

Baja Voyage(cont'd)

Day 6

This trip involved about 2200 miles of driving and 600nm of sailing. For technical details and information, lists etc. see the attachment, on the first installment; it may be useful if you are planning a long trip on your boat.

We got up early and held a strategy meeting between the two crews and decided that there would not be enough time for Mike and his Ranger 23 to go south with us as far as St. Rosalea. Since my brother Brad and I had a lot more time than Mike we agreed to head north to an intriguing island called Estanque (about 12nm) located off the south east tip of the 40 mile long island of Angel de La Guarda (Guardian Angel Island). As we passed Partida Rock we could see, hear and smell that it was covered with over a hundred sea lions honking, barking and bellowing at each other (kind of like the list during election time). There was some discussion about going in the water but we figured if the next large island to the east is called Tibrion (shark) Island it might not be such a good idea. However, we watched a couple of juveniles cruise around assembling a gang of 10 or 15 delinquent pinnipeds. With courage in numbers, they rushed out and surrounded both boats, barking and swimming exuberantly around us.



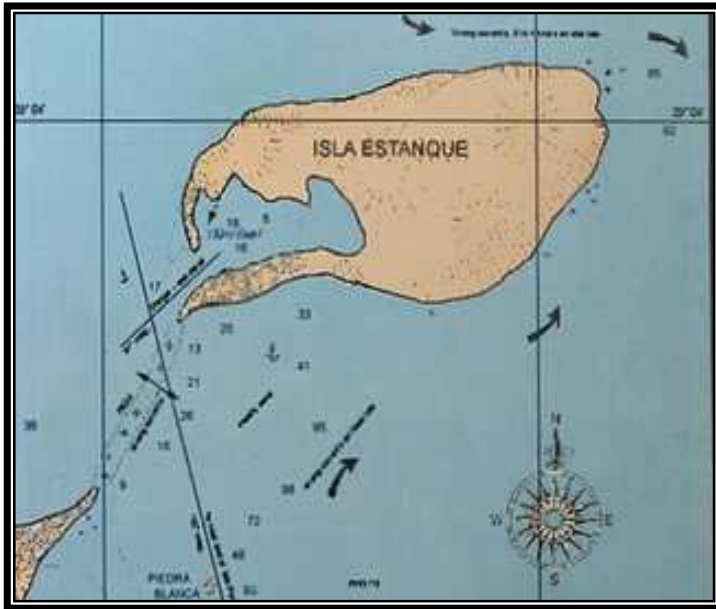
Looking for whales heading north

of all ages leaping and doing summersaults, and swimming alongside of us. My brother took the helm; I put on mask and flippers and jumped in. I was a bit late and most had gone by but I could see a few rushing along below me and all around I could hear their singing, clicking and squealing. Reluctantly I got into the boat and we continued on to the island of Estanque.

A half hour latter we saw a couple of finback whales and while looking for more saw a great commotion coming toward us. We didn't know what it could be, not a reef since the entire area of agitated water was moving, perhaps it was a tide-rip or those standing waves that the guide book talks about. After a few anxious minutes we could see that it was a pod of perhaps 150 dolphins heading our way! Way cool. We were just amazed to see so many dolphins



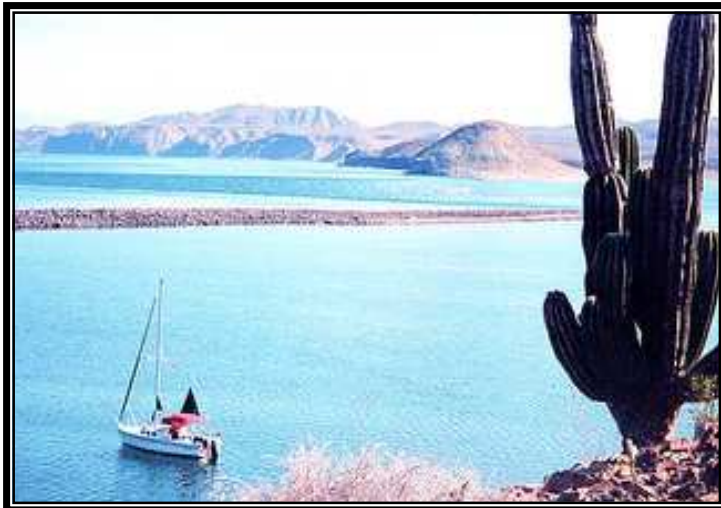
Dolphins, Dolphins, Dolphins everywhere



As you can see from the chart of Estanque it is a bit of a challenge to get into the “pond” as there are some very strong currents that will sweep you over a reef. There are several shoal areas as you enter and the peninsulas are large lava cobbles, not sand or gravel. To all appearances, at full flood or ebb tide, the reef looks like a class 4 rapid, 300 yards wide. When anchored inside of the pond during these times all is smooth and quiet except for the roar of what sounds like a large waterfall as the tide rushes over the rocks of the reef.

Isla Estanque (from Cunningham’s Guide)

We approached the entrance from the north during slack tide so we felt pretty confident though the soundings got down to 4 feet because we didn’t follow the rocky south side closely enough. Once inside we had 20 feet under us with a sand bottom.



Estanque pond with tidal falls in background

The island itself is quite high for such a small island. I climbed around it taking a few pictures. There were lots of large gulls and their molting fledglings so I had to step carefully. Scattered between the cactus and thorns were several strange stone structures, mostly circular, that appeared quite old; but though I looked, I found no artifacts. Later on when I asked a local fisherman he said that the native peoples made them long ago but he had no idea of their purpose.

Meanwhile, the rest of the guys went fishing and caught a California yellowtail that we BBQ’d that evening and enjoyed with Basmati rice and some cold Negra Modelo beer. Good food, good company, great location.

That night, before moonrise, all was very still and there was just the stars lighting the anchorage. When I stuck the dishes in the water to wash them there was a burst of phosphorescence and soon all around the boat were brilliant glimmering trails as the small fish went after the rice in the water. It was one of the best displays of bioluminescence I have ever seen; better even than the Bahamas or the Caribbean. Another perfect end to a perfect day in the Sea of Cortez. **To Be Continued.....**