mega-sized stores, both in the U.S. and Mexico, compared to the villages of the Sea of Cortez, for example, where it might be 100 miles to the next small tienda. But, as you'll see, it is just a matter of getting accustomed to your surroundings, which in itself can be a great adventure.

In our years in Mexico and Central America, we spent a lot of time in small towns and bays – from the Sea of Cortez south to Panama, and we hardly ever had trouble getting



what we needed. In fact, to a large extent, we found that if we hadn't brought something with us, we really didn't need it because we could find a good alternative. These days, there are the Mexican equivalent of big-box stores within a twenty to thirty-minute bus ride of virtually every marina in Mexico, and they are stocked with most everything you really *need*. But that does not mean you will have all the choices you would have by running to Trader Joe's, Whole Food's, Nob Hill or Macy's.

When you are out cruising you will have two basic choices, with a third choice as a fallback solution: (1) either plan ahead for what you really need to have with you, or (2) roll with it and enjoy the scavenger hunt of finding some wonderful alternatives. And yes,



you guessed it, the “fallback” is to just go without “it” and refer to your choice #2 for some substitute.

We have one more topic to cover before we get into where you are going. We want you to review a very short list of some spectacular things you are going to at least see, and probably participate in.

Here is a quick update on some of the annual events along the Pacific Coast of Mexico. It is included to help you with initial planning of potential places to visit, and to start assembling a rough

time schedule of places to go and fun things to do primarily along the mainland coastal cruising areas of Mexico. This is not a complete list by any stretch of the imagination, and it is *NOT* meant to be a complete list of excellent places to cruise while you are sailing Mexican waters.

The schedule shown here is drawn on events taking place in the 2018 to 2020 cruising seasons, and is indicative of most years. It is shown here simply to assist with your basic planning. A debt of gratitude and a THANK YOU goes to Bill Noonan and Andy Barrow of the Vallarta Yacht Club who originally gathered and provided this information. You will need to do some checking and verifying of actual dates as you get closer to your own departures. Other activities are not included here simply because some event information didn't reach us with the details.

The Mexican cruising season begins about November 1<sup>st</sup> and ends six months later when your six-month visa expires, "depending?!" Depending on the weather and hurricanes, depending on just not wanting to move from where you are, or the terms included within your boat insurance, or excessive heat and no breeze, or you made a trip back home acquiring a new 180-day visa on your return trip, or other things like grandkids, graduations, money, even jobs and commuter cruising schedules.

To help you understand what and where everybody is talking about, next, we'll identify some regions of mainland Mexico using the names generally assigned to these regions by the "locals". The Gold Coast generally refers to the mainland area at Mazatlán continuing south to Acapulco. If someone refers to the "Costalegre" area they are probably identifying the region from Banderas Bay south to Barra de Navidad, perhaps to Manzanillo.

January and February will be great months for your most southerly sailing destinations for some good reasons. The Sea of Cortez can

have colder blustery northern winds, there can be cooler days and nights with a little fog in Mazatlán, and Banderas Bay will have its coolest part of the year. South of Banderas Bay is the Costalegre Area with its soft sand beaches, calm bays, and a warmer region

### **SOME GREAT ACTIVITIES, AND THE APPROXIMATE TIMING OF THE EVENTS**

**Baja Ha Ha** - October 28-November 10

**Banderas Bay Blast** - (usually early December)

**Marina de La Paz “FANLAP”** fundraiser for children in the La Paz Barrio, held in early December

**Vallarta Cup** (cruisers race/party) - Each Saturday in January

**Zihuatanejo Sailfest** - February, (the 1st Monday after Super Bowl)

**Vallarta YC Cruise Out** to Chemela, Tenacatita and Barra – timed to include a week of festivities at Barra de Navidad

**Barra Cruise-in Week & Mexican Festival** (3rd week of Feb)  
includes a Mexican Fiesta, boat parade, work-day, fundraiser, & more

**Zihuatanejo Guitarfest** - (1<sup>st</sup> week in March)

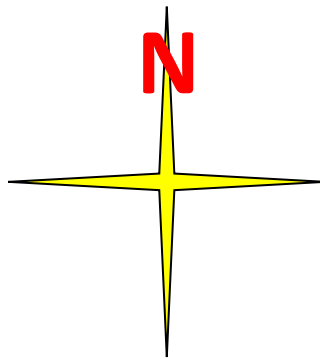
**Banderas Bay Regatta** – (1st week in March)

that is protected from the prevailing winds by Cabo Corrientes.

Other annual events you may want to investigate include Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday gatherings and New Year’s Eve Parties at the major places where cruisers gather, Music festivals and a Butterfly Festival at Loretto, and many local Fiestas, including local “Carnival” Fiestas, in the small towns and villages of Mexico, or Mazatlán. There are many great places to leave your boat for inland trips, also.

If you are planning on cruising Mexico for only one year there is no way you will have time to hit all of these events. You would be lucky to hit them in two years, or maybe even in three. The reason for that is because there is just so much to do and see, and that doesn't even take into account all the wonderful unexpected things that pop up along the way, or in other regions of Mexico!

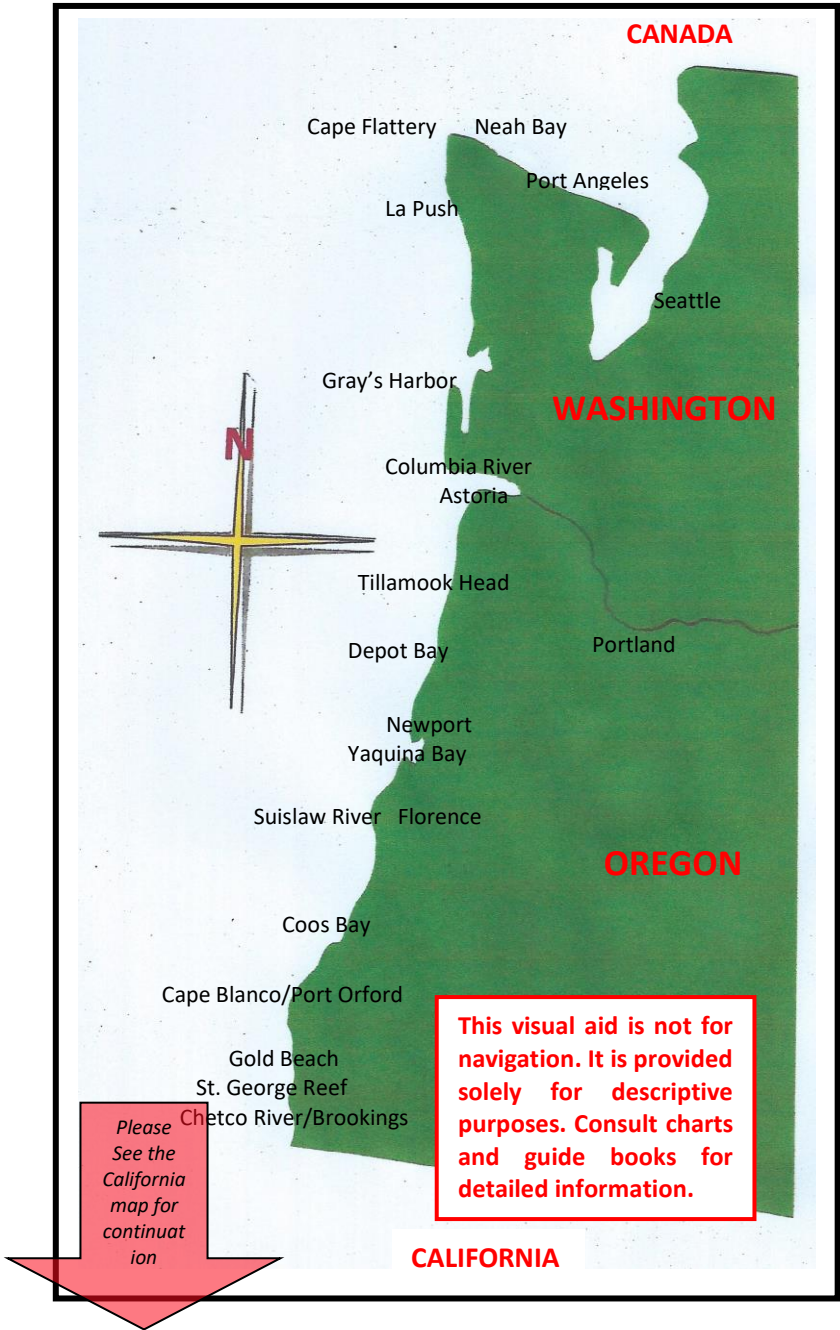
The rest of our book covers the basics of what lies off your Port bow as you journey south. It will not only familiarize you with what's ahead of you, but will better equip you to use your charts and cruising guides. **CRUISING NOTES Things to know before you go** will help your planning, give you insights, updates, tips and hints that you won't find together in any one place, anywhere else.



## **SECTION II Under Way**



*The Pacific Northwest to San Francisco*



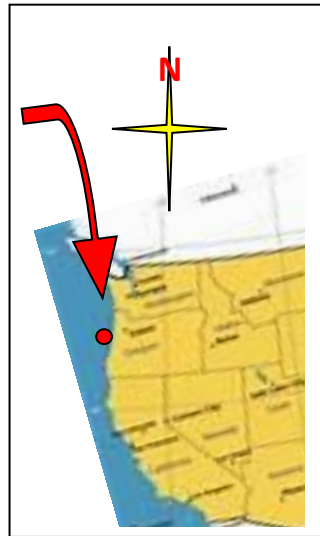


## ***Distance Planning for Washington and Oregon***

Disclaimer: The information below is NOT to be used for navigation. Compilations are approximations only; they are not guaranteed, either expressly or impliedly, by the authors.

<b><u>Anchorage</u></b>	<b><u>Miles From</u></b>	<b><u>Hours @</u></b>	<b><u>Hours @</u></b>
	<b><u>Prior Anchorage</u></b>	<b><u>5 Knots</u></b>	<b><u>7 Knots</u></b>
Seattle	start		
Port Angeles	75	15	10.7
Neah Bay	50	10	7.2
Cape Flattery	6	1.2	.86
La Push	33	6.6	4.7
Grays Harbor	70	14	10
Columbia River			
/ Astoria	52	10.4	7.4
* Tillamook Head			
/ Garibaldi	<i>(Avoid other than in emergencies)</i>		
Depoe Bay	95	19	13.6
Yaquina Bay			
/ Newport	12	2.4	1.7
* Suislaw River/Florence	<i>(Avoid other than in emergencies)</i>		
Coos Bay	42	8.4	6
Cape Blance			
/ (Port Orford)	41	8.2	5.9
* Gold Beach	<i>(Avoid other than in emergencies)</i>		
Chetco River			
/ (Brookings)	25	5	3.6
Crescent City, CA.	20	4	2.9
Total Miles	<u>591</u>	<u>118.2</u>	<u>84.4</u>

Unless you are harbor hopping, the usual time required from Puget Sound to San Francisco is six to ten days and the best time to travel is June to August. If you can't manage that schedule, an expanded window of May to September is almost as good. You must keep in mind that the Pacific Ocean along the stretch of Washington, Oregon and Northern California is among the most difficult passages you will undertake, anywhere. The furthest point west in the continental (lower 48) United States is along your course, at Cape Blanco, shown here. There is a lighthouse perched atop the cliffs several hundred feet above the Pacific Ocean. Mariners have long referred to this area as the "Graveyard of the Pacific." However, with the navigational aids we have today compared with those of 50 to 100 years ago and proper preparation and care, this can be an enjoyable leg of your cruise.



Conditions are typically stronger offshore, with potentially higher winds and seas sixty miles or so out, but capes, such as Blanco or Mendocino, can usually be more easily rounded further out to sea to avoid fog banks, wind, etc. The seas and winds are generally less severe and of shorter duration close to the coast but fog is more frequent and dense, and you will be dealing with the refraction of the seas off the coast if you stay close in. So, while it can be a mixed bag, boats headed south can generally avoid heavier seas by staying within 30 miles of the coast and the quickest route may be just five to ten miles out. Drawbacks, however, can include increased traffic and fog. In recent years, many sailors from the Pacific Northwest have been joining the Cojo Ho Ho sailing rally and heading south from around the Seattle area each year. Their plan

includes being in San Diego in time to join the Baja Ha Ha heading to Mexico.

The authors have been in and out of the various bays along this section of the coast, and visited the facilities you will find along the way, for many years. McIntoshes have taken sport fishing trips from a couple of the ports we don't think you should enter without local knowledge, and they've also driven the coast for over twenty-five years checking harbors and other facilities. The McCalebs, on the other hand, have made this voyage as a particularly memorable passage with two stops, at Coos Bay and Bodega Bay. They have successfully sailed past the lighthouse at the furthest west promontory in the lower 48!

The information regarding this section of the coast is part first-hand, and part gleaned from other sources such as harbor masters, fishermen and *Charlie's Charts of the Pacific Coast*, who have been past sponsors of this book. This information has been reviewed and in several important locations personally updated as of July of 2018.

The following references are intended as informational only. Do **NOT** rely on them for navigational purposes, as sand bars, shoals, marinas, restaurants and other facilities are always changing along the northwest coast of the Pacific Ocean. The coast is also peppered with navigational obstacles and mariners must pay close attention to their charts.

Here is our recommendation as you head south: although some coastal area fishermen with their local information might disagree, entrances to avoid in anything other than emergencies include Tillamook Bay (Garibaldi), Siuslaw River (Florence), Umpqua River (Salmon Harbor), the Rogue River (Gold Beach), and Noyo (Fort Bragg). If you must enter these areas, pay close attention to your

charts and be sure to call on your VHF radio for local information and updates on the entrance bar. It is also advisable to call the local Coast Guard to alert them that you are coming in and ask for information (or assistance if you require it).

**Neah Bay** - Six miles east of Cape Flattery is the first port of entry, if you are entering the United States from Canada. It is a good place to use as your jumping off spot. Rest up and do your last provisioning before rounding Cape Flattery and heading south.

**La Push** – At 35 miles south of Cape Flattery, keep a sharp eye for Indian fishing nets and do not attempt to enter La Push at night. Also be mindful of the 100-foot overhead cable crossing the entrance channel as you enter. The channel is also dangerous in heavy southerly weather.

**Gray's Harbor** – Ninety-three miles south of Cape Flattery, two extensive breakwater jetties extend out from both entrance points to Gray's Harbor. The south jetty is submerged at the outer end, so be mindful here.

**Columbia River** – One hundred and forty-five miles south of Cape Flattery and five hundred fifty miles north of San Francisco, the Columbia River is not highly recommended for stopping over. The entrance is between Clatsop Spit on the south and Cape Disappointment on the north. Clatsop Spit is a low sandy beach 2½ miles northwest from Point Adams. The south jetty extends almost three miles to sea from the end of Clatsop Spit. The river's entrance lies between the south and north jetties. Peacock Spit is north and west of the north jetty and is the most dangerous area to be in. Breakers can extend four miles out to sea and must be given clearance of 1½ miles. The river current in this area can reach nine knots.

**Depoe Bay** – One hundred miles south of Cape Disappointment and 12 miles north of Yaquina, this bay should be approached only from the offshore buoy over a mile off the entrance to the bay because a reef reaches out to within 100 yards of the buoy. The highway bridge over the entrance has a vertical clearance of only 42 feet. The bay has the distinction of being the world’s smallest navigable harbor. Known as the “Hole in the Wall,” it’s reputed to be about the most difficult entrance of any west coast harbor.

**Yaquina Bay (Newport)** – This is the *first, and best, place south of the Columbia River that can be entered easily.* Pick up offshore

lighted buoy “Y” a mile and a half southwest of the



entrance, followed by three buoys leading to the entrance. Clear buoy one before



turning either north or south. This first shot shows the channel and jetties. Even on sunny days it is difficult to pick out these buoys. The next shot shows the main span of the Newport's Yaquina Bay and the Conde McCullough bridge which dates back to 1936, from the approximate view you will have about the time you adjust your course to enter the harbor area. Whether you are waiting out a storm or only spending a few days, a stop at Newport can make

your southbound trip into a vacation. Good provisioning, marine supplies, great restaurants, motels with soft mattresses and touristy shops are all available very close to your dock.

When you have passed the bridge, the South Beach Marina and RV Park will be to your starboard, just past the Rogue River Brewery and Restaurant. As you are coming in the channel, make sure you are sighting on the proper range marker, NOT the sign to the right of it for the brewery. The marina includes a store, showers, laundry



facilities and more. There are also facilities on the north side of the river along the working wharf, next to the major visitor attractions. The marina and town of Newport also have lots of information available online, including some great information about crossing the Yaquina Bay Bar. The brochure they print and give away will also apply to the dinghy-landings in your not too distant future as well!

## **Florence / Siuslaw River**

The Siuslaw River and the town of Florence are approximately 50 miles south of Newport and Yaquina Bay.

Be sure to consult current guide books and all updated information prior to entering. Mariners are advised to contact Siuslaw River Coast Guard Station on VHF-FM channel 16 before attempting to cross the bar. The river is entered through a dredged channel between two partially submerged jetties; caution is advised. A light, seasonal sound signal and a Coast Guard tower are on the north jetty. The channel is marked by a 096° lighted entrance range that favors the north side of the channel. The uncharted buoys at the mouth of the river are frequently shifted to mark the best water. The bar at the entrance is narrow, and the depths vary greatly because of storm runoff. The entrance and south jetty shoals tend to build during late winter and spring. The river leads south to a turning basin off the town of Florence, 4.4 miles above the bar at the entrance. A bascule highway bridge with a clearance of 17 feet when it is closed, crosses the river from Florence to Glenada, a small settlement on the south bank of the river opposite Florence. . There are other ranges and navigational aids to one mile above Florence.

**Coos Bay** – Thirty-three miles above Cape Blanco, Coos Bay is generally regarded as a safe harbor of refuge. The local knowledge advises to only enter on a flood tide. The current may build either to the

north or south off the ends of the jetties. Another submerged jetty also extends 1/3 of a mile out from the east shore of Coos Bay. Phil had to hide here and do repairs when strong southerlies

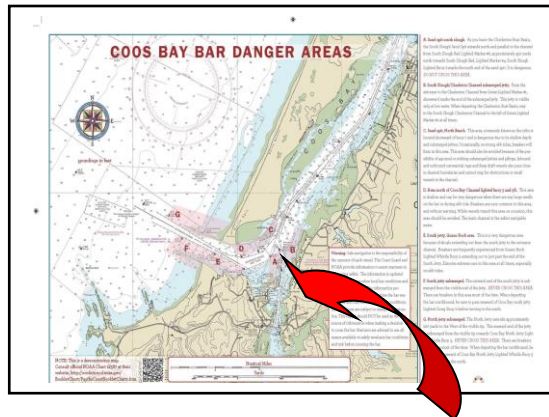
### **Port of Coos Bay – Charleston Marina**

541-267-7678  
63534 Kingfisher Rd.  
Charleston, OR 97420

<http://www.portofcoosbay.com>

threatened the coast and capsized a boat a few miles south when they were bringing Shiraz down from Seattle to San Francisco.

Historically known as Marshfield, Coos Bay celebrates a history in shipbuilding and lumber products while serving as the regional hub for Oregon's south coast. Coos Bay proudly stands today as the largest city on the Oregon coast, with a population of over 16,000, and is the medical, education, retail, and professional center for the south coast region. Wagon roads first connected Coos Bay to Jacksonville and Roseburg, in the 1850's. The Port of Coos Bay, according to the local chamber of commerce, "may be the best natural harbor between San Francisco Bay and the Puget Sound."



The Coos Bay Area consists of four

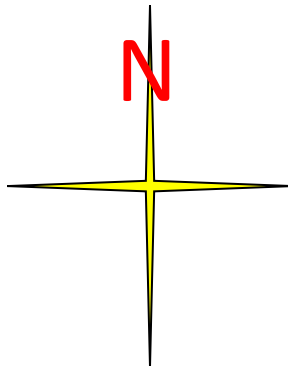
cities which include Coos Bay, North Bend, Empire, and **Charleston**. Charleston is a quaint fishing village located just inside the entrance to the bay, and just eight miles from Coos Bay. Charleston is home to some of the finest recreation and most beautiful scenery in the Northwest. The harbor serves as a home port to a large commercial fishing fleet and a bustling marina serving charter boat operators, sports fishermen, crabbers and recreational boaters. The Coos Bay area is the location of the Southwestern Oregon Regional Airport (OTH) which now offers daily flights to and from major airline destinations. The city is also



the home of the Bay Area Hospital (BAH) which is the largest medical facility on the Oregon coast.

**Port Orford** – This is arguably the best anchorage north of Point Reyes, especially in northwesterly wind. But take care to stay clear of dangerous areas west and southwest of Cape Blanco where reefs and scattered rocks are located. Orford reef extends two to five miles offshore. Do not pass between it and either the coast or Blanco Reef without local knowledge.

**Chetco River (Brookings)** – Chetco Point marks a notable change in the orientation of the coast, making a significant turn to the east. This affords Brookings increased protection from northwesterly winds but renders the channel untenable in southerly weather. The entrance is about 26 miles south of the Rogue River and 18 miles north of Crescent City, California.

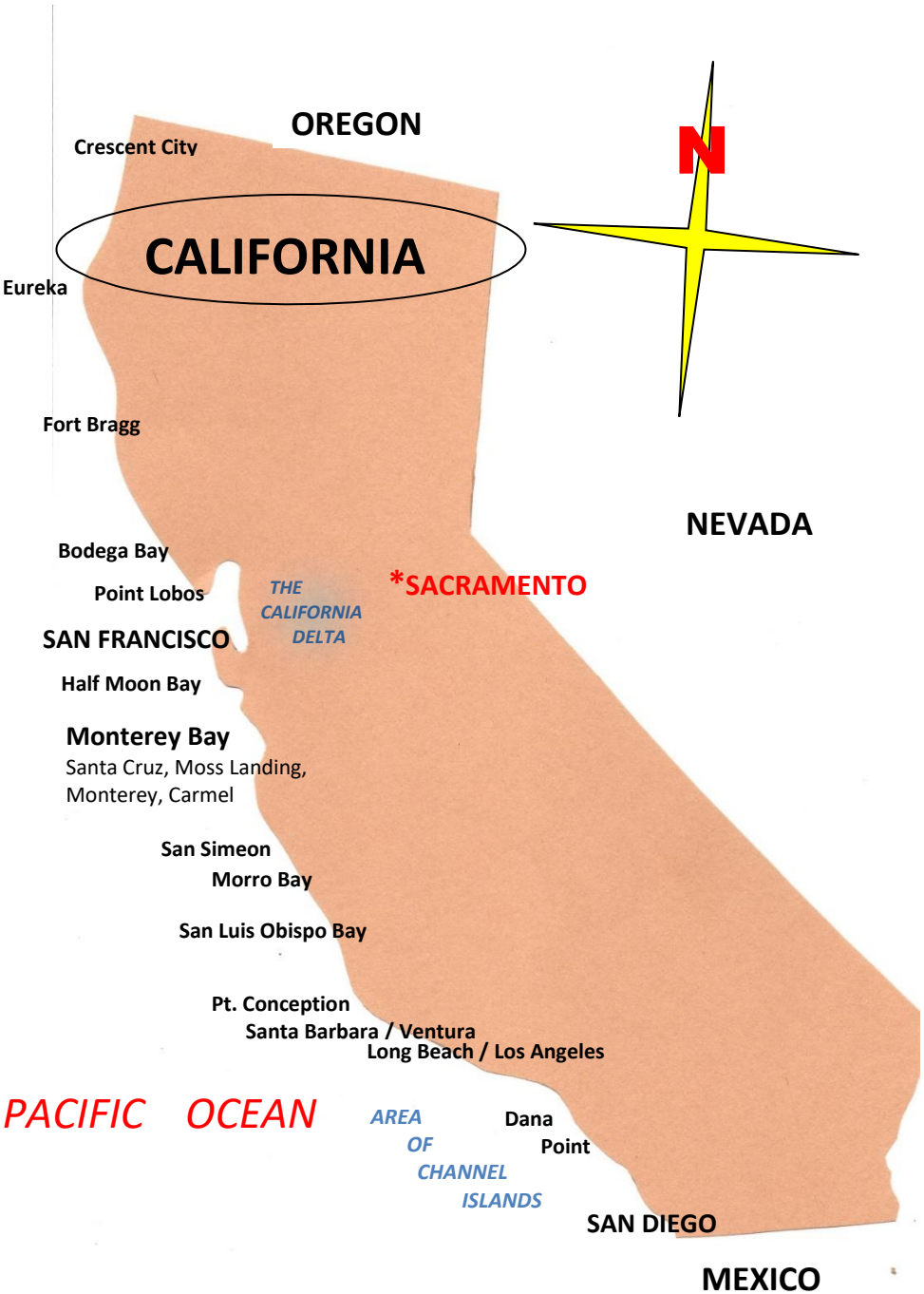


## ***The Coast of California***



***OPOSING WINDS, TIDES AND CURRENTS CAN CREATE SOME NASTY CHOP  
THE LAST COUPLE OF MILES ON YOUR APPROACH TO THE GATE.***

**NOTE:** this view is an approach from the south, heading into The Bay in a northeasterly direction, a bit to starboard within the center span.



## ***Distance Planning Data for California***

Disclaimer: The information below is *NOT* to be used for navigation. Compilations are approximations only and not guaranteed, either expressly or implied, by the authors.

<b><u>NM From Last Location</u></b>	<b><u>Approx Hours at 5 knots Average</u></b>	<b><u>Approx Hours at 7 Knots Average</u></b>	
Crescent City	start		
Eureka	86	17.2	12.3
Bodega Bay	195	39	27.9
San Francisco	50	10	7.1
Half Moon Bay	25	5	3.6
Santa Cruz	65	13	9.3
Monterey	27	5.4	3.9
San Simeón	95	19	13.6
Morro Bay	33	6.6	4.7
San Luis Obispo	22	4.4	3.1
Point Conception			
(and Cojo Anchorage)	39	7.8	5.6
Santa Barbara	43	8.6	6.7
Ventura	25	5	3.6
Oxnard	8	1.6	1.1
Marina del Rey	48	9.6	6.9
Long Beach	30	6	4.3
Newport Beach	23	4.6	3.3
Dana Point	15	3	2.1
Oceanside	25	5	3.6
San Diego	25	5	3.6
Santa Barbara to San Diego.			
	163	32.6	23.3
Santa Barbara to Catalina Island			
	94	18.8	13.4
Catalina Island to San Diego			
	75	15	10.7

***Crescent City*** – This is the first tenable stop in California. Though the harbor is easily entered in daylight it should not be attempted at night absent local knowledge. The entrance must be approached with extreme care because rocks and shoals extend roughly a mile to the northwest. Offshore buoy two is just over a mile WSW of the harbor entrance.

***Trinidad Head*** – This is 45 miles south of Crescent City and nearly 18 miles north of Humboldt Bay. Stay two miles offshore if approaching from the north. Whistle buoy 26 is about one mile west of Trinidad Head and a gong buoy to be rounded is another mile to the southeast. Moor in a cove east of Trinidad Head. There is always some swell and holding is only fair in the cove.

***Humboldt Bay (Eureka)*** – Eureka is a port of entry and customs port as well as a harbor of refuge, but call the Coast Guard for a bar report before attempting entry. Strong currents and shoaling can make for a difficult entrance. Approach from Trinidad Head when coming south for a good line to approach the bay. A lighted buoy is a little over one mile WNW of the bay entrance. Bell buoy #2 is west of the southern jetty.

***Shelter Cove*** – This is a popular anchorage roughly 60 miles south of Eureka, behind Point Delgada. Keep south of both whistle buoy 20 and bell buoy #1 to avoid rocks and shoals. There is typically some surge in the cove and the anchorage becomes dangerous in southerly or southeasterly winds.

***Noyo Anchorage (Fort Bragg)*** – Here you are about 97 miles south of Eureka and 80 miles north of Bodega Bay. Pass it up if there are strong westerlies or poor visibility. A bridge clears the river by 80 feet. Many rocks dot the southern half of the

anchorage and fog and shoaling are common in the narrow channel. The Boatyard Shopping Center should be able to meet most of your needs if you do need to do some shopping.

***Bodega Bay*** – This is a good place to duck into if you need to head for shelter. It’s also great if you are going there for the fishing / crab seasons. Here are a couple shots we took at a low tide that will show you why you need to stay in the channel, even at



the highest tides. The first one is looking in from Bodega Head. The second is from the old commercial dock area looking back towards Bodega Head. There is a Coast Guard station here, and two marinas. The marina to port is the best one but is furthest away from



stores. There is a small community here, but it is quite a walk to get to it.

Phil and his crew were at sea and put in here after they had heard the Twin Towers had come down on 9/11. He said an eerie feeling of near complete detachment came over them for the first time at sea as they struggled to get information. Eighty miles south of Fort Bragg and twenty five miles north of Drakes Bay, it offers adequate facilities, and is quite pretty and peaceful, but it caters to commercial fishing and crabbing, and sport fishing, so it



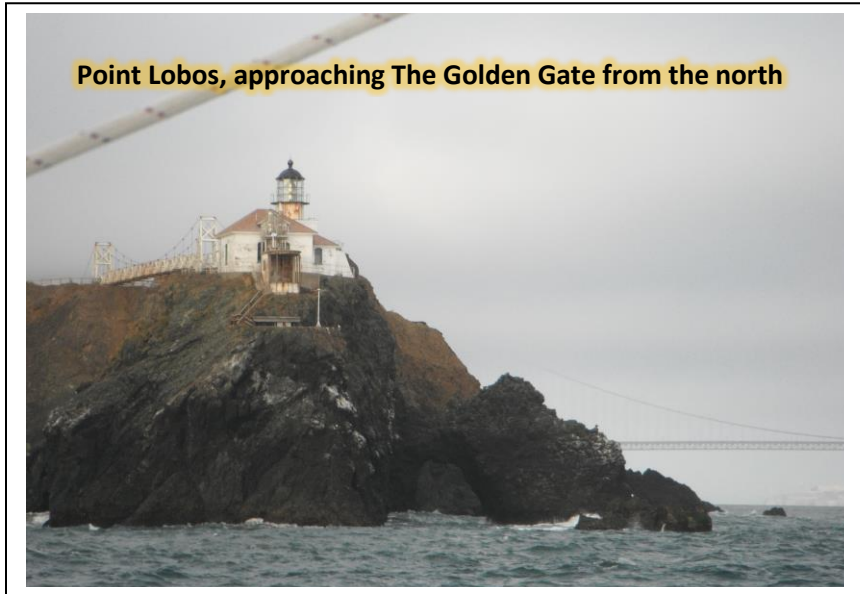
is on the “hardy” rather than “yachtie” side of things. Just over a mile



southwest of Bodega Head is whistle buoy 12. Gong buoy BA is found 3½ miles to the northeast. Do not pass between Bodega Head and Bodega Rock unless conditions are calm. Two lighted ranges will lead you in. There

are slips available once inside the Bay, along with a quaint little town that offers a stark reminder of Alfred Hitchcock’s movie, *The Birds*. This can be a good place to stop and rest, and to time your entrance into San Francisco Bay. There are a couple of restaurants close to the docks, and minimal shopping for staples. One of the really good things here is that the sea-food is as good or better than in San Francisco, and it is normally not near as expensive.

**San Francisco Bay** - The area to the immediate west of the Golden Gate Bridge is the San Francisco Bar, extending in a large arc from three miles south of Point Lobos, five miles to the west of the bridge, and ending one half mile off Point Bonita on the north side. The



northern boundary includes the infamous Potato Patch Shoal, and the Bonita Channel with the Point Bonita lighthouse. It bottoms out at 23 feet, most of which can be consumed in questionable-weather conditions by heavy seas rolling toward the Golden Gate. In large seas or even moderate winds this can be a dangerous place to be. Sailors with local knowledge strongly urge against attempting to use the Bonita Channel near the



lighthouse, pictured above, in anything except very benign conditions. If you are entering from the north, it is ***okay to enter between the shore*** and the outbound shipping lane instead of crossing over the shipping lanes, by approaching on a parallel path north of the outbound shipping lane.



**Approaching The Golden Gate coming up from the south**

**YOU CAN FEEL YOU HAVE DONE  
SOMETHING SPECIAL WHEN  
YOU SAIL YOUR OWN  
BOAT THROUGH THE  
GOLDEN GATE.**

It is always best to plan your arrival to coincide with a flood tide if you can, because the currents coming out under The Gate are known to stop sailboats dead in their tracks. Also, be constantly aware of tidal currents,

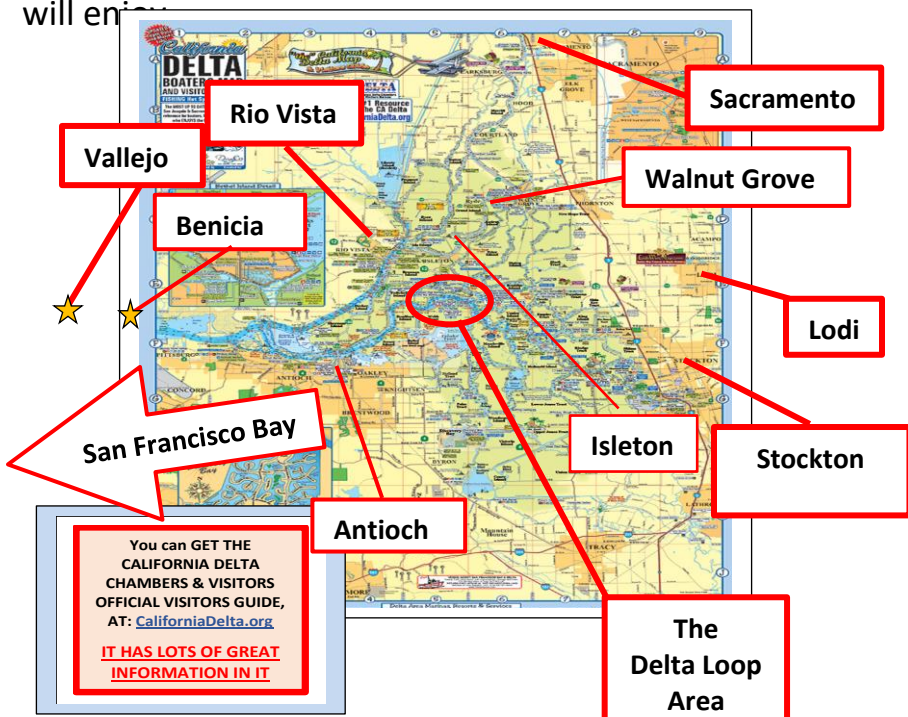
wind direction and velocity, and the San Francisco fog. One place you really don't want to find yourself is coming in through The Golden Gate with an ebb tide running into a good westerly wind; it will really pile up the waves when that happens. If, by unfortunate circumstances you have to enter against a full running ebb tide, your best bet to get in is probably staying very close to the north shore where you will have either less current against you or an eddy to help get you in past the Golden Gate Bridge. However, it is advised that you use caution when crossing the shipping lanes and that you cross over well out from the entrance. Unless you have crew to assist you in monitoring depth, the rocks and the shore, and swirls in the water, do not attempt this route if you have any other safe alternatives. Be ever mindful of deep-sea commercial traffic which moves quickly under The Gate, and has the *right of way*.

The safest approach coming into San Francisco Bay is to enter through the center span, well to the side of the main ship channel. The approach into the bay is from a bit south of due west to a bit north of due east. You won't miss it because those beautiful big towers will lead you right in.

Now that you are here, stay for a while, and enjoy one of the world's "primo" sailing regions, before moving on. Since you have just completed a cold ride down the coast you deserve at least a few sunny days. There is an unexpected treat for you, just a few miles inland. We

strongly suggest you head up into the warm and fresh waters of the California Delta. “The Delta” is where lots of local coastal sailors go to warm ***up in the summer***. The fresh water will also help clean the bottom of your boat before you continue heading south.

We are including a little information here, but you need to “google” The California Delta and Latitude’s DELTA DOO DAH to begin finding out what you need to allow time for while you are passing through. Spending time in the California Delta might be so much fun you will bring your boat back from Mexico for the summer season and really spend extended time here. We know cruisers who have done just that! The Delta includes 1,000 miles of navigable waterways, lots of historical towns, great fishing, anchorages, marinas and a lay-back attitude you will enjoy.



## ***San Francisco to Point Conception***

**Before heading south from San Francisco review our previous section on CRUISING STYLES and refer to your CRUISING GUIDES for details on stopping points. Your time will dictate where you can**

As good as the sailing on San Francisco Bay can be, coastal sailing, heading south along the coast of California, will open up a whole new dimension of sailing for you.

Except for only a couple of spots heading south, you can enjoy day-hops, stopping at either good anchorages or at marinas with all the amenities you want. Plan your route so you can stop at some of the wonderful ports, especially if you are new to this area.

Along the coast of California, fog may come and go very quickly. Wherever you are sailing you will have a chance of fog. You have a bigger chance of running into fog where there are swamps or deltas, some low lying coastal areas, a convergence of temperature zones or a cold water current. Expect it and be ready for it. It's the coast, right? Check your cruising guides for information on all the ports along the way. It can be an enjoyable ride the coast down from San Francisco.

## ***Planning to Round Point Conception***

You will probably want to stop at Morro Bay, home to a very welcoming yacht club, to time your rounding of the cape. Take your time and plan your weather window where there is shelter, food, water, fuel and good information. This is also a great stop coming north to catch your breath and let your crew get back on dry and firm ground. After one particularly rough trip, our son actually got out and kissed the ground when we arrived here.

Other good stops are: Half Moon Bay, San Simeon Bay and Hearst Castle, Santa Cruz, Moss Landing, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo Bay.

If you need an anchorage just south of Pt. Conception, stop at Cojo. Once you are south of Conception, the weather starts to get warmer. The Channel Islands are like nothing we have in the San Francisco Bay Area in the summer. Sailing is generally warm with pleasant light breezes.



You can day-hop and spend lots of time either on the mainland coast or out around the islands. Each of the Channel Islands has its own beauty; there are opportunities for hiking and just enjoying the relative solitude.

For those new to sailing along the coast, we can't say this too many times. There are designated shipping lanes that will show up on your charts. Commercial traffic uses these lanes for the most part, so if you are going to sail there, or cross these lanes, you need to be aware of the shipping traffic. The bridge on these large boats is very high off the water, and your boat is not readily visible. At times when we have hailed a commercial vessel to make sure that they were aware of us, they hadn't even seen us out the window, let alone on their radar. You will need to "drive" defensively,

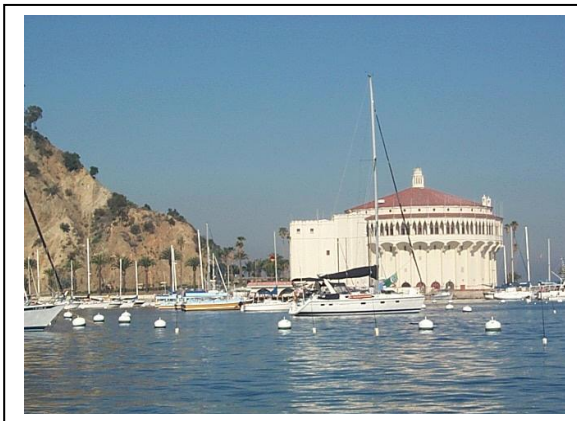
especially at night. These are waters where AIS can come in handy, and don't hesitate to hail the commercial traffic!

### ***Point Conception to San Diego***

There isn't time or room enough here to cover all of the fantastic possibilities south of Point Conception. There are lots of great sailing spots, anchorages, marinas, tourist attractions, and shopping, and it is warm compared to weather north of Point Conception. Be aware of the rules in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the Naval Danger Zone, and the other things the cruising guides point out; avoid the drilling platforms and the shipping lanes!



Here is a shot of Pat and Carole coming into the guest dock at Santa Barbara. It's fantastic here and the marina and boatyard bend over backward to be helpful; the same can be said with regard to Ventura. From the marina at Santa Barbara you can



walk to town and businesses, the weekly farmers' market, and even up to the Santa Barbara Mission. Although it is great for a short stay, if you need to leave your boat for any length of time,



Santa Barbara is very expensive. Other good spots include Oxnard, Marina Del Rey and the whole Los Angeles and Long Beach area clear down to Newport Beach. After you do the Channel Islands, including Avalon, the whole south coast has ports not more than a hop away from each other all the way to San Diego. This whole trip can take from three days to more than three months. *Enjoy!*



**Dana Point Anchorage**

### ***San Diego Area***

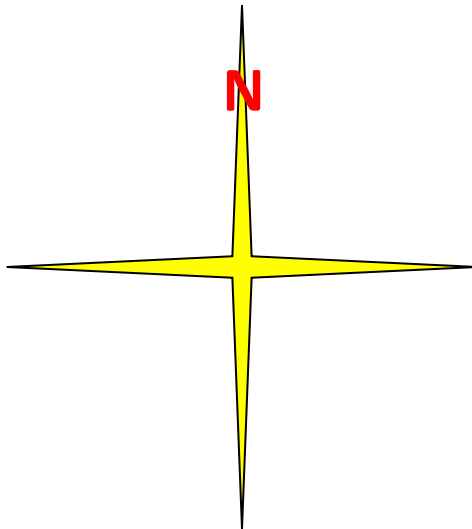
This is a fantastic area to do your last boat prep and provisioning before you head south. All your favorite stores are here from Trader Joe's to the big box stores. Von's market is a local store that does a great job competing with prices and selections. Everything "marine" is close at hand. The airport is close by with flights from all airlines including Southwest and Jet Blue. Go online to get cheap car rentals from Fox or others.

Want a quick trip to Mexico for a day and have some fantastic fresh fish or tacos? Go to the airport; get a free shuttle to the car rental agencies that are located on the trolley line. Then you take the street car to the border and walk to the bus station in Tijuana where you take the express bus to Ensenada. The busses are great

and you get a movie; but bring along a snack like the locals. Be sure to bring your passport; you want to come back, don't you?

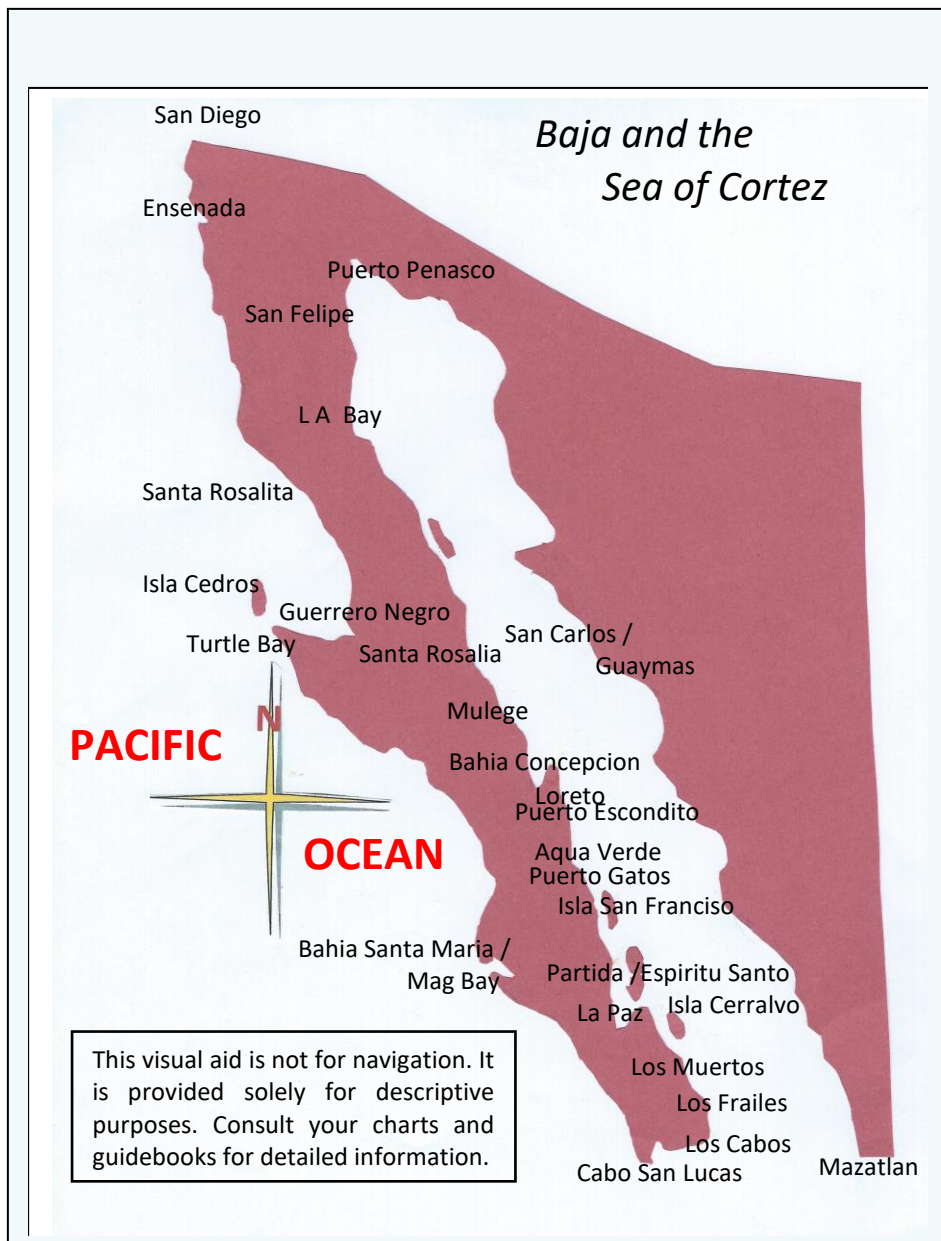
There are lots of things for the whole family to do in the San Diego area. Balboa Park is a must-do as well as the wild animal park, just for starters. The lighthouse and museum on Point Loma is also an absolute must because it will prepare you for the marine history of the Pacific Coast, especially the exploration of Mexico. Try to fit in plenty of time here before you head south. This would be a place for family to visit with you one more time. It would be easy to spend several weeks in this area and still feel like you were leaving too early, because you would be.

However, eventually it will be time to go, and the beauty of the landscape, the seascapes and the people of Mexico will truly have you wondering why you waited so many years to get there.



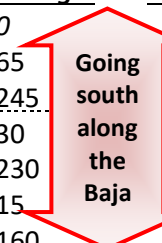



## *Baja and the Sea of Cortez*



## Planning Data for Baja California

Disclaimer: The information below is NOT to be used for navigation. Compilations are approximations only; they are not guaranteed, either expressly or impliedly, by the authors.

<u><b>Anchorage</b></u>	<u><b>Miles From Last Anchorage</b></u>	<u><b>Hours @ 5 Knots</b></u>	<u><b>or</b></u>	<u><b>Hours @ 7 Knots</b></u>
<i>San Diego</i>	0			
Ensenada	65			
Isla Cedros	245			
Turtle Bay	30			
Bahia Santa Maria	230			
Bahia Magdalena	15			
<u>Cabo San Lucas</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>32</u>		<u>22.9</u>
Frailas	42	8.4		6
Muertos	45	9		6.4
La Paz	55	11		7.9
San Gabriel Cove	15	3		
Partida Cove	12	2.4		
Isla San Francisco	20	4		
Evaristo	10	2		
Aqua Verde	42	8.4		
Puerto Escondido	23	4.6		
Loreto	15	3		
Caleta de San Juanico	21	4.2		
Bahia Concepción	40	8		
Santa Rosalia	49	9.8		
Bahia San Francisquito	78	15.6		11
Bahia de Los Angeles	51	10.2		7.3
<u>Puerto Penasco</u>	<div>                     BLA to Pt. Peñasco is 300+ mi, DEPENDING?!*                 </div>			
Santa Rosalia to				
San Carlos / Guaymas	91	18		13
Frailas to Mazatlán	160	32		23
Muertos to Mazatlán	190	38		27
Cabo S Lucas/Mazatlán	193	39		28
Cabo S Lucas				
to Puerto Vallarta	295	59		42

\*Depending on tides, currents, winds and if you go direct or to other places on the way to "Rocky Point"! DO YOUR NAVIGATION HOMEWORK!

## ***Entering Mexico at Ensenada***

Cruising guides will give detailed information on the Baja coast so be sure to consult them. Entering Mexico at Ensenada can make the paperwork and checking into the country very easy. This picture shows one of the three windows required for the total check-in process; all are contained within the same building located near the port. How easy is that! The reason it took two hours on



this particular day is another story, and due to some other folks who had not followed the rules, not us. Besides the ease of checking in, Ensenada is a delightful, fascinating place to begin to truly appreciate Mexico, its history and culture; just get a few blocks away from the tourist zone. There's a wonderful fish market along the beach area, at the north end of the malecon, north of Baja Naval Marina and Boatyard, a good, centrally located marina where you can dock your boat and have work done too. Another good marina in this area is Cruiseport Marina. It is located in the area where the cruise ships dock, and from either of these marinas

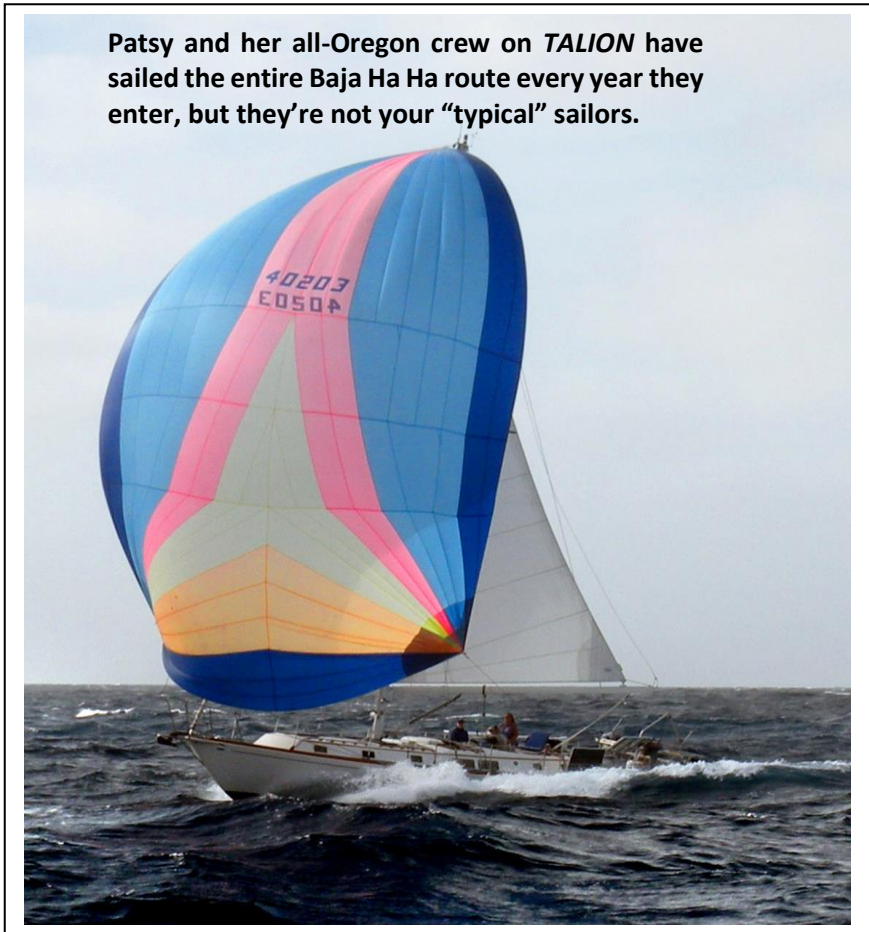
it is an easy walk all over Ensenada. Another good marina in Ensenada is Marina Coral, but it is a bit further out of town to the west. There are some medium-sized stores here, like Soriana where you can provision, get fresh hot tortillas and some prepared foods as well. Santo Tomas and L. A. Cetto, Mexican wineries, have tasting rooms in town; this will probably be your first introduction to some of the good Mexican wines available. They have been growing grapes and making wine in this region since the Spanish came to Mexico hundreds of years ago. If you have the time, take a tour to the nearby Valle de Guadalupe, the wine growing area. We did this twice in rental cars and would definitely do it again. Rental cars are pretty reasonable here, too; one of the most reasonable places we found was in the lobby at the hotel near Cruise Port.

Our experiences checking in and out of Mexico at Ensenada have been great. We have found it easy because everything you need is located in one building. It saves a lot of time compared with having to run around to several different locations to find customs, immigration and the bank.

### ***The Outside of the Baja***

Most cruisers take off from San Diego and sail directly to Turtle Bay. That route may be a thing of the past depending on the implementation of the new, evolving check-in procedures being put into place as we go to press. It appears that checking into Mexico at Ensenada is likely to be the preferred choice, so that you will be able to stop and enjoy the coastal regions on your way down the Baja. Each of the last few years have seen modifications to the Temporary Import Permit (TIP) procedures, so be sure to check for current procedures before you head south! That said, depending on your boat and sailing preferences, Turtle Bay may be a three-day and night sail away. However, it is possible to stop several

times along that section of the coast, depending on weather conditions. You can visit some small communities along the way. The same goes for the trip from Turtle Bay to Bahia Santa Maria and Magdalena Bay. From there to Cabo San Lucas, keep two things in mind: **1.** Do not try to go out the south end of Mag Bay for any



reason. **2.** You will most likely plan on sailing a straight shot to Cabo San Lucas because there isn't a good place to stop on the way. However, if time permits and you can find transportation, it is possible to visit much of that area by land using Highway 1, a main

highway between Tijuana and Cabo. There are also several interesting and safe back roads. It is well worth the time and effort, and some tours are available too. We drove several hours to the little town of San Ignacio which is about half-way to the Pacific Ocean, west of Loreto. It was mostly dirt road, but we thoroughly enjoyed the trip and visiting the old town and mission when we got there.

Consult the cruising guides and do your homework for sailing this area of Mexico. Pay special attention to the warnings about getting way inside those big bays on the outside of the Baja. Do not get suckered into the eastern, and especially the southeastern quadrants of Bahia Sebastian Vizcaino, north of Turtle Bay, or the bay north of Cabo San Lazaro at Bahia Santa Maria.

The typical cruiser is either part of an organized rally or may be in a hurry to get to mainland Mexico, so only makes minimal stops along the outside of the Baja. However, if your schedule permits, take the time to visit some of the smaller towns and anchorages.

**The trip down the outside *can* take 4 or 5, or 10 days; or more than a month. We have friends who've said a month wasn't enough time in just MAG BAY!**

You can easily harbor-hop south. We have friends who spent a month in Mag Bay alone, enjoying it immensely. The cruising guides include good information about all of the towns and anchorages along the coast of the Baja. All you need to do is continually check for local information, talk to the fishermen, and keep a good eye on the weather forecasts.

There are places to pull in if you need to, but before you go, make sure you are familiar with the coastline, its ports of refuge and its lee shore dangers. The weather can change quickly! The shots



above were taken within hours of each other coming north along The Baja. As mentioned, the cruising guides are indispensable for coastal cruising. They will give you tips on which places are good for ducking into for a quick rest, or to visit for several days, and in



what types of weather. They have waypoints, landmarks, suggestions, and more. Stay away from lee shores and rocky places. When *Charlie's Charts* tells you what to watch for around Cabo San Quintin, or that Turtle Bay's normal anchorage is unprotected from a south wind, believe them. If the weather and your plans permit, stop and enjoy the out of the way places like the Wildlife Refuge for Grey Whales at Laguna San Ignacio, or at Bahia de las Ballenas.

Consider two approaches for making the outside trip. A common approach is taking off from San Diego or Ensenada and sailing non-stop for two or three days, depending on the speed of your boat, for Turtle Bay. The other common approach is to harbor-hop down the coast, stopping and enjoying several of the small coastal villages along the way. If you are going to harbor-hop, pay close attention to the weather and sea conditions, because that will dictate which stops you may want to choose, and which ones you will want to avoid. Our advice is to not get very far down the coast until the hurricane season is over the first of November. Sometimes the weather conditions are unsettled until the end of October.

Whether heading north or south along the outside of the upper Baja, cruisers should keep in mind the small village located in the southeast corner, on the backside of Isla Cedros. As discussed elsewhere, it can offer safe harbor when conditions get dicey, especially from the north.

Just south of Isla Cedros is Turtle Bay. This will probably be your first taste of rural Mexican living. The town and its people are wonderful. The shops and little tiendas of Turtle Bay are to be enjoyed, but remember that you are just a visitor passing through. The folks who live here survive on what is available in the local tiendas only. They won't be in Cabo in a few days to buy the food they want or need at the big stores. Keeping that in mind, buy what you need, and rest assured the local businesses love to have you



shop here. Just save your stocking-up for Cabo as the folks who live in Turtle Bay may not get another truck delivery for close to a week.

Bahia Santa Maria and Mag Bay are great also, but don't plan on buying any provisions there, because there aren't any. The port captain in Man-O-War Cove can help you get fuel if you need it, however. If you need to or want to go up the channel to San Carlos make sure you check at Man-O-War Cove to see if all the markers are in place, and go slow enough to make sure you don't wander out of the channel. Likewise, do not try to enter or leave Mag Bay by way of the south entrance.

### ***Cabo San Lucas***



The trip down from Mag Bay to Cabo is best done as one leg, because there are *no* good coves or bays to use as a port of refuge. When you reach Cabo you'll feel like you have done something way out of the ordinary, and you have! Probably your last days of sailing to get here were hot, you were wearing shorts and smearing on sunscreen. You'll want a good hot shower and some food you don't

have to cook yourself. Your boat, now crusted with salt from the trip south, will also likely need a bath.

Once you plant your feet on the dock, take it easy. You will probably notice you are walking and feeling a little funny. Remember, you have not been on solid ground much in at least the last ten days, and maybe longer. If it feels like you've developed a swagger that's okay. But it won't take long to get your land-legs back again.

If you didn't check into Mexico in Ensenada or San Carlos up in Mag Bay, this is the place to do it. You can walk to the various places you

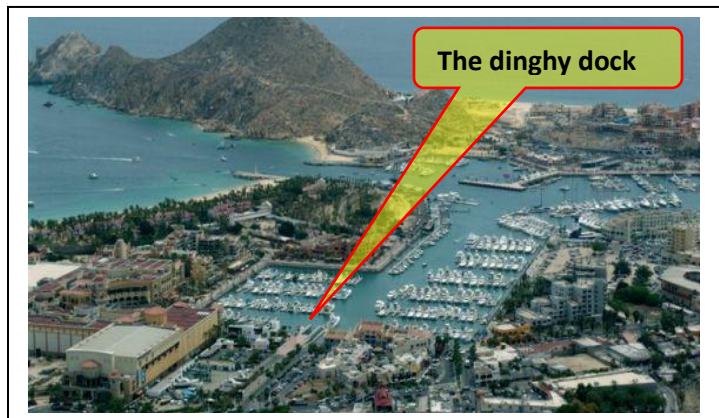


need to go to complete this check-in, or can hire an agent to do it for you while you clean the boat. However, checking in must be number one on your list of things to do.

Cabo is where your boat will probably be inspected for things you cannot bring into the country. Check articles in "Latitude 38," or Mexican tourist sites online for the latest information on what you

can and cannot bring into the country, as these regulations are subject to change. Current requirements require you to eat up those steaks or chicken on your last few days before you get to Cabo, because unless you can prove you bought it in Mexico, it will be confiscated. Fuel is readily available here also. If you decide to anchor out, go to the area east of the marina entrance and breakwater, in front of the activities and hotels on the beach. It is a good sandy bottom, but steep. Also, the city is reported to be charging to anchor in this area now, so check it out before you decide how long you may want to stay. If a big wind starts up from a southerly direction be prepared to move because it turns into a lee shore with absolutely no protection. If you continue going east, there is now a marina at Los Cabos, also.

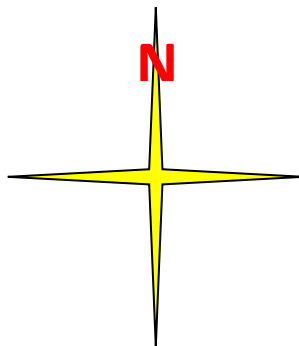
**IGY: Marina Cabo San Lucas**, now the official name of the Cabo Marina since its acquisition by **Island Global Yachting**, is a welcome respite for you and your boat after the trip south. If you're anything like us, and probably most sailors, the sight of the famous arches as you enter this bay is a wonderful greeting.



This is matched only by the friendliness and care exhibited by the marina staff. When Pat first arrived here in 2003, things were very different. In 2006 we heard that it was the most expensive marina on the Pacific Coast; we know they took a bite out of our cruising kitty. We were delighted to find the competitive pricing structure

had changed when we were crewing on a 53' Selene trawler in 2011. In addition, their staff is most helpful, often going out of their way. Due to a family emergency we had to fly home immediately after arriving from the 2008 Ha Ha; they called the airport and arranged for us to "check in" there at the same time as we were "checking out." In 2011 they were helpful with suggestions for restaurants and a bakery frequented by locals so we could avoid the more touristy areas of Cabo. Just ask at the office; they'll help you like they helped us.

The town is at your doorstep when you are at the marina. From restaurants, shops, boat supplies, laundry facilities, fishing supplies, shops of all kinds, and stores to resupply your provisions, it is all close by. If you are headed to a big box store you may want to take a taxi, because you will be loaded down when you come back to the boat. Walking a few blocks away from the marina area will take you to the Port Captain's office. Keep walking and you'll be in a nice residential area with little tiendas and even coffee shops and a bakery. You can take morning walks and get away from the tourist areas; you get a chance to see lots of people and places you would otherwise miss. We even found somebody having a garage sale and bought some nice welded yard art that has a place of honor in our backyard at home. There are two marinas in Cabo, so except in the busiest of times, you should be able to find a slip for a day or two.



## The Sea of Cortez

Spend some time reading the various Mexico and Sea of Cortez cruising guides and talking with other cruisers to familiarize yourselves

with the details of the fantastic bays, islands and out of the way places that are available in the Sea of Cortez. You can stay or leave your boat for a long or short time. There



are lots of places to go, and you just won't want to leave.



This visual aid is not for navigation. It is provided solely for descriptive purposes. Consult your charts and guide books for detailed information.

You can cruise most of the Sea of Cortez taking hops of only a few hours to a day, if you want to!

Be sure to have good, recent information as you head to the northern islands, "LA" Bay, San Felipe and Puerto Peñasco because the tides and the distances are greater. The Sea's history is

The cruising guides will offer detailed information which is very helpful, especially when entering small bays or attempting to anchor at an obscure spot. As you will find, part of the charm of the Sea of Cortez is the fantastic bays, remote islands, and out of the



way quiet little coves. Places to provision are few and far between.

This picture is of the tienda in Agua Verde; it has some of the basics, but not much more. There is a woman in town that makes tortillas; she has a sign on

her gate. Her husband makes jewelry using shells and a gas-powered generator. We spent three weeks just going half way up into the Sea our first year, and about six weeks “gunkholing” in the Sea the second year, and it was not near enough time.

If you are crossing the Sea of Cortez to Mazatlán coming down from the north, think about sailing directly from Evaristo or Isla San Jose. If you are crossing from La Paz, depending on the wind forecast, go north of Isla Cerralvo instead of through the Cerralvo Channel unless you are going via Muertos anyway. It may be a longer sailing leg, but it will save you some elapsed time and could be a much smoother trip with a better wind angle. As always, check on the expected sea state and wind conditions before you chart your crossing.



Another new marina has opened north of Cabo San Lucas, on the way going from Los Cabos to Muertos. Cabo Riviera is approximately 20 miles south of Muertos. They opened in 2011/12, but as with any new marina, the construction and building will continue for several more years. This development is being touted as a luxury marina/resort with homes on the water and some private docks.

**NOTE:** The following information is believed accurate; it is given solely to assist you in approaching the general area so you can take visual sightings and soundings to determine that it is safe to proceed into the marina. We have been told to call the Cabo Riviera Marina on Ch 20 prior to entering. Using AIS we observed a vessel starting their westerly turn into the channel at: **23-36.74 N / 109-35.02 W.**

It is probable that dredging will continue indefinitely, and caution should be used when entering. We have heard that maintaining a course closest to the north bank will keep you in the deepest portion of the channel. However, you are advised that this is subject to change and you should ask for updated information prior to entering. This is to be expected at new marinas. A similar situation exists at La Cruz, and silting is still a concern from time to time in Mazatlán and Puerto Vallarta where active dredging continues, and they have both been established for a long time.

## **Places to Go**

The Sea of Cortez is a magical place to us; at times you will be the only boat anchored in a small bay. We suggest that you visit the islands north of La Paz, and the anchorages at Evaristo, Agua Verde, Escondido, Honeymoon Cove, Puerto Ballandra and Caleta de San Juanico to name just a few. All of these anchorages are within a day's hop of each other, or shorter.

Bahia Concepcion has good anchorages at its mouth, depending on the winds just inside Santo Domingo Point on the south, and just south of either Punta Chivato or Punta Santa Inez on the northern side. Halfway into Concepcion Bay is Bahia Coyote and several other great clamming spots. A quick word of warning for you: When you are in this area and you decide to “just take a short walk along the beach at low tide” take something to carry back your treasures! We found great driftwood and beach-glass which was no problem to carry back. But the clams were something else! They won’t go in your pockets, you can’t carry them all in your hands. Let me warn



you, you won’t get your wide-brimmed sailing hats clean or smelling good again for a long time. We had Thanksgiving dinner that year at the little restaurant on the beach at El Burro Cove (26° 44.44N/ 111° 53.8W); a land-based cruiser by the name of Gary broadcasts the Sonrisa Net most mornings from his house in El Burro Cove; he also makes wifi available to cruisers. If you have



time and are so inclined, cross the road from El Burro Cove and climb the winding path to the top of the hill; the view is spectacular.

Continuing north at the mouth of Conception Bay is Mulege. We drove down from Santa Rosalia because there is no good, safe, protected anchorage in Mulege. The cruising guides say it can be safe for a quick stop if you leave someone on the boat while others go ashore, but that's it. It is best visited by car so you can poke around and not run short of time. The town is charming with a lovely church up on the hill and an old prison you can tour.

Further north, Santa Rosalia is a great place to start preparing your boat for the hard, and a good jumping-off point for going across to San Carlos. Besides that, Santa Rosalia is a very interesting little town in its own right. Check out the info in the cruising guides for the historical information. Briefly, it pretty much came into being in the mid - late 1800s when a French mining company was given rights to mine for copper. If you look at the houses erected for the mining company employees, they are stick built with lumber brought down from the California coast, rather than concrete or stucco or adobe as found elsewhere in Mexico. Some of the structures left behind, like the Hotel Frances and the museum, resemble those found in the Gold Country of California rather than the architecture of Mexico. The church was a prefab structure built by Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower, and is largely made of metal; the French mining company dismantled it and brought it to Santa Rosalia for their company town.

There is also a bakery in Santa Rosalia that dates from earlier times; it's on the main street. Although the town has weathered some hurricane blows, it always seems to bounce back.

One of the favorite gathering spots for locals and for cruisers who have discovered it, is a little hot dog stand just opposite the church. Most evenings about seven p.m. they show up and start serving

and people start lining up, choosing among a variety of toppings. Another favorite spot is on the street just opposite the train engine monument, on a *down* street, right off the main highway, where several stands start serving fish and shrimp tacos in the morning; their typical clientele are the people on the way to work. One year, while driving down to La Paz, we stayed overnight in Santa Rosalia just so we could have some shrimp tacos in the morning. In case you haven't guessed by now, we have eaten our way through Mexico! Which reminds us, up in the Sea of Cortez you need to plan ahead for provisions -- *it's a long way between tiendas*.

Still on the Baja side of the Sea of Cortez, north of Santa Rosalia are anchorages that are even more remote, quiet and less touristy than those further south. Be sure to get up to date tide information before you head up to Bahia San Francisquito, the San Lorenzo Islands, Bahia de los Angeles, the Midriff Islands or the Upper Sea of Cortez.

On the mainland side of the Sea, north of San Carlos a short distance, is Punta San Pedro, a quiet anchorage as long as there is no southern wind. If you are going further north in The Sea, make sure you have talked to locals and cruisers to get the most up-to-date information, and be sure you get a tide book and the fishing guides and maps. The Midriff Islands, Bahia de Los Angeles, Kino, Isla Tiburon, and other islands up to San Felipe require some special preparation. Be ready for tidal swings up to 15 to 20 feet as you go way up north in the Sea. Be aware that most charts are based on the old, original surveys of Mexican waters, and depending on how old your GPS unit/charts are, you may not be where you think you are. You should proceed with caution, and with your eyes on the surroundings. However, we can tell you from crosschecking the guidebooks that we keep onboard; Charlie's Charts does not rely on the old survey data, and is correct.

The San Carlos/Guaymas area has long been a place cruisers leave boats on the hard, as mentioned earlier, because it has historically been just far enough north to be out of the hurricane area. However, every so often a hurricane does come through. One of the other nice things about San Carlos is that it is easy to drive to if you are transporting boat parts. La Paz, Mazatlán and Puerto Vallarta are also places cruisers leave their boats, but it seems most boats are left in the water at these locations. Check with your insurance company about your options.

The next shot was taken during the *FANLAP* fundraiser that's held at Marina de La Paz each year in the first part of December. This



event funds programs for children in the barrios, and it is becoming an annual “must-do” event. La Paz is a great place to stay for either a short time or an extended stay.

In La Paz you have everything available from boat parts to a wide variety of restaurants in every price category. Here is a shot of the dinghy dock at Marina De La Paz. You can anchor out and pay a small fee to use the dinghy-dock and showers at the marina.

There are many good marinas in La Paz. There are lots of reasons cruisers like La Paz, the way the marina staffs go out of their way to help you is one of those reasons. Other reasons cruisers enjoy Marina de La Paz and other close-in marinas, is that they are within walking distance of practically the entire downtown area. Everything from provisioning, marine supplies & repairs, entertainment, music, great food of all kinds (formal dining to street-food), and about everything else a cruiser wants - including ice cream cones, is a short walk away. The morning gatherings at Club Cruceros and the spontaneous dock parties are just the “frosting on the cake.” Once here in La Paz, it’s hard to leave.



There are lots of opportunities for live music, both professional and played by cruisers. There are also large Mexican supermarkets, as well as Walmart and Costco. La Paz is a medium-sized city, but has the feel of a small Mexican town, maybe because it is not impacted by tourists. The locals stroll and ride bikes along the malecon, especially on weekends. Be sure to walk the length of the malecon to see the wonderful sculptures there. There are several marinas in

La Paz, but many are not conveniently located to the downtown area.

Marina Costa Baja is a new marina and resort, located the furthest northeast, towards the ferry terminal. It is fairly expensive, but certainly is worth a visit. Shuttle busses usually run to the downtown area from most outlying marinas, but schedules may not always be conducive to evening activities, so be sure to do your



homework before arriving. This is a picture of Marina Costa Baja.

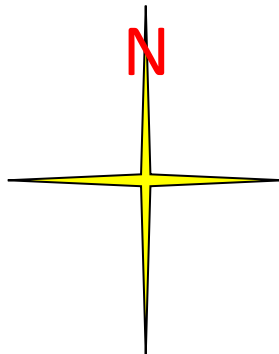
If you are only going to be leaving your boat for the off-season you may not be interested in the same location and convenience you would be looking for if you are planning to stay for only a week or two during the cruising season. A word of warning is needed here: La Paz can be very enticing, and difficult to leave.

There are also Spanish language schools, farmer's markets, art galleries, and everything else you will need or want in La Paz. We have driven down the Baja to La Paz, and come and gone using both the airport here as well as the airport at Los Cabos. La Paz is not only a great place to include in your cruising plans, it is a great place to use as a base for "commuter cruising."

And, as we mentioned, you don't have to stay in a marina all the time to enjoy La Paz; many boats just anchor out in the bay and do the "La Paz waltz" as the tide changes. We have heard that a fee may be being charged to anchor-out at La Paz, so be sure to check.

### **CROSSING TO AND SAILING ALONG THE MAINLAND COAST**

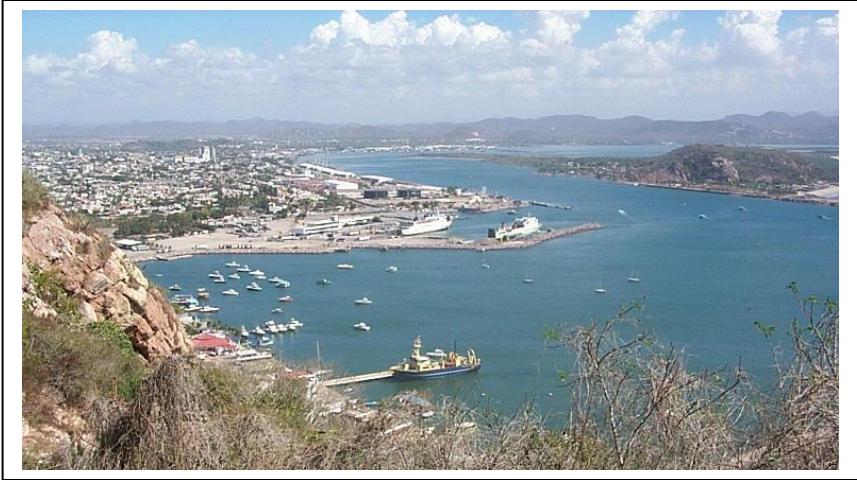
Next up is Mazatlán and heading south along the mainland coast. When sailing along the Pacific Coast of Mexico you must maintain a constant vigilance for fishermen in small fishing boats, called *pangas*, and their nets. Most of the time neither will be visible on radar, and much of the time longline nets will almost be invisible to the naked eye. They are especially troublesome at night. Sometimes the end of a net will be marked by a black flag, but don't count on it, and sometimes the nets may be tended to by a fisherman who will "open" the longline to let you through. They are generally most friendly, helpful and appreciative when you take action to avoid snagging their nets. When doing an overnight passage think about going well off shore to avoid the fishermen; other boats are lit up and show up well on radar.





***Mazatlán – Easy to get to, but hard to leave***

Mazatlán is one of our favorite cities on the Mexican mainland. The Old Harbor anchorage (below) is close to everything downtown,



but check before you arrive to make sure you can stay here. As long as it isn't too hot with the wind blowing in the wrong direction, it's great. When transiting from the Old Harbor area going to the



marina area to the north, *do not cut the corner near the lighthouse.* There are large swells here that may break, caused by the shoaling in the area where the fishermen bring in their pangas. These can cause you to be in danger before you know it.

The Old City area of Mazatlán has a huge marketplace with great fresh produce, fish, lunch counters, ice cream and even t-shirts and souvenirs. Also located here is a lovely old cathedral (see photo on previous page) the Opera House which often offers free concerts, and Plaza Machado with its shops and restaurants. This is a great area to walk and explore. Also nearby is an area known as “shrimp alley” where the shrimpers bring their catch. The shrimp is



arranged in buckets by size and you can go from vendor to vendor comparing prices. Even if you don't like shrimp, go there and take your camera. But, if you like shrimp even a little bit, this will be like no place else on earth.



Mazatlán is a great place to have people come visit you, or to leave your boat while you visit back home. It's also a great place to park your boat and use it as a condo. The bus system is great, and inexpensive, and the "pulmanias" – a sort of golf cart used as a taxi – are fun and you won't see them anyplace else.

Mazatlán has everything for cruisers starting with a great local cruiser's handbook. It has a fantastic list of recommended service providers, including English-speaking doctors and dentists and repairmen of all kinds, including good diesel repairmen. You can get a copy at one of the marina offices or just inquire on the morning radio net. To fully experience everything Mazatlán has to offer there are lots of places to get up-to-date information: the morning net, get-togethers at the marinas, dinghy raft-ups, local English papers like the "Pacific Pearl," free and available all over town, flyers and posters which tell of concerts and plays held downtown at the Opera House and elsewhere, and bulletin boards at the marinas.



The marina area is north of the city and includes Mazatlán Marina, El Cid Marina, Isla Marina and the Singlar Marina and boatyard

complex now called Marina Turistica Mazatlán. Grupo Naval Mar de Cortez (GNMC) has a repair yard on the Singlar site, with a 55-ton travelift.

Unless you have been here before, we strongly suggest you do not enter into the marina area channel after dark. As you can see in the photo on the preceding page, the boat coming in is in a following sea and must make a left turn to enter the channel and then a quick dog-leg to the right. With all the back ground lights at night this can be tricky. Anchor out at the islands and come in the next morning. Before you come in, call on the radio to make sure the dredge doesn't have the channel blocked. There are adequate day-sailing



and other activities to keep you busy in Mazatlán for an extended time. We know folks who came for a couple days and have stayed eleven years - so far.

Don't be surprised if you run into some fog in Mazatlán. There is a huge amount of low-lying land and mangroves in the area, just right for foggy conditions. Just outside of the entrance to the port is a

nice place to go and drop the hook for a day or two, to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city, at Isla Cardones.

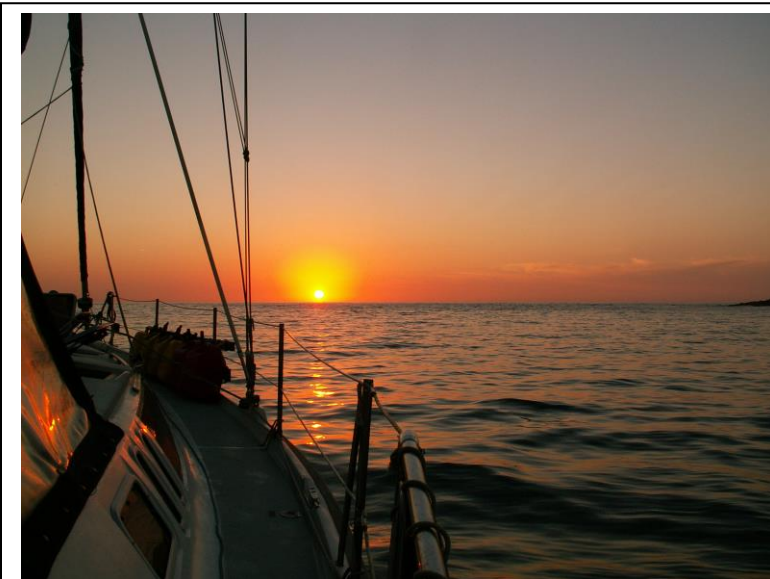
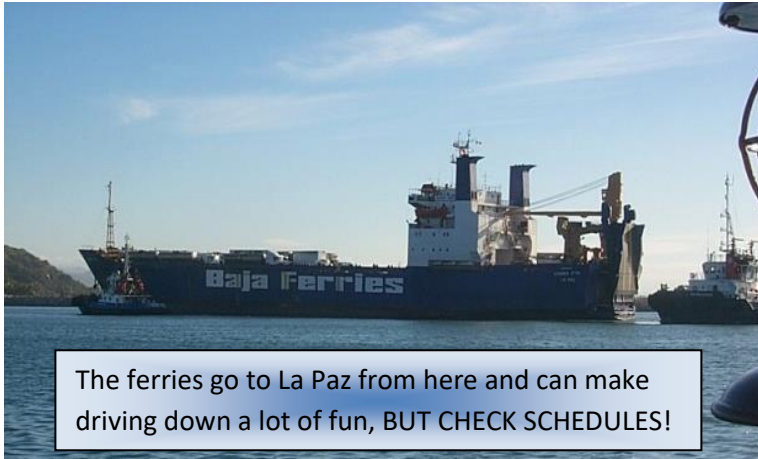
One of our sponsors, the ***El Cid Marina***, is located in Mazatlán. Phil and Nora's first introduction to ***El Cid Marina*** was when they sailed into Mazatlán in '05. Pat and Carole became familiar with it during a land cruise in the mid 90s and finally arrived here on their own boat in 2007, coming back after sailing as far south as Zihuatanejo. The local busses stop at the marina's entrance, or you can walk where you want, because shopping and restaurants are close by. All the dinghy raft-ups are close, the food and drinks are great, and you get big, soft towels to use at the pools and the hot tubs that are close to your boat. After cruising and swinging on the hook for a couple of months, staying here is a nice treat.

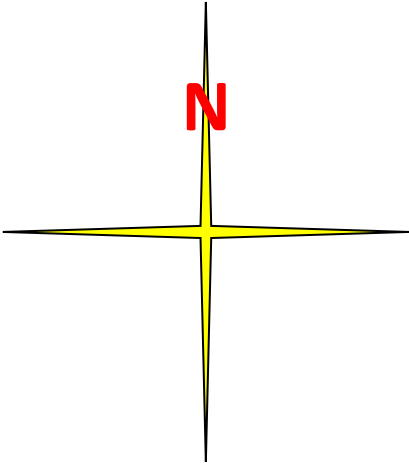
One of the things that stands out, through the several times we have been in and out of El Cid Marina, has been the gracious way their whole staff has treated us. We've arrived when it was hectic around the docks. They have always found a way to take care of our needs, and in a cheerful way. Phone and say "hi" to Geronimo or Kitcia in the marina office. Ask them if they can take care of you, and you'll see just why we have asked them to be one of our sponsors. Be aware, however, that there can be significant surge in the marina. You will want good chafe gear for your dock lines.

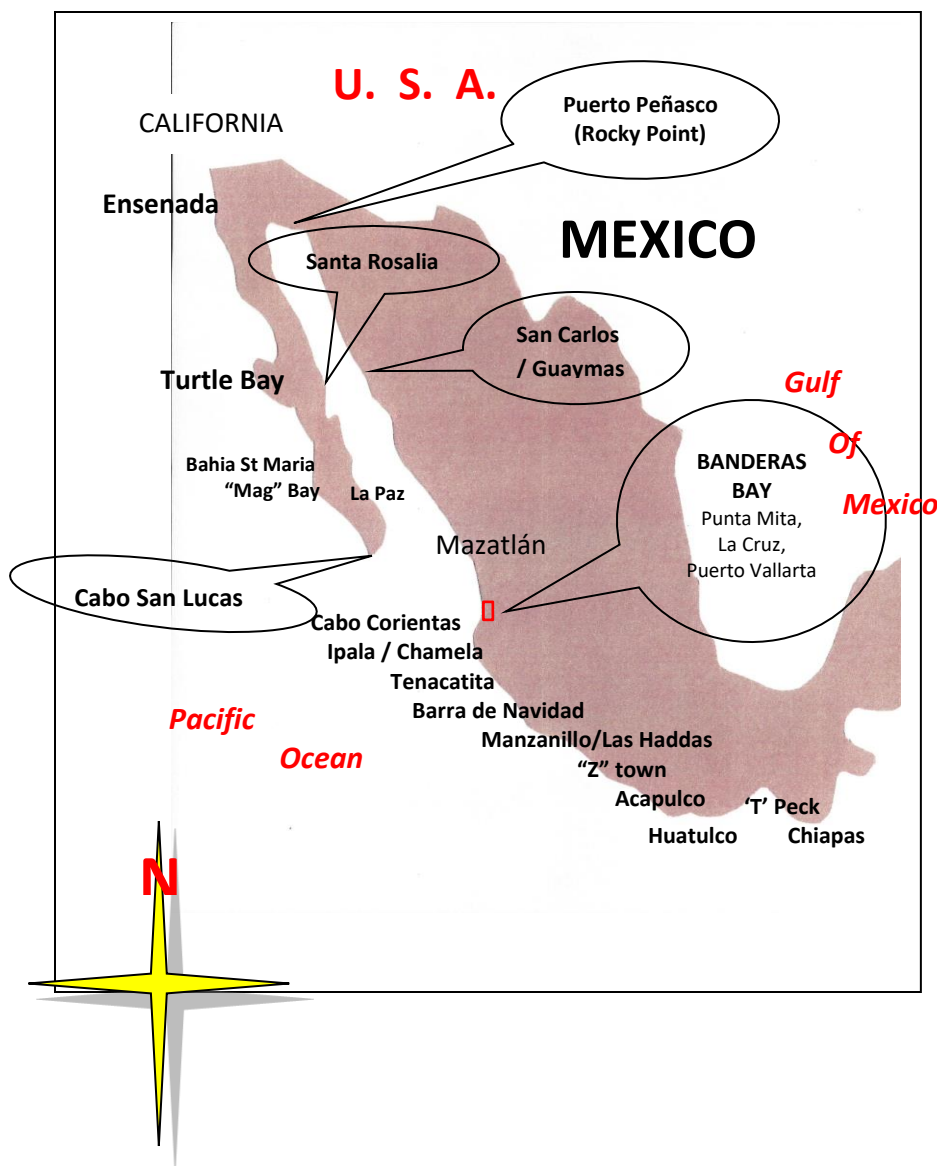
Your voyage across the Sea of Cortez between the Baja and the mainland may be your last chance for uninterrupted multi-day sailing for a while, because once you have crossed the Sea of Cortez and are sailing along the mainland coast you are doing primarily day-hops and the winds can be light.

Besides the sunsets, quiet anchorages and overnight sails, one of the experiences we've truly enjoyed about our cruising is the live music available everywhere – some provided by cruisers and some

by local musicians, and Mazatlán is right up there at the top of the list. Information as to times and places can always be found by inquiring with the cruisers on your dock, in your anchorage, or asking on the morning radio net.







## ***Heading south from Mazatlán, the Pacific Coast of Mexico***

### ***Distance Planning Data for Mainland Mexico***

Disclaimer: The information below is NOT to be used for navigation. The compilations are approximations only and not guaranteed, neither expressed nor implied, by the authors.

<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Miles From</u> <u>Last Anchorage</u>	<u>Hours @</u> <u>5 Knot Ave.</u>	<u>Hours @</u> <u>7 Knots Ave.</u>
Mazatlán	0		
Isla Isabela	85	17	12.2
San Blas / Mantanchen Bay	44	8.8	6.3
Chacala	15	3	2.1
Punta Mita	35	7	5
La Cruz	10	2	1.4
Puerto Vallarta	10	2	1.4
Punta Ipala	47	9.4	6.7
Bahía Chemela	52	10.4	7.4
Tenacatita	18	3.6	2.6
Barra de Navidad	21	4.2	3
Manzanillo (Las Hadas)	27	5.4	3.9
Punta Cabeza Negra	44	8.8	6.3
Bahia Maruata	34	6.8	4.9
Caleta de Campos	40	8	5.7
Isla Grande	64	12.8	9.1
Zihuatanejo	8	1.6	1.1
Punta de Papanoa	38	7.6	5.4
Acapulco	75	15	10.7
Escondido	175	35	5
Puerto Angel	37	7.4	5.3
Huatulco	26	5.2	3.7
--- The Tehuantepec Crossing ---			
Puerto Chiapas	250 - 300	50 to 60	36 to 43

## ***South to Banderas Bay***

Heading south from Mazatlan, plan on stopping at Isla Isabela, San Blas, Mantanchen Bay, Chacala, Jaltemba, Punta de Mita and La Cruz (de Huanacastle), on your way to Puerto Vallarta. There's a lot to see and to experience, so take your time – from two days to two weeks.

Isla Isabela is a particularly wonderful stop; it's a wildlife refuge that offers an array of birdlife. While you cannot stay overnight on the island, you can anchor-out at one of two spots referred to in the cruising guides and you can go ashore, walk around and take lots of pictures.

### **BANDERAS BAY**

Nuevo Vallarta (Paradise Village)

Punta de Mita

La Cruz (Marina Riviera Nayarit)

Puerto Vallarta (Marina Vallarta)

The Islas Marietas (Las Tres Marietas)

Yelapa and other villages on the southern coast of the bay

When you get into Banderas Bay you are in a fantastic sailing and cruising area. It is a great place to be, and a great place to get off your boat for a while and visit some of the historic inland areas.



Here are some of the basics, provided by the Puerto Vallarta Yacht Club. Don't let this fool you though. To get a handle on all there is



to do here you will need all the cruising guide info, plus information from all your fellow cruisers, "Latitude 38," and the scoop from the daily radio net.

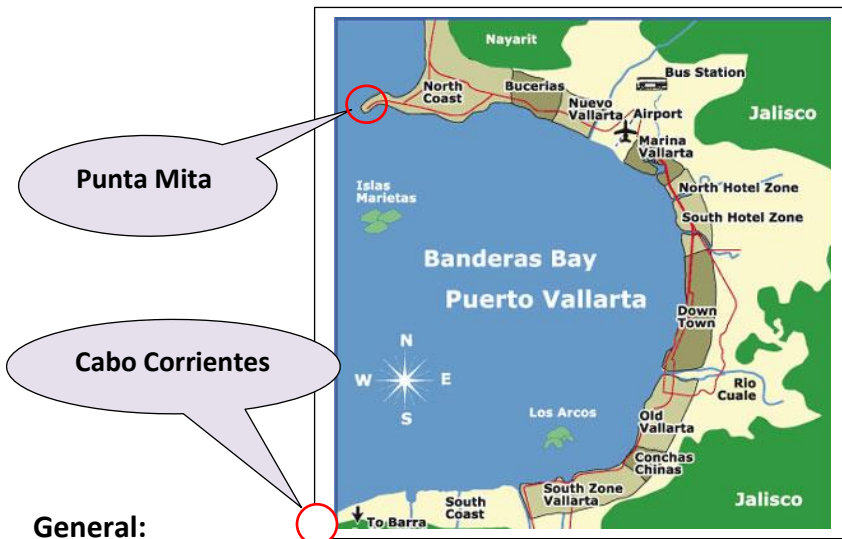
Vallarta latitude: **North: 20 Degrees 30 Minutes**

(same as Hawaii, sunny and tropical climate)

- **West:** 105 degrees 38 minutes
- **Prevailing winds:** SOUTHWEST
- **Average wind speed:** 8 to 12 KNOTS
- **Average tide:** 1.8 feet.
- **Average water temperature:** 86 to 88 F degrees.
- **Maximum current:** 1.4 KNOTS

**Population:** Over 300,000 people

**Area:** More than 1, 200 square kilometers



**General:**

- Vallarta area enjoys over 300 sunny days a year with temperatures averaging right around 83F/19C degrees.
- English is widely spoken.
- There is a wide variety of attractions and entertainment options on and off the water.

- From beautiful beaches to small rock-surrounded coves and anchorages, you will love it.
- It is without a doubt, one of the friendliest and cleanest beach resorts in all of Mexico.
- It lies on Banderas Bay, the second largest natural bay in North America (over 100 miles of coast line).
- Banderas Bay is home to a colony of Humpback whales.
- Although winds may blow they never reach the fury of full hurricane force.
- There are as many activities as at any resort in the world: sailing, mountain biking, golf, tennis, hot air balloon flights, parasailing, concerts in the main square on the newly rebuilt malecon. It's a safe place with a lower crime rate than other tourist destinations in the country.



- Downtown, or Centro, has old Mexico charm, with art galleries, gourmet restaurants, boutique shops and lively nightlife. Every Saturday morning there's a market in the main square, just south of the river. You'll find produce, specialties from local markets, bakeries, homemade granola & hummus as well as artisans with jewelry, clothing & pottery; you won't want to miss it. This area also has many

small, great restaurants. We found a fantastic Peruvian inspired restaurant called SUMAQ, up behind the old church, check it out.

- Nuevo Vallarta's modern upscale resorts have excellent restaurants, awesome beaches, golf courses and fabulous resort hotels.
- The small towns of La Cruz and Bucerias offer more quality galleries and a variety of great places to eat.

OLD CITY PUERTO  
VALLARTA IS GREAT!



Banderas Bay is home to some of the best organized, as well as spontaneous, music in Mexico.

Following on the next page, is a shot coming through the channel into ***Paradise Village Marina***, another of our sponsors. Dick

Markie, the harbormaster here, runs one of the best and friendliest marinas you'll ever visit.

We first met Dick in December of 2006 when he found a place for us in his already full marina for a few days. We had just completed the trip down the outside of the Baja and the southern crossing at a fairly brisk pace, and we needed a vacation from sailing. What a *great* welcome and introduction to ***Paradise Village*** hospitality, and a fantastic reunion with friends who were already here.

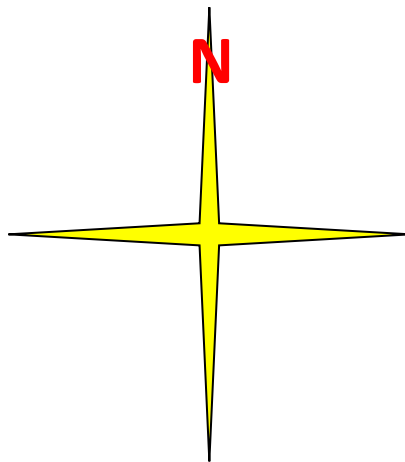
Our second visit was in January of 2008. We called on the VHF radio after entering Banderas Bay and told Dick we were having a charging-system



problem. We had an electrician ready to help us, but he could not dinghy-out to where we were anchored. Again, in spite of having a full marina, he got us onto the docks so we could be repaired. He's not just running one of the best marinas in Mexico; he also takes a personal interest in you and does whatever he can to help you have an enjoyable and safe cruise. As we were coming into the marina channel, Dick was standing on the docks with his handheld VHF directing us around the shallow spots that had some sand buildup, and hadn't been dredged recently. Here's what you'll love: when you are here you get the run of the resort as well, with nice showers, swimming pools, hot tubs and restaurants nearby. You

really are on vacation. You can rough it when you head back out to another anchorage someplace.

The bus system around Banderas Bay is very convenient, inexpensive and reliable; you can catch the bus near any of the marinas and head out in any direction. Go downtown to the older, more traditional Puerto Vallarta area with its lovely church and malecon and palapa restaurants on the beach. The old town area also has market days and festivals so be sure to look up all the activities coming up for the time you'll be in the P.V. region. There is also an artisan area on an island in the river. Then the bus route can also take you north to the towns of Bucerias, La Cruz and Punta de Mita, and even around the point to Sayulita and beyond. A beautiful new marina opened in La Cruz in 2007, and it is a delightful little town; be sure to check out the local gathering spots for live music and good food.



## ***Mainland Mexico (The Gold Coast)***

### ***South of Banderas Bay's Cabo Corrientes***

As you approach Cabo Corrientes you are in a different climatic region. The changes are as dramatic as that experienced when you approach and round Point Conception heading south on the

**BE VERY WARY WHEN COORDINATING YOUR GPS READINGS WITH YOUR CHARTS, ESPECIALLY AS YOU HEAD SOUTH FROM BANDERAS BAY!**

California Coast. Typically, approaching Cabo Corrientes requires as much preparation as approaching Pt. Conception. After rounding Cabo Corrientes you are now along Mexico's "Gold Coast," also known as "The Mexican Riviera." This region includes all those great spots south of Banderas Bay and Cabo Corrientes that you've heard about: Chamela, Tenacatita, Barra de Navidad, Manzanillo, Zihuatanejo, affectionately known as "Z-town," and others.

***Ipala*** - This is the first possible anchorage south of Corrientes. It's a nice little place if you can squeeze in, but ask around before you arrive to get up-to-date information about the state of the fish pens strung in this little bay by the fishermen. The bay can be totally filled, leaving little or no place to anchor and requiring that you continue instead on to Chemela, if going south, or into Banderas Bay if northbound. Either way, it can make for a long day. If the wind is blowing hard around Cabo Corrientes, the little bay may fill up quickly as boats going north stack up waiting to get around the cape.

**Chamela** - Watch the reef stretching well into the bay from the north point as you head into Chemela. Once inside, this is a great spot and a good beach to practice and improve your dinghy landings. It's also a great place to shop in local tiendas and eat in the places on the beach. Though you may have to move if the wind changes, the bay offers good protection from most directions, so this is a good spot to stay a while. The little town of San Mateo is only about 20 minutes away; there is a very unusual church there that's worth a visit. Ask around and somebody will find you a ride. The day we went our "taxi" was the back of a pickup truck.

**Bahia Careyes** - Just a few miles south of Chemela, this beautiful little bay was once the home of a Club Med resort. It is now overlooked by luxury homes and definitely worth a look, even if you only stop for lunch or a scenic pass through the bay. We found it too small to anchor comfortably, but we know of others who did and had a great time there.

**Bahia Tenacatita and La Manzanilla** - Tenacatita is a favorite among cruisers. Historically, it offers two anchorages to choose from. The outer one that was more civilized with restaurants and shops on the beach, and an inner one that is more remote and restful. If you choose the quiet inner anchorage, be prepared to be awakened early each day by the breathing of two resident dolphins outside your window as they meander through the anchorage in search of a morning meal. They are fixtures here and it's just one of those pleasant little life interruptions. We dubbed the larger and older of the two, "Graybeard," on our first visit, as we got a good look at him lying on his back just under the surface at our bow, supervising the lifting of our anchor. He then kindly escorted us to make sure we got safely out of the anchorage.

Regarding the outer anchorage, due to a local dispute over land ownership rights you should ask around before you assume it is OK



to land your dinghy near the “aquarium” or where the shore-side restaurants had been. As of 2020 we’ve heard that the dinghy ride through the mangroves is growing over, but passable. We recommend that you do not take it unless **you** talk with someone who has recently done it, so that you can judge whether or not you want to try it.



**Barra de Navidad** - Barra is a “must see” destination – and be sure to stay awhile. This quaint little town and its people are great.

The Grand Bay Hotel with its adjoining marina is a five-star resort and can be a budget buster. However, the last several years the





management is making a real effort to court the cruising community and has been offering specials to entice you to stay in the marina. Talk with Secundino Alvarez, the Harbor Master. He is trying to make it worth your while to stay for a while. A few years ago, we kept our Choy Lee 35 *Encore* here for over two years, and have had the pleasure of working with the staff on community fundraising events. The facilities are great and their people are super helpful. We are very happy to have them as Cruising Notes sponsors.

The other option is to anchor in the lagoon, and that is a great option! You probably won't run aground your first time in, but if you do, take it in stride; it's part of your initiation to cruising.



Proceed slowly, and if the entry doesn't make sense, call on the radio for somebody in the lagoon to give you the latest information on coming in. There is

usually dinghy traffic coming and going from the lagoon, and it is common for somebody to lead the way in if you need it. We know a skipper who says he had made 15 trips into the Barra lagoon before he hit the sandbar. He had a lazy afternoon, and spent the time chatting with new and old friends as he waited for high tide. Doesn't he look relaxed?

Even if you don't stay in the hotel marina, be sure to walk the grounds of the Grand Bay Hotel; the swimming pools and amenities

are spectacular. Take your dinghy over to the golf course on the edge of the lagoon for a morning brunch in the Club – reasonably priced and very good. Then walk it off with a hike out to the beach.

For many years when cruisers anchored out in the lagoon, they often got to town by tying their dinghy to the sea wall at the Sands Hotel, then walking past the swimming pool and the palapa bar and through the hotel to the street. On the way back it was only right and part of the cruising protocol to stop and patronize their palapa bar; you were also welcome to take a dip in their pool before the dinghy ride back out to the boat. We loved their hospitality toward cruisers. Over the years the hotel sort of languished and was falling into even more disrepair due to lax-management caused by the age and poor health of the owners. In February 2019 we heard the elderly owner had past away and the family had not yet decided what to do with the old hotel grounds. You can still land your dinghy here; the bar is open most afternoons & live music on Sundays.

We understand the Cabo Blanco Hotel, up the main (most easterly) canal, is offering the same accommodations to cruisers. A word of caution however, at low tide it is VERY thin water close to the dock at the Cabo Blanco! We also had several cruisers tell us in 2018 that they use and enjoy the water taxi ride, especially if they will be in town until after dark. If you tie up at the Sands Hotel make sure you take tide swing into consideration, have fenders and/or chaps for your dinghy. You should lock your 'stuff', the dinghy and your outboard everywhere in Mexico.

Everybody knows about the Grand Hotel and Marina located as you come through the jetty towards the lagoon, but there is also another marina in Barra, next to the Cabo Blanco hotel. It is a good spot to land temporarily when you walk to the Port Captains office. This small marina is up the middle canal in the development behind the Sands Hotel, just past the sunken old boat. Pat and Carole's 35' Cheoy Lee lived there for several years before they bought her. It

is the Cabo Blanco Marina, next to the Hotel. It's mentioned in the cruising guides but it is used primarily for pangas and boats on trailers. Depending (remember, in Mexico lots of things are "depending") on circumstances, they rent slips. The office has recently been moved from the launch ramp area, but ask at the hotel. There are also signs near the Port Captain's office you will see if you are walking. We urge you to take a look with your dinghy, don't take your big boat up the canals, and be sure to check the tides for your depth needs. The Cabo Blanco Hotel has Pickle-ball courts, and afternoons full of swimming, a fun bar for with an "open-mike" for singers on Thursdays during cruising season.

There's always a new taco stand in Barra. One day Carole and Pat had two tacos, a bowl of consume and a bottle of water for 23 pesos each. At the time it was \$1.75 to \$1.80 USD. But, depending on exchange rate it might even be cheaper now. There are also many great little restaurants all over Barra. In fact, eating out in Barra is so good, and so inexpensive, that you may decide you don't want to cook on your boat – REALLY – and it will be hard to choose your favorite restaurant. One of the great tasty local restaurants is senior PiPi's. He is just up the block from the fish co-op near the corner with the big tree. Barra also recently acquired its first cappuccino shop, La Bruja, on the main street, (although it has had The French Baker for many years) but it still doesn't have its first bank yet. *The* ATM machine near the town square is NOT working. SEE OUR COMMENTS EARLIER REGARDING MONEY WHILE CRUISING! For now, take the \$10 peso bus to Melaque and go to one of the banks there.

Another local business we have used in Barra is Crazy Cactus, located on Calle 21 de November; it intersects the main street through town past the fish monument. Their email is [crazycactusmx@yahoo.com](mailto:crazycactusmx@yahoo.com). We rented a small storage unit from them for about \$20/month. Their car rentals are also very

reasonable, and include insurance and mileage; check them out online. It's owned by Tracee, an American who has lived here for several years. Across the street from the Crazy Cactus office are the home and office of Eduardo Pena, an independent taxi driver and tour guide who speaks English. He came to Manzanillo with us to help us navigate the maze of registering our boat and getting the import permit. You can reach him at [eduar580@gmail.com](mailto:eduar580@gmail.com).

There are some very good and inexpensive restaurants in Barra as well. For a "take back to the boat" type of meal, there are several spots around town selling barbequed chickens on the street. One of our favorites is a couple blocks east of the main street near the produce market. You'll find them by just looking for the smoke in the early afternoon. We love them. Don't forget to take the water taxi, or your dink, over to the little village of Colimila on the south side of the lagoon for great fish at the palapa restaurants. If you are game for a great experience and a great mid-day meal, walk up from the waterfront to the main road, and go to the small, family-run restaurant just to the right of the elementary school. Carole and Pat were introduced to this spot by the guys who work on boats at the Grand Marina. Order the daily special, whatever it is. You will be surprised by how good it is! Then write us and tell us about it. If you get there for lunch the guys from the marina will help you order if you don't speak Spanish.

In 2017 Barra began having a FIESTA MEXICANA. It is an event produced by the locals to raise money to improve the town and the schools. An addition to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Fiesta Mexicana in 2018, a sailboat parade and sailboat rides, began being hosted by the cruising community. The event was so successful they raised enough money for the Secondary School to rewire the school so students could use their computers at the same time the air conditioning was on. Plans have been made to continue the boat parade and sail as part of the FIESTA MEXICANA in order to

continue helping upgrade the area's schools. The event is scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of February each year, about a week

**You will want to be in Barra de Navidad  
the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of February 2021.  
Barra will provide you with great memories!**

after SailFest in Zihuatanejo, and prior to the sailing events in Puerto Vallarta. The 2019 *FIESTA de VALEROS* and *FIESTA MEXICANA* together raised the equivalent of about \$4,500 U.S.D. for the schools and students and spent the better part of a day helping to paint the elementary school in Barra de Navidad. The event has grown so that the 2020 version of the Fiesta and "Cruise-in-Week" raised approximately \$10,000 USD and painted parts of a school and a library. Plans are already being made for the 2021 Fiestas Mexicana and Barra Cruise In.

### ***Bahia de Santiago, Bahia de Manzanillo and Las Hadas***

Another "must" is a visit to the Las Hadas Hotel, tucked in behind a small mountain that juts into Bahia de Manzanillo. The hotel is getting on in age but is still quite beautiful; it is the hotel where the movie "10" with Bo Derek and Dudley Moore was filmed, many years ago. Anchor in front, just beyond the roped-off swimming area. The jet skis can be a bit bothersome, especially during holidays. As of 2013, the marina, which used to be more cruiser-friendly, has been charging \$20 per dinghy landing and it is unknown whether that entitles you to any hotel privileges, like the pool. Check for evolving conditions. Some cruisers have recently preferred to anchor in Santiago Bay, bring their dinghy ashore, and catch a bus or visit Santiago from there.

The above notwithstanding, Las Hadas remains a lovely place to anchor; it's only a short, but brisk, walk to the top of the hill where you can get a beautiful view of the bay, the marina and the boats anchored in front of the hotel. That may change again, and cruisers in the area will have up-to-date information when you get there.

The town of Manzanillo is about a 20 minute bus ride from Las Hadas and Santiago and maybe about a 40 minute ride from Barra. It is a largely industrial town, on the south side of the bay. You will find the large Mexican grocery stores like Soriana and Mega which carry everything including hardware, electronics and pharmaceuticals. Sam's Club, Home Depot, Auto Zone and Walmart are also located here. Pat and Carole also came here to get their import permit for their boat. There are good industrial supply, maritime stores, fishing stores and hardware stores in Manzanillo.

If you are out at Las Hadas or anywhere close to Santiago and need almost anything in fishing supplies or limited boat gear, before you decide to head back to Puerto Vallarta or take the bus ride in to Manzanillo, first go to the fisherman's store, ***La Casa del Pescador***. We were able to find some line suitable to use as a replacement topping-lift in 2007. It was our first experience at buying line by the kilo rather than by the length and we still laugh about it. When you go to Santiago, spend some time in this little town. There are some quaint shops and a large indoor produce and fish market where we have purchased shrimp, fish and ceviche, spices, coffee and kitchen utensils – check it out.

We first heard about the Manzanillo Airport when friends flew out of the airport in '06 and '07 and really liked it. The Manzanillo airport is closer to Barra De Navidad than it is to Manzanillo, so we decided to use it and flew in and out here when we went to our new boat in Barra. Either place can be quite acceptable as a spot to

leave your boat for a while. It is usually a little more expensive to fly in and out of Manzanillo than it is Puerto Vallarta, but here's something to think about: While Barra is only 150 – 160 miles south of Puerto Vallarta, it is about three and a half + hours of driving time, and sometimes the bus can take longer. Driving time is subject to rapid change depending on weather conditions, road construction, and time of year or traffic congestion. And, if your flight doesn't get into Puerto Vallarta early enough to catch a bus or drive down to Barra, you will be staying overnight and will have to go down the next day. With this in mind, maybe the added air fare is not so bad after all. Private shuttles will do this drive for about \$100 USD.

***Punta Cabeza Negro*** – Anchorage can be taken on either side of the point here, offering protection from the north or south. It is typically a very rolly anchorage that we preferred to avoid, but it is available in an emergency.

***Bahia de Maruata*** – To avoid the worst of the swell, position yourself in the northern part of the anchorage, about a quarter of a mile from the rocky islands and the same distance from the beach, if possible, but watch your depth. The rocky islands will help shelter you from the swell from the northwest if you can tuck up in there tight enough. It can otherwise be a rolly anchorage. This picturesque spot is known for its surfing - and that does not make it a great place to anchor.

***Pechilinguillo*** – This anchorage is okay for an overnight stay, but it is not recommended by the cruising guides. Because of its proximity to Caleta de Campos, (23 miles) we preferred to avoid this open bay.

***Caleta de Campos*** – Though this is not much better than Pechilinguillo and can be quite rolly, using fore and aft anchors to

hold the boat into the swell and even your flopper stopper when warranted can make for a more restful night.

**Lazaro Cardenas** – At roughly 34 miles from Caleta de Campos, Lazaro Cardenas is a dirty, heavily trafficked, commercial port, but a safe harbor in storms. Absent such weather conditions, you will probably want to avoid it, though doing so will make for a roughly 60+ mile day from Caleta de Campos to Isla Grande. Ixtapa Marina, with fuel and all the amenities, is another five+ miles. Zihuatanejo is another five+ miles beyond that.

At a total of 71 miles from Caleta de Campos, Z-town as it is known among cruisers, is a run of about 10 hours at seven knots or 14.2 hours at five knots from Caleta de Campos. Plan accordingly if you elect to make the jump over Lazaro Cardenas, but watch for the ship traffic as you transit the area in and around that port.

**Isla Grande** – Isla Grande is an inviting little island to get away from the hustle and bustle of Ixtapa, just a few miles to the south. Lunch at one of the restaurants on the beach or just have a cold cervesa or, better yet, have a massage on the beach to forget those boat troubles. Spend the night tucked into the little bay before going on to Ixtapa or Z-town, just down the road.

**Ixtapa** – Seemingly moments away from Isla Grande, Ixtapa is a thriving resort area with hotels, restaurants and tourist shops. It also boasts a nice, well located marina tucked in behind the bay proper that offers the only real fuel dock in the area. Watch out for the crocodiles, however, that live up the stream that feeds into the marina. They meander through at all hours to sun themselves on a point just as you enter the marina and sometimes they get sidetracked. We knew of one lady cruiser in the marina who was late for a shopping date with another cruiser one morning because



she couldn't get past the crocodile lying on the finger of her slip, just outside her boat.

If you want to try some good local food, Pat and Carole found a little "sidewalk restaurant" semi-permanently set up where the busses turn around out in front of the Ixtapa marina. This was the spot most of the locals who worked in the area would go for lunch. Pat and Carole loved it.

**Zihuatanejo** – "Z-town," is a great spot. One of the reasons is that the people like it this way. When the Mexican government asked the local citizens if they wanted to develop the town into a mega-



tourist area like Cancun, they turned it down and said "NO!" That's why all the big hotels are up the road in Ixtapa instead.

In 2011, Z-town was voted Mexico's favorite among cruisers answering our questionnaire. We asked the same question in our 2019 questionnaire, and it continues to be one of the most memorable spots for cruisers when cruising Mexico.

It offers lots to do and has a good airport for visitors to come see you having fun in the middle of the northern winter. You will love walking all over town. Visit the central market where you will likely see a butcher carrying in a side of beef or a half a pig; there are also some good lunch counters where you can grab a bite. The town itself is a fun one to walk around in, and the people are very friendly.

Sailfest, held in the first week in February every year (it is scheduled for the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday after the Super Bowl), raises thousands of



dollars for local kids who can't get into the government-run schools because they don't speak the primary language of Spanish. This picture shows cruisers and locals building the construction shed for a new school in the hills overlooking the bay.

Cruisers will come from all over Mexico for the week to raise money for the indigenous children. We even met tourists from the condos



who return every year to be part of this; it's one of the most worthwhile, satisfying things you will do in Mexico.

The basketball court is **the** spot for Sunday night. This is the heart and hub of the local community, with singing, games, ice cream, kids, old folks, cruisers, and food booths of some of the best food you will find in Mexico.

Pat and Carole were all set to leave on a Saturday, and Carole looked over and said she just was not ready to go. We needed one more Sunday night. It is *that* good.

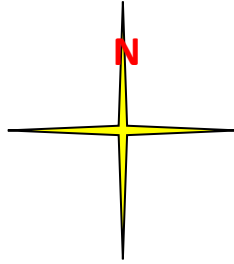
While in Z-town, you will have one of your most memorable times of cruising Mexico. Slow down and enjoy it. Even if you are contemplating a "Puddle Jump", if you can put it off for one more year consider doing it, because there is so much to see and do in Mexico, and you are already here!



In the picture on the previous page you can also see boats out in the bay, beyond the basketball court; these are just a fraction of the ones who were there for Sailfest in 2007 when there were 100+ boats here to help out and have fun in the process. Sailfest continues to draw around 100+ boats each year, sometime more and sometimes less but it is always a highlight of the sailing season along the Gold Coast of Mexico. Everybody we have talked



with who has gone has agreed that the trip down has been well worth the time and effort to get that far south.



## ***Mainland Mexico, (South of Zihuatanejo)***

***Punta de Papanao*** – Papanao is the next place to stop south of Z-town, roughly 38 miles down the coast. It is a relatively good anchorage for an overnight, but if you're headed south, you'll be anxious to move on to Acapulco and beyond.

***Acapulco*** – Acapulco is, of course, a renowned tourist spot, and as such, is expensive and not very practical for provisioning, etc. The bay is beautiful and deserving of a sightseeing spin through, but we preferred to anchor in the less touristy, adjacent Bahia de Puerto Marquez. We neither fueled nor provisioned, but anchored for free in a picturesque spot just under a resort. The bay is protected and we spent a quiet, restful evening listening to music and revelers from the resort.

***Puerto Escondido*** – While this little port is listed as an anchorage, we found it to be inhabited by boats from a yacht club that left us little or no room to anchor, and so we pushed on. It is small.

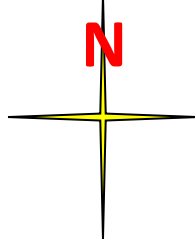
**MAKE SURE YOU GET GOOD UP-TO-DATE,  
RELIABLE LOCAL WEATHER INFORMATION  
BEFORE YOU HEAD SOUTH FROM HERE!**

***Puerto Angel*** – Angel is a pretty little, well-protected bay and, at 212 miles south of Acapulco, you'll be ready to make a stop. Call the Harbor Master's office as soon as you arrive to see if they still want you to physically check in. When we were there we waited to call because we wanted to rest a little first. By the time we got to the office, the person who needed to check our paperwork had gone for the day. We had to leave our papers and pick them up the

next morning. That made for a late departure to get on to Huánuco. Of course the need to physically check in has likely been relaxed since then, but it doesn't hurt to be sure.

**Huántlco** – Along with Z-town, this is our other favorite town in Mexico. It has a newer feel than other towns, probably in part due to the fact that it was a planned community, unlike most other towns in Mexico. As a port of entry, you can check out of Mexico here, and sitting on the southwest approach, it is also the staging area for crossing the Tehuantepec. You can either anchor by the cruise ship dock or grab a slip at Marina Chahue', just to the southeast. Be sure to enter the marina in daylight, however, as its narrow entrance can be difficult to spot your first time in. The marina staff will truck you to town for fuel, get you checked in and out and, most importantly, give you daily weather reports for crossing the Tehuantepec. Though he probably isn't still there, Enrique, the Harbor Master, was unquestionably the best we encountered anywhere in Mexico and an expert on the weather of the Tehuantepec. A nice feature of Huatlco is that you can ride in a cab anywhere in town for the same reasonable price and therefore don't have to haggle with the drivers.

If you are hanging out in the area for awhile, take a few days to go inland to the ruins and old town of Oaxaca. It's a day-long, but scenic ride over the Sierra Madre Mountains, and the town itself is old enough to give you the feel of Europe in the Middle Ages. Still covered when the Spanish arrived, the origins of the ruins on the hilltop overlooking the city are unknown.



## *The Tehuantepec Area*

The Tehuantepec (T-pec) is the most dreaded stretch of water in Mexico and all cruisers who venture there know of its reputation. When northerlies blow down from the central plains of the United States into the Gulf of Mexico they can blast across the isthmus separating the Gulf of Mexico (Caribbean side) and the Gulf of the Tehuantepec (Pacific side) as they are forced through a funnel, similar to the winds coming through into the San Francisco Bay at the Golden Gate Bridge – except that these are often at hurricane strength!

The two schools of thought for crossing the T-pec are: 1. Sail the rhumb-line for 250+ miles from Huatulco on the west side to Puerto Chiapas (formerly Puerto Madero) on the east side, or 2. Sail around the top, keeping one foot on the beach for 300+ miles. The latter can actually keep you within a few hundred yards of the beach, avoiding any significant fetch even though winds might be horrific. In other words, the closer you can stay to the beach the less opportunity there is for seas to build because the prevailing winds come from shore, across the isthmus.

Ordinarily, the plan for the beach route is to round the top of the T-pec in daylight to avoid the *longlines* (invisible at night) that fishermen stretch out from the beach. To do this going south, you'll want to leave Marina Chahue (see photo on next page) in Huatulco around 6:00 p.m. and arrive at Salina Cruz at the top, about daybreak to start across. It's tempting to overnight at Salina Cruz before going around the top, but dangerous because the winds can be strongest there, often making anchoring untenable.



We intended to follow the beach plan going south, but made the mistake of turning too early, miles from the beach, because conditions were balmy and calm. That soon changed. As often happens, the winds built unexpectedly causing heavy seas on our beam and making for an exhausting and uncomfortable day trying to keep the boat on its feet as we rounded the top of the bay. When we returned north about a year later, we took the beach route again but didn't make the same mistake. Actually dragging one foot on the beach, the sea remained like a lake, though we spent a day in 35-knot winds. We knew of a catamaran, on the other hand, that once took the rhumb-line route and got blown 150

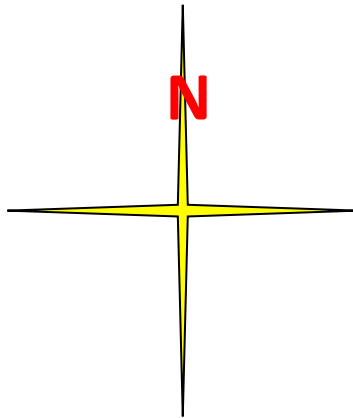


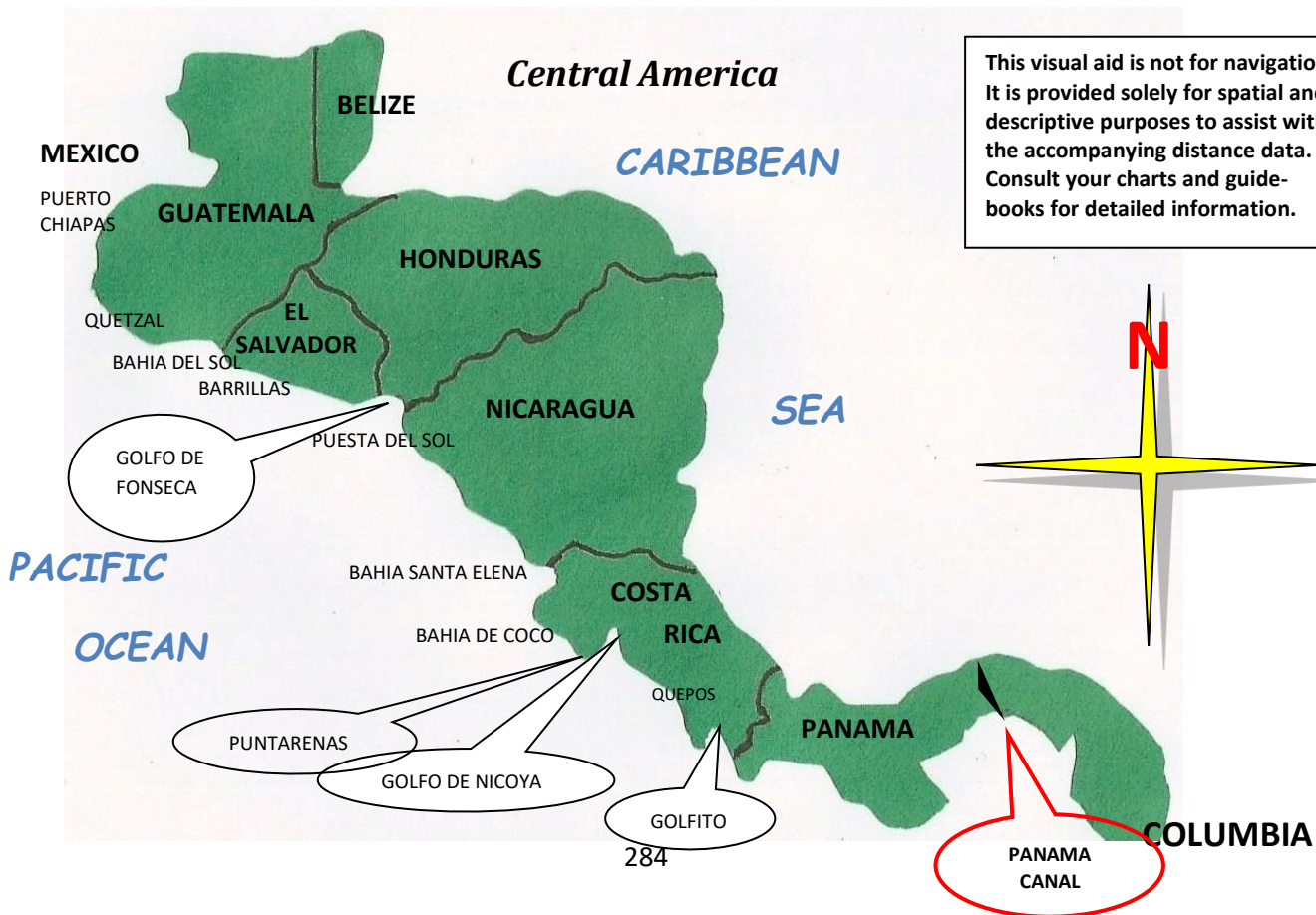
miles out to sea because it couldn't power back to shore through the winds and seas. It doesn't do any good to plan to cross the T-pec by going far out to sea. We understand that in a heavy blow the winds can stretch out 500 miles before dissipating because there's nothing to get in their way.



The worst time to cross the T-pec is November through March. For an up-to-date, excellent article on crossing, please see [www.elsalvadorrally.com](http://www.elsalvadorrally.com).

***Puerto Chiapas*** has a new marina, which is the southernmost place in Mexico to provision, fuel and/or check in or out of the country. It's also a good place to lay over to wait for a weather window to head north or to rest after crossing the T-pec heading south, and a good waypoint for cruisers doing the now yearly El Salvador Rally to gather before crossing the line into Central America. For information on the rally, see again [www.elsalvadorrally.com](http://www.elsalvadorrally.com).





## ***Distance and Planning for Central America***

Disclaimer: The information below is NOT to be used for navigation. Compilations are approximations only and not guaranteed, either expressly or implied, by the authors. You need to consider wind, weather, tide, location and boat conditions in calculating your specific expected times.

<b><u>Anchorage</u></b>	<b><u>Miles From Last Anchorage</u></b>	<b><u>Hours @ 5 Knots</u></b>	<b><u>Hours @ 7 Knots</u></b>
Puerto Chiapas <b>México:</b>	0		
<b>Guatemala:</b>			
Puerto Quetzal	120	24	17
<b>El Salvador:</b>			
Bahia del Sol	160	32	22.9
Barillas	35	7	5
Bay of Fonseca	54	10.8	7.7
<b>Honduras:</b>			
Puerto Amapala	12	2.4	1.7
<b>Nicaragua:</b>			
Puesta del Sol	45	9	6.4
Puerto Corinto	25	5	3.6
Masachapa	85	17	12.1
San Juan del Sur	20	4	2.9
<b>Costa Rica:</b>			
Bahia Santa Elena	6	1.2	.85
Bahia Portrero Grande	24	4.8	3.4
Bahia de Culebra	16	3.2	2.3
El Coco	5	1	.7
Marina Flamingo	13	2.6	1.9
Bahia Brasilito	6	1.2	.85
Bahia Ballena	91	18.2	13
Puntarenas	65	13	9.3
Herradura			
(from Bahia Ballena)	57	11.4	8.1
Quepos	35	7	5
Bahia Drake	57	11.4	8.1
Golfito	65	13	9.3
<b>Panamá:</b>			
Puerto Armuelles	62	12.4	8.9
Isla Parida	32	6.4	4.6
Bahia Hondo	55	11	7.9
Isla Cebaco	25	5	3.6
Ensenada Naranjo	50	10	7.1
Ensenada Beneo	58	11.6	8.3
Balboa and the			
<b>Panama Canal</b>	103	20.6	14.7

## *Central America*

The language in Central America is, of course, all Spanish, so hang onto your English/Spanish dictionary. You'll invariably find it in your lap as you try to communicate with officials who will board you. The officials will covet your dictionary, so if you want to make points with them, take along extra copies to offer them along with a cold beer.

Speaking of being boarded, expect it to happen – whether at dock, anchor, or sea – in every country you visit. If at sea, get your fenders over the side as soon as you see them coming because they'll care little about how forcefully they come alongside. You'll get the point from the



accompanying picture above of the El Salvador navy vessel (perhaps their entire navy) that wanted to raft to us until we convinced the captain to allow us to board him instead. Another issue to expect to encounter is that, unlike the pictured vessel, many of the officials who board you will arrive in unmarked pangas that you won't be able to distinguish from fishermen until they are close enough to be able to see their uniforms. This can be disconcerting so a good rule of thumb is to keep your binoculars handy.

We never had a bad experience in being boarded. Just keep a smile on and be cooperative. They'll do a cursory search of your boat, but likely be more interested in seeing your paperwork, including that from your last port of

call or check-in to their country. As much as anything, they'll be looking for drug runners coming north.

Tides increase drastically, to 13 feet or more, as you move south in Central America, so factor them in when anchoring. Keep in mind also that most



of the Pacific coast of Central America is very shallow, with depths increasing as little as ten feet or so for every mile from the beach. It's not uncommon to find yourself in only 70 or 80 feet of water eight plus miles from the beach. Our point: we once anchored more than a quarter of a mile off a beach in Costa Rica and felt our keel bumping on the bottom when the tide went out during the night.

Be sure to also check the tariffs before entering any of the countries of Central America. They've been in a state of flux in recent years and you don't want any unhappy surprises. You should be able to get current information about the fees of each country online. Even better, speak directly with the consulates of the countries of interest to you.

Finally, cruising in Central America is weather driven. We all know and think about hurricanes, but don't forget about the rainy season when

torrential downpours can become a daily occurrence. We once captured more than 30 gallons of water in one of our tanks in less than two hours of rain. Likewise, Panama is widely considered the lightning capital of the world and the rest of Central America is its sibling. Plan accordingly. But, that said, Central America, with its literally hundreds of miles of seemingly untouched, pristine beaches, is beautiful and its people wonderful and friendly. Be careful, as you would in the States, but don't be afraid to experience it.

## ***Guatemala***

While reputed to be a country of scenic beauty, Guatemala is the first potential place to stop after you have left Mexico, and the only place to stop on the Pacific Coast of Guatemala is Puerto Quetzal. Historically, most cruisers have bypassed it. In the past, even stopping just for fuel has resulted in hefty fees in addition to the cost of fuel. We recommend you check the latest cruising guides and obtain current information from other cruisers before stopping here. We have, for example, also heard there may be substantial paperwork and time involved in your checking in and out.

## ***El Salvador***

The first designated anchorage in El Salvador is La Libertad, which is unprotected but generally okay for an overnight. On down the line is Bahia del Sol. *It has a shoal entrance that can be dangerous and trap* cruisers inside, forcing them to wait for a weather window to get back out. But the marina is beautiful and is the end zone for the activities of the now annual El Salvador Cruisers' Rally from Mexico, which is becoming a serious gathering for holding hands by budding boating across the T-pec and beyond. For up-to-date, excellent information on cruising to El Salvador, see [www.elsalvadorrally.com](http://www.elsalvadorrally.com).

Just another 35 miles down the coast is Barrillas Marina and Resort. Rendezvous with a panga at sea to lead you through miles of shoals and reefs, then ten miles up a jungle river where you'll tether to a mooring ball



adjacent to a beautiful, quaint little resort. It offers a nice outdoor restaurant, small store, swimming pool, wi-fi, fuel, and a boatyard next door. The resort's van will take you to Usuletan for provisions where yours will be the only white faces in town. You may want to go in a group or ask the marina to send a staff member with you. Take a stroll into the jungle near the resort with a guide to see and feed nearby monkeys.

When leaving Barrillas, we found it best to plan to exit the mouth of the river at sunrise. Catch it right and the seas, turned pink by the emerging light and interrupted only by the choreography of white breakers crashing rhythmically over reefs seeming to stretch for miles out to sea, will be one of those sights that will always stay with you.



## ***Golfo de Fonseca –***

The Gulf of Fonseca offers a respite with unlimited anchoring before heading on to Nicaragua. El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua each border on the shoreline of this large bay, the only place that Honduras can be accessed from the sea on the Pacific side. The gulf also marks the north end of the region plagued by “Papagayos”, strong winds that blow from the Caribbean across Central America from October through February,



dumping on boats cruising the Pacific coast. They can attack instantly and with little or no warning if you're close to shore because there will be little or no telltale fetch. Watch for the sign of sand blowing west, off the beaches. If you're lucky enough to see it, get ready to duck.

## ***Nicaragua***

Puesta del Sol Marina, [www.marinapuestadelosol.com](http://www.marinapuestadelosol.com), nestled in a pristine area along Nicaragua's coast, is an intimate little resort and marina with friendly staff, fine dining, and all the necessary amenities. More to the point, it is the only tourist marina on the west coast of Nicaragua and is well located as a staging point for continuing south to Costa Rica and beyond.



Enter this picturesque little cruising oasis by first locating a buoy about five miles offshore to start up an entrance channel bordered on each side by reefs. We are including the instructions posted on their website as of January 2013, but you check with them for any updated information and exact instructions to enter the channel and proceed to the marina. You should never have less than eight feet of water in the channel, even at low water. Channel 16 is monitored by an English-speaking person during daytime hours.

The marina staff provides transportation to the nearby town of Chenindegá roughly a half hour away for provisioning, shopping, or just for sightseeing. Time your visit for when the kids have a school break and their delighted, inquisitive little faces will follow you all over town. Nicaragua is one of, if not the, poorest of Central American countries, and the school children would most likely enjoy any school supplies you might be able to share with them.

A buoy at sea must be located before starting up the entrance channel bordered on each side by reefs. Puesta is a port of entry and, though it's in a remote location, the necessary authorities will come to your boat for check in.

**1.** The following waypoints and information, provided by the marina, should be entered in your GPS:

Waypoint A: Lat. 12° 35.653' North; Lon. 087° 25.563' West

Waypoint B: Lat. 12° 36.570' North; Lon. 087° 22.430' West

Waypoint C: Lat. 12° 36.830 North; Lon. 087° 20.930 West

Waypoint A is about five miles offshore. Waypoint B is the location of the marina entrance buoy. The entrance buoy is eleven feet high with red and white vertical stripes and has a flashing white light with a three-mile range. Waypoint C is the location of the green #1 buoy marking the beginning of the navigation channel to the marina.

2. If you are coming from the northwest, steer a course to Waypoint A that will keep you at least five miles offshore. This course avoids several reefs in \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity.
3. The approach from the southeast is free of any known hazards, and you may steer a course directly for Waypoint B if you wish.
4. The distance from Waypoint A to Waypoint B is 3 nm on a course of 072° True.
5. The distance from Waypoint B to Waypoint C is about two nm on the same \_\_\_\_\_ course \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 072° \_\_\_\_\_ True.
6. Once in the channel of El Estero de Aserradores, follow the buoys marking the channel for 1.36 nm. (2.52 km.) to the marina docks. You will never have less than eight feet of water in the channel even at low, low water.
7. Channel 16 is monitored by an English-speaking person during daytime hours.

Additional anchorages further south, all of which are good \_\_\_\_\_ for overnight stays only, include Masachapa, El Astillerio, and Punta Gigante. The town of San Juan del Sur is at the southern end of the country and offers fuel and provisioning but is typically a windy, rolly anchorage.

## Costa Rica

Only miles south of San Juan del Sur is Bahia Santa Elena, the first anchorage available as you enter Costa Rica. Nearly landlocked with only a very narrow entrance, it is normally lake smooth. Once inside, it is encircled by low hills blanketed with lush vegetation and, as a wildlife preserve, is untouched by man. In our years of cruising, it is our favorite anchorage of all time. Yellow butterflies *swarmed the boat* during the day and howler monkeys serenaded from all directions at night. It was a tropical paradise. For us, the sun usually rose each morning peeking



through wispy fog lying low on the water. Large numbers of green parrots flew overhead early in the day, to return in the late afternoon.

The little bay is a good staging point to await a

weather window to round Cabo Santa Elena just to the south, the equivalent of California's Point Conception. Marked by many large rocks, it is not to be underestimated and preferably not to be rounded at night.

Further southeast, Bahia del Coco boasts several nice anchorages. Among them, the little town of Coco is the most northwest point of entry and offers good provisioning. Continuing southeast, several little bays dot the



coastline, such as Bahia Portrero, Bahia Carrillo, and then the much larger Golfo de Nicoya. Bahia Ballena marks the northwest entrance to Golfo de Nicoya and Bahia Herradura is its southeast entrance. Nicoya itself is large, with many remote islands offering pristine, isolated tropical anchorages. Bahia Herradura boasts a beautiful five-star marina, which is very expensive. Anchor in the bay just outside of it instead. Nearby is the town of Jaca, a must-see picturesque little surfing town. Deeper into Golfo de Nicoya is Puntarenas, a peninsula town behind which the Costa Rica Yacht Club Marina sits on a river with mooring buoys and detached floating docks to tie to. But watch the tidal range; the river can put you on the bottom.

Southeast of Herradura is Quespos. Anchor there and grab a bus or taxi to take you a little south on the coast to spend a delightful day in the nearby renowned Manuel Antonio National Park. It is truly one of Costa Rica's treasures. And while there, be sure to ask to see, for example, the

strongest living creature on earth. You will truly be amazed. Further stops on the way to Panama include Bahia Unita, Bahia Drake, Isla Cano, Puerto Jimenez and Bahia Rincon. The southeastern most marina is in Golfito, which is expensive but the only game in town.

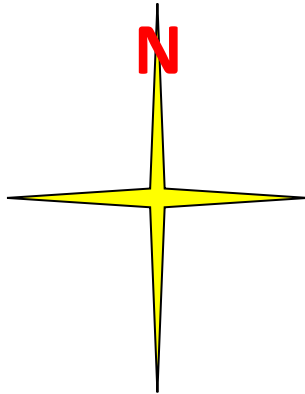
## ***Panama***

Crossing into Panama, the next real sign of civilization is Puerto Armuelles, which is roughly 62 miles southeast of Golfito. In descending order heading south, the noteworthy anchorages from there in the run to Balboa and the Panama Canal, some 323 miles, include Isla Parida, Bahia Hondo, Isla Cebaco, Ensenada Naranjo, and Ensenada Beneo.

The Panama Canal is, of course, the gateway to the Caribbean. Pat and Carole didn't make it to the Caribbean or to Panama on *Espiritu*, but recently they spent about three weeks in the region. They explored the old city "Casco Viejo" area of Panama City, rode the Panama Railroad and traversed the canal three ways, by boat, train and car. Then they spent time charter-sailing in the San Blas Islands. They said it was a totally different kind of sailing than when they were on *Espiritu*. They were on a large catamaran, the captain and crew did all the work and cooked and served all the meals, and Pat didn't have to waste any time doing boat-chores or maintenance! After that they spent several days up in the Bocas Del Toro region near Cost Rica, and then squeezed in an extra day in the mountains, in Boquette. Panama is a destination to keep on your "bucket List", it doesn't matter how you get there, get there and spend some time there; – *GO!* And here's a little "teaser" for you: the national food of Panama is ceviche, and in the permanent outdoor market across from Casco Viejo there must be two dozen vendors with their own special ceviche recipes. *It's to die for!!*

South of the canal, the newest destination of interest to cruisers seems to be Ecuador. West of Ecuador, of course, are the Galapagos Islands, the Marquesas and the lure of the exotic islands of the South Pacific beyond.

Whether you are heading through the canal, on to South America, or to the South Pacific, make sure you have up-to-date charts and other information before you leave Panama. This is definitely a place to talk with other cruisers. You may be going where many of them have just come from. Whatever your next landfall may be, “May the wind gods be with you.”



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Each of our sponsors are businesses that either we, or other many cruising friends, have personally worked with. We have enjoyed receiving outstanding services from these firms and from their employees. We have invited each of our sponsor to participate in **CRUISING NOTES – Things to know before you go**, and **CRUISING NOTES – Underway to Mexico**, because in their area they represent the very best services cruisers have encountered.

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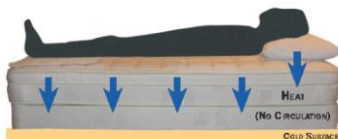
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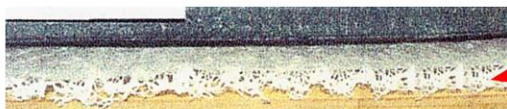
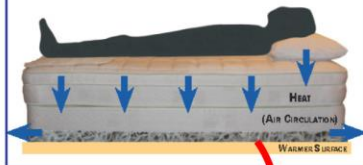
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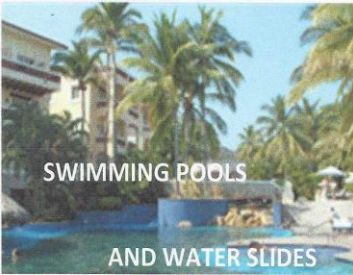
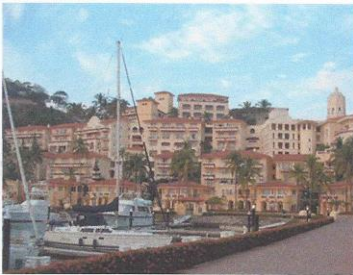
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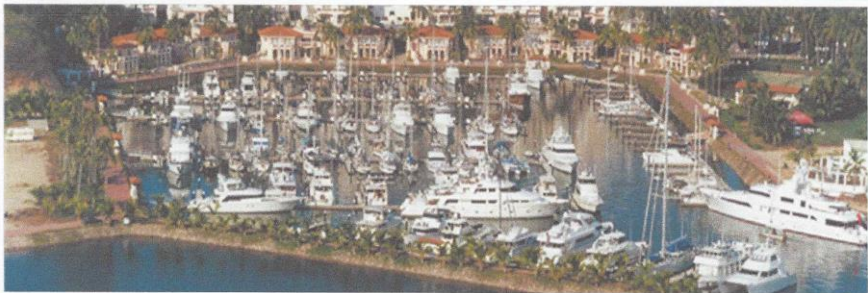
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## ***Our Closing Comments***

Thank you for allowing us to share our thoughts with you. We hope we've helped you with things you need to know before you go, and with cruising information and tips that will help you get the most out of casting off your dock lines.

That said, please know that while we each have a fair number of miles under our keels, we, the authors, are also well aware that life's responsibilities and/or commitments can tie very secure knots in those dock lines. We've been there ourselves. While we had enjoyed years of sailing, including spurts in various parts of the world, life's exigencies had tethered us well to our lives on terra-firma, causing us to put off that "big" cruise. The plan for each of us was to take three to five years to meander south, turn left at the canal, and wander through the Caribbean and up the east coast before returning home.

Though five couples had planned to set sail together in 2005, in the end Pat and Carole and the three other couples from our sailing group were delayed a year by family commitments. Feeling a sense of urgency for physical reasons, Phil and Nora sailed on schedule but, as *Shiraz* slid south, Nora began to develop arthritis in both hands and, with increasing progression of his own back issues, Phil started to question the wisdom of taking on the winds of the Caribbean. Their final decision was not made until they reached southern Costa Rica, but it was clear that sailing *Shiraz* required a level of physicality they were both losing and going on would be foolhardy. Unexpected family matters involving an aged parent and the arrival of twin grandkids ultimately turned *Espirito* back early as well. A business situation cut short time for one couple, their boat stayed in Mexico until it was sold but they had to come back to Northern California more and more after the first year in Mexico. One of the other boats "buddy-boated" back about the same time as Phil and Nora. That left Chris and Robyn Parker on Robyn's Nest. After a little more than a year in Mexico they had their boat shipped to Alaska – in the winter yet – and spent



another couple of years cruising the rest of their dreams along the Inland Passage and the San Juan Islands of the Pacific Northwest.

Our point: simply put, even the best laid plans can be changed or interrupted by life's pressing needs – careers, family commitments, financial security or many other important things like just changing your plans – and it's easy to wait too long.

So, if you dream of sailing over the horizon, go while you can – as soon as humanly possible – *just go!*

These days it need not be a long, extended cruise. Many families of all sizes and ages are now *commuter-cruising*. Go, even if it is for only three months, and then fly home and come back later to untie the dock lines again. At the end of a few years when you come back and tie up in your slip at home again, next to your old dock-mates, **You** will have done it while **THEY** will still be dreaming about it! The world at sea is simply like no other – and it beckons. See you on the water!

**Phil & Nora McCaleb**

**Pat & Carole McIntosh**

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## ***Testimonials***

**Strictly Sail Pacific Boat Show** at Jack London Square 2014, included this statement in their program announcing our Cruising Mexico seminars and book **CRUISING NOTES – Things to know before you go**:

*“It’s about time all this information was written down in one place!”*

**Jimmy Cornell** is an accomplished sailor and author, who has sailed all the oceans of the world. His books include: *World Cruising Routes*, *World Voyage Planner*, *World Cruising Essentials*, and *200,000 Miles – a life of adventure*, and many more. Here’s what he says about **CRUISING NOTES - Things to know before you go**:

*“. . . and must say that what impressed me most was its comprehensive content. I have no doubt that such a book is a godsend to any sailor planning to cruise from the Pacific Northwest all the way to Panama, whether they're experienced or not. I was also impressed by the amount of practical detail and tips you give sailors following in your wake, all obviously based on your, Carole's, Phil's and Nora's extensive local experience.”*

**Robert and Carol Mehaffy** are well known authors and voyagers whose home waters are in Northern California. They have chronicled their voyages since the early 1990’s in guide books, articles and seminars covering California, Mexico, the Hawaiian Islands, and have recently released the 2nd edition of *The Definitive Guide for San Francisco Bay*. After reading **CRUISING NOTES - Things to know before you go** here’s what they said:

*“..... Your book definitely falls into the category of a book every cruiser should have since it is based on your own experiences and written for boaters making their first passage. . . . . your book uses so many anecdotes of your personal experiences, it makes it easy for readers to understand your message. . . . the mini-cruising guide from the Pacific Northwest to Panama, would be an excellent book for any cruising boater thinking about heading out. Carol and I have been in every country and harbor you*

*mention, so we appreciate your comments and your ability to make cruising in these areas something all boaters wanting to follow in your wake can do with confidence.”*