

Baja Voyage (cont'd) Day 10 & 11

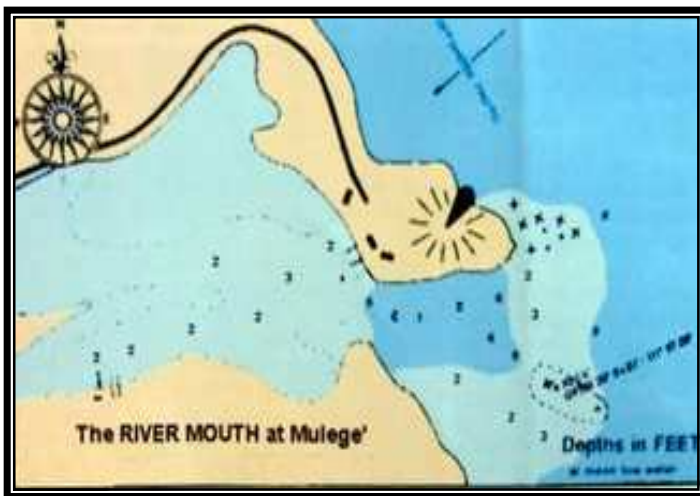


The bay near Los Arcos on Isla San Marcos



View from one of the caves at Los Arcos

We got up early the next morning and motored over a couple of miles to the north end of the island to a place called Los Arcos. There were several caves you could dingy into -- one with a beach in the back and the roof open to let in light. At that time of the morning, a fishing camp of sleepy local fishermen occupied the beach. It was a great location for skin-diving and the visibility was excellent. The colors of the different depths of water were fantastic, and even though there was no coral, there were lots of wildly painted fish. We hiked the island a bit then left for our next destination of Mulegé, pronounced *moo-lay-hay* not *mule-age*. (about 25nm).



The entrance to Mulegé (as seen through the blur of post Bar El Patron eyes) (from Cunningham's guide)

In the middle of the Baja desert, there is a river with the town of Mulegé. It is in effect an oasis with hundreds and hundreds of palm trees along the river. The entrance to the river is a bit tricky because on the right there is a steep promontory and on the left there is a series of reefs, but wait! There's more! Across the mouth of the river is a sandbar with around 3 or 4 feet of water, sometimes more, sometimes less with a scattering of unmarked rocks. Sounds like Rhodes territory to me!

Mostly without touching the centerboard, we crossed the bar and passed a small quay to starboard. The guidebook said that you could motor up almost to the town 3 km upriver (in your dingy). Well, a Rhodes is really only a big dinghy, so why not see how far up we could go? Slowly, we felt our way up the river. (Remember the river scene in *Apocalypse Now*?) We focused on the river, looking for every clue to guide us up the stream to find our own Col. Kurtz. Suddenly, I was distracted -- incoming pelican poop impacted the water just in front of us. When I looked up, I could see no pelican only an old, much spliced, high-tension wire 20 feet above the river and 50 feet in front of us. Gaak!. Visions of Wiley Coyote flashed through my head; so much for the easy way to the town.



Mulegé river mouth, from the lighthouse. Enosis is the 3rd boat from the left. Note the frigate bird above

We returned to the small quay and checked in with the Capitana del Puerto. There was a \$5 gratuity for the use of the quay, but the best part was that perhaps 200 yards away on the beach was a nice, rustic, dirt-floored restaurant and bar called El Patron. We spent the rest of the afternoon there eating cerviche, drinking cold drinks and enjoying the ocean breeze as it blew through the open walls of the restaurant. It was a fine end to a fine day. (Any day you avoid electrocution is a fine day.)



Relaxing at Bar El Patron, Mulegé

The next morning, I worked on some maintenance things while Brad went in to see if he could bum a ride into town to get some gas. On the way past the restaurant, he met some Americans who had bought a beater of an RV and had come down to fish. They offered him a ride into town to get the gas, and ice too. When I say a beater, this was a vehicle with 4 Chico State College graduates. One of the heavy ones had already had fallen through the floor as the RV

was going over topes, but had landed on the axel. Additionally, after hitting a house, the RV had started to come apart. So, it was held together with 2 by 4's on the inside and hundreds of colorful Mexican beer bottle caps on the outside skin. The bottle caps were used as washers into which screws were driven and fastened to 2 by 4's inside. (Could have been one of Rummy's framing jobs?) My brother had to be in Loreto (55 nm away by boat) to catch a plane to L.A. Since he had to be there in 2 days (by our fuzzy calculations), he was quite nervous about making it on time. So he decided to take the bus. He stopped at the bus station and bought a ticket for Loreto, supposedly 2 hours away by bus.

Since Brad was leaving the next day and I didn't have to leave for Loreto for a couple of days, we made a short 6 mile sail to a deserted beach called Bahia Santo Domingo near the top of the peninsula that encloses Concepcion Bay. It was here that my brother, a devotee of Geocaching, planned to deposit his ammo box of treasures.

Geocaching is a worldwide sport that involves using a GPS receiver to find a latitude and longitude coordinate at which there is a geocache. A geocache is usually in a container like an ammo box or some sort of Tupperware. In it you will typically find a logbook in which to write your name, date, and an account of your experience finding the cache. You will also find trade items like pins, toys, and key chains. The only rule is that if you take something you must leave something of equal or greater value. For more information on this sport go to www.geocaching.com



Geocache site just inland of Santo Domingo Bay, cache site is 50 ft. due east of the rock cairn and near the multi-fingered cactus.

After much preparation, the box was hidden inland about 200 yards from the red cliffs on the beach. Carefully concealed in a natural rock pile and camouflaged with debris, it was the perfect spot. After setting the GPS for "WAS" and taking very careful readings, he recorded the information in one of the notebooks he bought in town. A month later when I called him about the details, he pointed out one small **technical** problem. Seems "he" (I could say "we" but I

get to exercise a writer's prerogative and say "he") put the notebook with the coordinates *in the box*. Well, at least "he" knows it's safe. So, if anybody wants to find this cache I can give you some old fashion pirate map directions. D'OH!

Considering our great success in depositing the cache, we decided to go into town for one last meal. After a long walk shaded by palms, we entered the little town of Mulege', very clean and quaint if a bit dusty in places. Since it was Saturday and Brad had to leave Sunday, we found a great restaurant and sat down for a real feast. I asked the waiter if things were open tomorrow and he said of course, why would they be closed on Friday? It wasn't Saturday evening, it was Thursday evening! After animated consultation over too many beers, we decided to stay the next couple of days and explore the area. Much later that evening, bumping off trees and stubbing our toes, we shuffled down the dark, dusty palm lined road from the town to the port and our waiting boat (too cheap to take a taxi and too dumb to take a flashlight).



Mulegé river mouth. Capitana's house to the left, El Patron Bar at the end of beach