

Baja Voyage(cont'd) Day 4 & 5

This trip involved more than 2200 miles of driving and 600 nm of sailing. For technical details and information, lists, etc. see "Baja Odyssey & Lists" posted previously in multiple postings due to the size of the files. You may find these useful if you are planning a long voyage.



Bay Angles and Puerto Don Juan (Cunningham')

Mike had been going to BLA with various church groups for several years and knew the area quite well and knew the trucks would be safe with a friend who ran a campground to keep the vehicles until we finally returned from the trip. After we launched the boats, my brother and Jonathan drove the trucks and empty trailers around the bay to the campground for storage. Mike and I sailed our boats to the campground in about the same time (1hr) as it took them to negotiate the dirt track.

Unfortunately, in the excitement to get underway, my digital camera was left in the truck. When Mike and Jonathan returned to Oregon, they graciously picked up the camera and gave it to my wife Alice, who brought it with her, when she came to join the adventure.

At last, the trip really began. By now it was three in the afternoon; fortunately we planned to sail only 6 or 7 miles to our first stop, Puerto Don Juan. On the way over we saw our first dolphins -- a small pod of Whiteside dolphins. As it turned out we rarely shared any anchorages with any, other boats. It was so deserted.

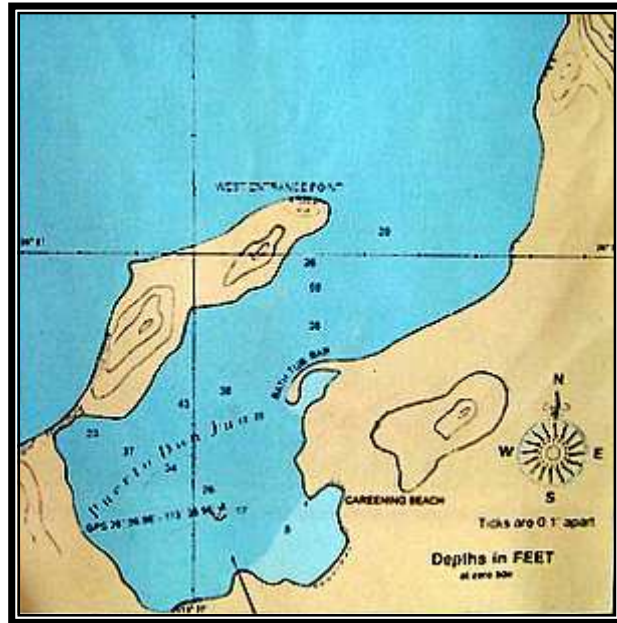
Puerto Don Juan is a perfect hurricane hole and indeed was used during the last hurricane that went through BLA. Though no boats were



Our first sight of a dolphin

lost in Don Juan, several including a Pacific Seacraft sank nearby. To quote the guide, "Puerto Don Juan is a beautiful little land-locked bay with no access by road. There is a good sand bottom, and it is a favorite place for careening boats. The maximum tidal range is 11 ft..." One thing to note, as you head south the tidal range diminishes until it is around 3 feet or so about 300 miles further south. Mike and Jonathan caught a couple of sea bass and we had fine barbequed fish for dinner.

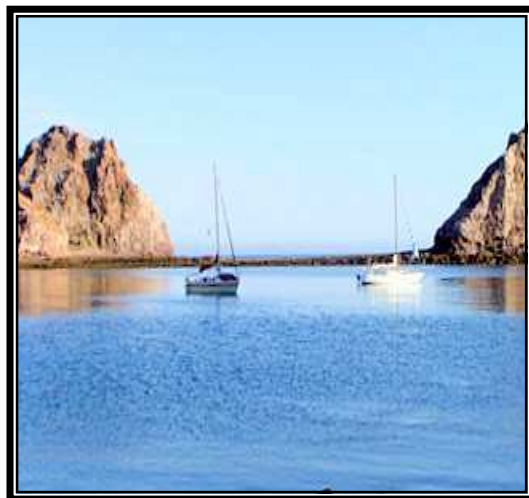
Very quiet and still with the full moon lighting every fine detail on land and sea, we fell into a restful sleep. The next morning we were surrounded by ... "Bees, Bees, mother of God, *Bees*," to quote that old Chris Farley film, *Tommy Boy*. They were everywhere; perhaps 500 to 1,000 bees were trying to desperately suck up the fresh water from the dew that had condensed on the boat. In this desert, freshwater is a rare thing. The honeybees were not at all aggressive, but with that many one must be very careful not to step or sit on any. Of course, when my brother did that, I started to crack up because of, shall we say, the indelicate location of the sting. Soon I



Puerto Don Juan (from Cunningham's Guide)

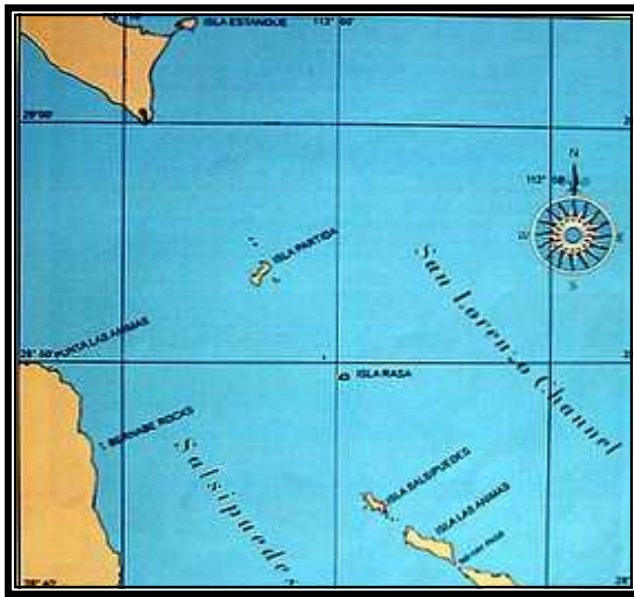


Killer bee lures, Puerto Don Juan



Morning in Puerto Don Juan

found myself "accidentally" shoved down on a few of those little honeys. From then on it was all down hill with the poor bees being the butt (pun) of our revenge on each other. Fortunately, we did have some sting ointment and did come to our senses before it got too bad.



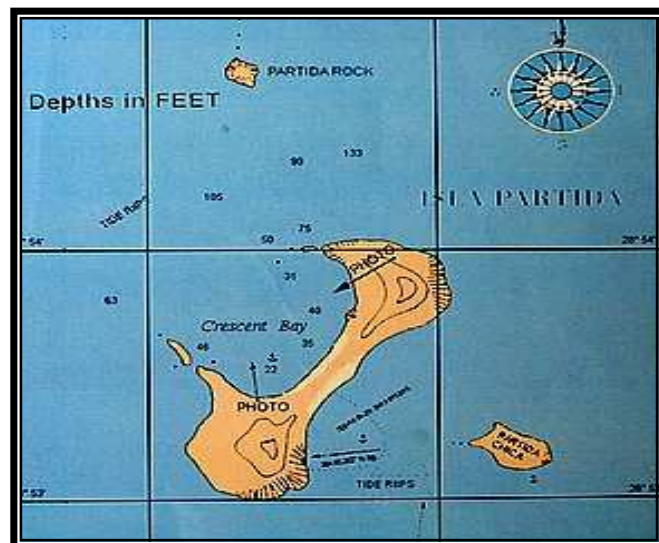
Punta Animas, Salsipuedes, & Estanque
(From Cunningham's Guide)

Our plan was to leave and head southeast from Puerto Don Juan to the island of Salsipuedes, it means "leave if you can" island. Unfortunately, the seas were 4-6 feet right on the nose as was the wind. After trying to beat into the wind and seas we diverted to a small cove on the mainland called Animas slot (about 15nm from Puerto Don Juan). On the way there we did see a couple of finback whales, several hundred yards away. Boy they were big! The mainland there was mostly steep to rocks with a few off lying reefs; not someplace you would want to get into trouble. Though a bit tricky, we entered the cove and

found it gave us good protection from the SE. There was a steep sandy beach with a small dune backed by cactus covered cliffs and several large rocks sticking out of the water. There was also a small Islet on the north side of the cove that had some interesting caves. The snorkeling was good but the visibility was only 20 feet or so. The next morning we moved around to the next cove, Emmedio, and fished, but we caught nothing. A fishing boat went by and when the guys went out to ask about fishing techniques, they were given a yellow fin tuna...fish for dinner tonight!

We left with the intended destination being Salsipuedes again. And again, the wind and seas were rough, choppy, and of course on the nose. Mike wanted to get as far south as St. Rosalea, a neat town some distance away, but at this rate he would run out of time.

We diverted to the island of Partida (about 10 nm from Punta Animas) and anchored in a large crescent bay. It was protected from the SE., but the swell wrapped around and you all know how the Rhodes behaves when anchored with a beam swell. After some work, I set up a bridle on the anchor line to point the boat into the swells rather than the wind, and



Isla Partida (From Cunningham's Guide)

things were much better. The guys went ashore amid the cries of vast flocks of irritated seagulls and climbed up to get some pictures.



Crescent Bay Isla Partida

That night with the moon still quite full, we had a delicious dinner of BBQ'ed marinated tuna, rice, canned asparagus and a bottle of wine. With the large and comfortable cockpit our boat was designated the grand dinning saloon of the fleet. Ah, Life is beautiful!

To Be Continued.....