

Baja Voyage (cont'd) Day 29

We awoke early, had some breakfast and since I could see what looked like a Pemex gas station a few miles away decided, to be clever and row about a ½ mile across the shallow tidal basin, leave the boat and hike a mile or so through some sand dunes to the main road and



Looking west from Punta Arena



thence to the gas station. Fortified with a couple bottles of water I rowed for a long time in water only a foot or two deep, then dragged the dingy 100 yards over the soft moist beach sand and secured it to a piling driven into the beach. The hike through the dunes was interesting and there seemed to be all sorts of

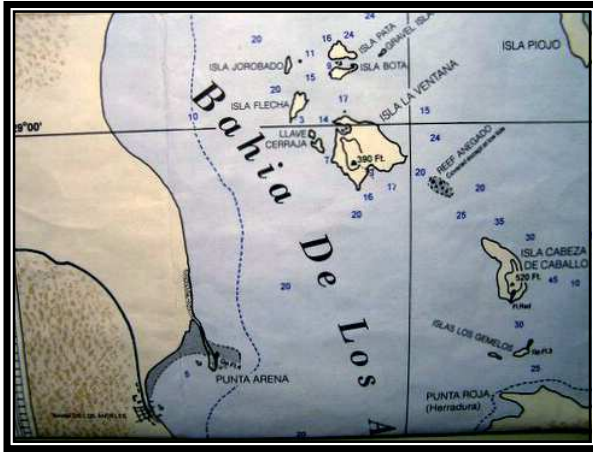
On my way to get fuel and become vulture bait

trails that looked as if a rainstorm had flooded them. I also saw lots of vultures and when I walked past a closed elementary school, all the play equipment had several vultures on each piece. Wished I had a picture of the vultures on the monkey bars, very strange! Finally I got the gas and bought more water to replace all I had consumed and then headed back.



Gull "assisting" the pelicans

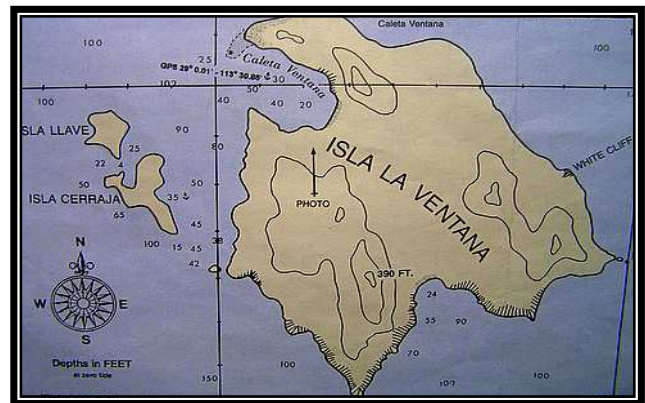
On my return trip, I found myself having to wade from one sand dune to the next in several feet of water. Those "trails" were now under water. Gravity in the area seemed to be increasing. As I got closer to where the dingy was, the 3 gallons of gas seemed to weigh 40 pounds. When I arrived at the "beached" dingy, I had to wade out a hundred yards in thigh high water. The 12-foot flood tide was coming in fast. Finally, exhausted, I arrived back at Enosis, tied up and flopped down in the shaded cockpit for a well-deserved rest. It was late morning and we relaxed and watched the many pellicanos crash into the water. They usually had a companion gull along. While the pelicans strained out the water from their enormous gullets, the clever little gulls would pester the pelicans, causing the pelicans to loose a few baitfish.



Punta Arenas to Ventana Island (from Cunningham's Guide)

After lunch, we chose to sail over to the nearby island of Ventana, only a 4-mile sail to the northeast from our present location. The wind was light from the east so we just motored over to the island in 45 minutes. We did pass the old pirate ship we had bumped into down south. With a cheerful "Arrgh Matey" he crossed our bow heading north. We proceeded to slip between Ventana and a few offshore islets to a beautiful cove called Caleta Ventana on the

northwest part of the island. I set two anchors since the cove is somewhat open to the west. It is from here that strong katabatic winds come roiling out of the canyons on the mainland and their force can extend out several miles.



It wasn't too hot, so after a swim we rowed ashore and I set off on a trail to see where it would go. It was

Isla Ventana (from Cunningham's Guide)



Caleta Ventana and the Enosis

interesting how different these islands were from the ones further off shore and to the south. There were several cacti that I hadn't seen on the other islands and a couple of shrub-like plants I recognized as trees on the mainland desert. This island seemed to be mostly granite, but the island just to the north (Isla Coronado) was a perfect volcanic cone with a rocky ridge extending south a couple of miles. It struck

me as strange, there are hardly any clouds, yet this volcanic peak has a low, flat cloud surrounding it like a tutu. I took a couple of good pictures of the boat from my vantage point and then returned to the beach without getting over to the far side of the island.

Alice and I donned our snorkel gear and spent the next hour or so snorkeling around the cliffs looking at all the strange and colorful fish and other marine life. Fortunately this time there were no jellyfish to contend with. We did see many, many stingrays in the shallow water leading up to the beach. I have heard there

are several people (mostly tourists) that receive very nasty injuries from stepping on the rays each year. We made sure we did the stingray shuffle when we had to go ashore, and carried a long stick to probe the water in front of us.



Moonrise over Isla Ventana

everyday had been a joy. Our time together on the boat was coming to a close in a few days and the poignancy of the moment touched us deeply.

With a light wind slowly shifting around the compass, we watched the moon and stars circle overhead. Several times during the night I would awake to do an anchor check. I was startled at how the bright moonlight and the deep razor-edged shadows of the rugged cliffs formed a mosaic of extremes. All around was a landscape of silver and ebony; the only color was the pale blue of the sand through the 15 feet of sea below us.

After spending a month sleeping outside on a small boat in the sea, things like tides, and phases of the moon, the wind and currents become more than quantifiable statistics, they become a significant part of a familiar environment. As Alice and I watched the sunset and an almost full moon rise over Ventana Island, it carried a greater significance, and affected us more, than any moonrise I can recall. We were in a safe harbor, we had sailed together for 300 miles and



A romantic moon over Caleta Ventana