

Baja Voyage (cont'd) Day 16, 17, & 18



Isla Carmen, Balandra to the NW

Ole'. Good food, at a great price. I returned to the laundry where the young lady was talking with a friend and folding the laundry. Fortunately I paused and gave the clothes a quick inspection since I wanted every thing to be clean for my wife who was joining me in another day or two. What caught my eye was the lace on the red thongs. Now I know I don't wear them (least ways I don't remember any recent times) and contrary to rumors my brother Brad probably doesn't either, at least not that size. (Please note: the previous sentence is for fraternal baiting purposes only.) I pulled them out, held them up, and stated in Span'talian or Itanish language, "Hey, I will die an ugly death if my wife finds these in my laundry!" We all had a good laugh and she explained that sometimes they mix two small loads and she just missed those unmentionables. Boy, talk about a close call!

A short walk brought me to the boat and after stowing my clothes, sans thongs, I set sail for Puerto Escondido 13nm south.

The following morning I was up early putting Benedryl on the bites. I returned to Loreto to have some laundry done as I knew most of my clothes should not have that green velour finish on them. I found the "Puley" lavanderia and left my duffel bag with a young lady who was full of giggles and smiles as I tried to explain what I wanted in my best Italian. What the heck, Spanish and Italian are pretty close together and most of the time I had no problem understanding what was being said to me if the speakers spoke slowly. I spent the rest of the morning wandering around town and enjoying a quiet lunch at Café'



Puerto Escondido (from Cunningham's Guide)



Mountains on the mainland side of Escondido

lack of maintenance some of the 100 or so buoys were unreliable, so he sent me to a secure one. The whole port is a bit odd with a sense of abandonment. It was initially developed to be a 1st class facility, but as each stage would be completed someone would run off with the investors' money. The enterprise would go bankrupt only to be revitalized by a new group of investors and the same things would happen to them. Adding to the desolation, a couple of freak hurricanes had damaged many of the incomplete and abandoned buildings. So the port was pretty much deserted with two competing entities trying to collect the "fee" for the moorings and use of dockside water, which by the way, was considered some of the best in Baja. I laid back and listened to some classical music as I enjoyed a beautiful sunset and anticipated my reunion with Alice.

Unfortunately, my stomach was unsettled and I wasn't able to eat anything. That evening, and all night, I really fed the plankton. By the next morning I was too weak to do much of anything until late that afternoon. The only things I could keep down were fluids, and I had to force myself to drink them. I guess you expect to get sick when traveling in remote areas, but still I had been hoping I would be the exception. Well, thinking back to Loreto, perhaps I didn't eat at Café 'Ole,' but Café 'Oily. So that's why it was so cheap! I lazed around the boat the whole day and had another unsatisfactory evening (though I expect the fish liked it).



Western mountains, note the street lights and abandoned buildings; still, water and ice is available

"Set sail" was a misnomer. There was no wind and I had to motor the whole way there.. The Puerto is a neat, perfect hurricane hole about 2 miles long over all. It is made up of several interconnected bays and coves, and the tallest mountains in the Baja guard the mainland side. To seaward there are a series of interconnected lower islands a few hundred feet tall. I motored through the narrow entrance into the inner harbor and was directed to tie up to a mooring buoy by another American boat there. Due to

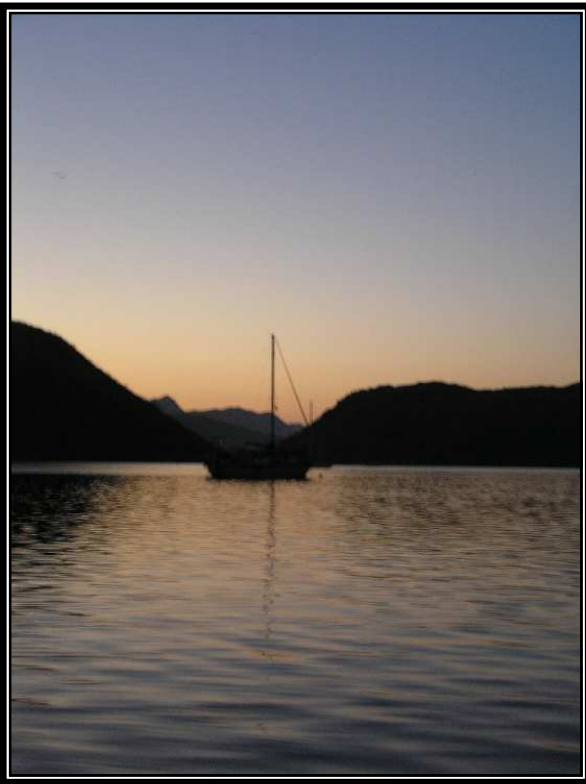
By the following morning I had some energy. Knowing Alice was arriving at 5 that afternoon, I set about cleaning the whole boat inside and out. After two weeks of two brothers "baching" it, the boat wasn't very welcoming to say the least. Still weak with the food poisoning, I left the dingy on the mooring and motored into the small crescent manmade harbor where I could take on water, and ice. I scrubbed down the outside of the boat with Softscrub and saltwater working hard to remove the layers of oxidized suntan lotion, skin and beer that had adhered to most surfaces of the cockpit and cushions. I beat the rug on the dock to remove 2 weeks of sand, crackers and "naval lint". I filled the tank, and some soldiers from another Special Forces boat tied up in front of me, lent a hand with the heavy jerry cans of water. I walked ¼ mile to the ice machine and got several bags. With ice in hand, I prepared to sprint back before the ice melted, when another boat person who lived in a town nearby gave me a lift in a rusty old '75 Impala. She and her boyfriend had lived on their boat for a number of years and decided to settle down in a nice off-the-grid house on the beach near by. After loading and stowing everything and spraying down the interior surfaces with 409, the boat

looked, and smelled great.

Two older ladies were trying to load a dingy with propane, food and water and I lent a hand. It seems one of them runs the VHF cruisers net there in Escondido with about 30 live-aboards within range in the summer and a lot more during the winter season.

Alice arrived a few minutes later all smiles and excited to start our return trip up the coast. She told the story of her flight from LA. Waiting in the lounge to board the plane, there were only a few women. Right before boarding, a large group of men appeared at the gate. They were an animated group of good-looking men in their 30's to 50's. Some were carrying long white tubes. It seems that Loreto is a huge hub for deep-sea fishing, and the guys had just come out of the bar to board the plane. Alice described the off-loaded luggage as fishing tube upon fishing tube, and cooler after cooler with hardly a piece of luggage on the plane.

Typical in this man-oriented culture, the



Sunset, Puerto Escondido, Baja California Sur

fishing groups all boarded taxis to their hotels before Alice could get one to Escondido.

Alice came aboard; we motored back to the mooring and spent the rest of the evening catching up and watching the stars come out one by one.

To Be Continued.....