

Baja Voyage(cont'd)

Day 8

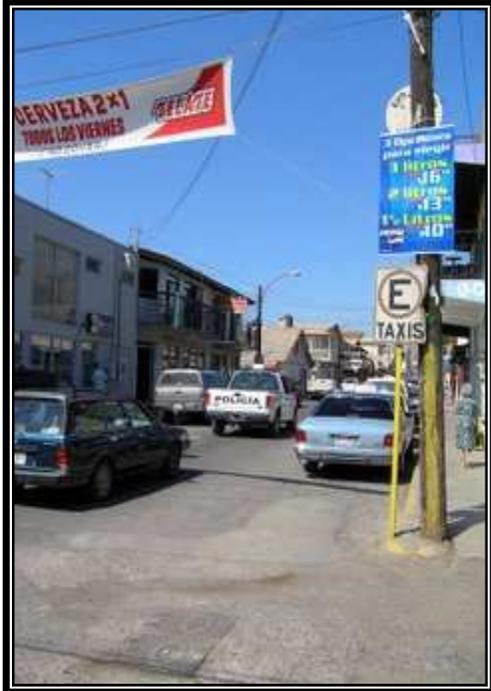
Our goal was to reach Santa Rosalea (about 80nm) before evening and not to use too much gas. Fortunately, a light easterly to northeasterly breeze had sprung up after midnight so we raised the sails and slowly cruised SE. There was enough light from the moon and stars to see quite a distance, but we could not on our own determine how far away the islands were. Were they on the horizon, or a few hundred yards away? It was most weird. (We could, by referring to the chart and GPS, determine their true distance). Several times we heard but did not see, distant whales. Also we saw some strange sea life about the size of a penguin (but it wasn't bird) leaping out of the water close by. It had the coloration of a penguin, black and white, but a weird shape that was hard to see in the light. This mystery was solved a few days later. Imagine sailing along a coast for an entire night and other than the restaurant you left, not seeing a single light the entire time. There were no houses, cars, other boats; not even any airplanes! So we sailed through the night very much alone.

Remember the description of the remote aspect of the coast in the dark? In the morning light there was just the rugged coast with numerous shallow, indented coves, steep coastal cliffs, caves and tall rugged mountains. Nowhere, for the rest of the morning, did we see any sign of man on the land. There were no roads or tracks, no houses, no power lines; no mark upon this deserted landscape to indicate that man even existed. It wasn't until late in the afternoon that we saw a couple of fishing boats and finally a gypsum mine. A few miles later we entered the harbor of Santa Rosalea.



Enosis at rest in the harbor of Santa Rosalea

The harbor at Santa Rosalea is manmade in an unusual manner. A French mining company built the town in the 1880's. As part of the mineral rights lease, they had to provide proper infrastructure including the port. They took special train cars, filled them full of molten slag from the copper smelter, and rolled them out to the breakwater. They stacked up the now cool and solid blocks of slag to form the breakwater in a stair step manner. The small beach outside the harbor appears to be black sand, but is a mixture of slag and coal dust from, you guessed it, coals from Newcastle. They were brought



Street scene, Santa Rosalea

around the horn from England in big square-rigged ships. We anchored in the harbor since the small marina was full and rowed ashore in the dingy. The marina is most unusual, since the guy who runs it, Ricardo, is often not there. The check in procedure is to go to the office/bar/club house, fill in your own paperwork, reach into the cooler for a cold Pacifico and jot down what you have taken -- all on an honor system. Ice was available along with showers and the odd cold drink. We arrived in time to be invited by the "residents" of the marina to go for a special traditional cruisers meal.

At seven, a group of about 10 cruisers gathered at the clubhouse and walked into town for a famous meal/ritual. I can't remember what it was called, but the meal consisted of a meaty hotdog wrapped in bacon and deep fried in oil (all cholesterol free I'm sure) and placed on a bun. You had your choice of 10 different kinds of toppings including 4 different salsas guacamole,

etc. all served from an elaborate pushcart and with a great deal of pride. Along with a cold soda, this meal cost about \$1.25. After downing a couple of these delicious treats, we went to the ice cream shop and had some really great pistachio ice cream.

Heading back down from the town there was the obligatory stop at the local bar where Brad and I enjoyed a couple of cold ones. After some pleasant and interesting conversations at the "clubhouse," we headed back to the boat for a quiet night's sleep. Not! It seems that about 9 pm is when there is a big exodus from the harbor of the squid fishing fleet. The fleet consisted of about thirty, 25-foot long narrow fiberglass boats powered by a 50 hp. outboard with only two speeds -- off and full speed ahead. The pangas as they are called, went roaring out through the "make-as-big-a-wake-as-you-can-zone where the cruisers were moored. But to keep perspective, it is their harbor and we are there just to play on the water. They must make a tough living on it. We drifted off to sleep just in time.....to be woken up by the return of the squiders. By 1 am everything was quiet again.

To Be Continued.....