

Sea of Cortez International CCA Cruise: May 3 - 12, 2024

Hola Marineros y Marineras!

¡Nos encantó nuestro crucero por el Mar de Cortéz!

On May 3rd a small fleet of a dozen boats Med-tied to the outer dock at Marina Puerto Escondido, preparing to depart the next day for a cruise along the shores of Baja California and around the islands in the Sea of Cortéz. There were eight boats, both monohulls and catamarans, chartered from Dream Yacht Charters in La Paz, and four private yachts that had traveled from the US and Mexico to join the cruise. A few of us picked up our boats at the base in La Paz a few days earlier, and the rest were delivered to Puerto Escondido by the Dream Yacht Charter crew. Friday night opened with drinks and a Mexican taco bar on the plaza adjacent to the Marina. A light breeze cooled us as we connected with old friends and were acquainted with some new ones. Following some introductions and expressions of gratitude to the many folks who helped make this event happen, we laid out the general Float Plan for the week. The weather promised to be very nice with warm days, not too much wind, and calm seas.



The first day the fleet spread out between the nearby islands of Isla Danzante (Dancer Island), Isla Carmen (the largest in the area), and Isla Coronado (an extinct volcano). Between swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, stand-up paddling, beach combing, hiking and fishing, everyone had a taste of what to expect over the next few days. The weather could not have been better with warm, dry air and a slight cooling breeze. The water

temperature was cool enough to refresh, but warm enough to allow one to stay in for an extended time. May and June are terrific months to visit the Sea of Cortez as the cooler northerlies are mostly absent and the extreme heat of the summer has yet to appear. This year was no exception — we timed the cruise perfectly.

Sunday May 5th found most of the fleet anchored in the large hooked bay in the southwest corner of Isla Coronado. The island is an extinct volcano and part of Bahia de Loreto Parque Nacional which is administered by CONAMP (the National Commission of Protected Natural Areas). For the more adventurous there was a trail to the top of the volcano which provided magnificent panoramic views of the surrounding sea and land masses, and for the less ambitious there were marked trails which lead to different sides of the island. The long white beach provided ample distance to stretch one's legs and dry off after a swim.



Monday and Tuesday were “free” days wherein each boat could choose a different route and anchorage on their way south to Bahia Agua Verde for our Wednesday afternoon rendezvous. Some ran offshore to Isla Carmen with its many anchorages and at least one boat ventured further to Isla Monserrat. We made a lunch stop at El Refugio (V-Cove) on the north end of Isla Carmen to snorkel along its steep, layered bluffs and white sand beach before the breeze came up out of the north and chased us off. We ended up around the corner in the large anchorage of Bahia Salinas along with a few of our fellow CCA cruisers. Everyone took a turn running their dinghies up on the beach to explore the Salt Mine there and to visit the small church and hunting lodge.

Wednesday the fleet reassembled and spread out over the three anchorages of Bahia Agua Verde. In the late afternoon the crews gathered ashore at La Brisa Del Mar, a tiny open-sided beach bar and restaurant operated by the husband-and-wife team of Juel

and Antonio. We quickly consumed all their tequila with our margarita orders and they had to join forces with two other small operations on the beach to provide us with enough fish and shrimp tacos, ceviche, chips and guacamole for a crowd of 60 or so sailors. Gary Hill and I took a run out to his 75-foot motor yacht, the *Peter B*, to gather the rum and mixers they had ferried south for the occasion. Once back at the palapa, we improvised the infamous CCA Rum Punch by pouring Mount Gay and Goslings Rum with the mixers into a large white bucket since the official Rum Keg had suffered some sort of operational failure. I must say, I don't know if I could have tasted any difference once the hours wore on. It was a very fun and lively afternoon! It was also the official wedding reception of Fin Beven and Deborah Norum, who had tied the knot earlier that day aboard their charter boat, *Indefatigable* — an appropriate name at the start of a marriage!

Thursday the fleet continued south, some to overnight along the shores of Baja at Puerto Los Gatos where it looks like “Moab meets the sea”, or San Evaristo with its small village and well protected anchorage. Others anchored in Bahia Amortajada on Isla San Jose, running their tenders up the estuary to explore the lagoon, or continued on to Isla San Francisco with its striking geologic formations and stratification.

Friday was a longer passage south to reach Isla Partida or Isla Espiritu Santo, which are the last islands before you get to La Paz. Al Garnier overnighted at Puerto Balandra, at the north end of the peninsula that forms the bay of La Paz, and had the rare misfortune to experience the local Coromuel winds that night. Al, who has spent more time than most in the region, will be the first to tell you that those winds are unpredictable and sudden. We were anchored just a few miles away on Espiritu Santo, facing the same westerly direction, and had a calm night. Sometimes one never knows.

Saturday we all arrived in La Paz and most of us turned in our charter boats at Marina Costa Baja to take rooms in the Hotel Indigo, which is adjacent to the marina. It is a very nice hotel and the site of our farewell fiesta on Saturday night. Once again there were speeches and jokes, a delicious Mexican buffet, lots of tequila and cerveza, and a fun time was had by all. While a few of our party remained in La Paz or continued cruising their boats elsewhere, most of us flew home on Sunday. It was a wonderful cruise to one of the most unique environments on the planet, and the only thing that could have improved it would have been to have had more time to explore further. One week just whets one's appetite!

I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge and thank the many people who helped make this event a huge success, including Steve Calhoun who was the original impetus for the cruise, Gary and Nancy Davidson who are responsible for most of the event planning, the graphics and the fantastic Cruise Guidebook, Al and Jolinda Garnier for providing an introductory shakedown cruise and tons of local knowledge, Sandi and Gary Hill for making name and bag tags and transporting much of our contraband, Lisa Eddy and Mette Segerblom for organizing the farewell party, Dave Cort as local station treasurer for handling the finances, and the CCA National Leadership team of Les Crane, Michael Moradzedah, Kathleen O'Donnell, Julie Kallfleiz, and Commodores

Otorowski and Gowell for their guidance, advice, and leadership which paved our way. And as far as those outside the CCA, thanks are extended to Savannah Collins, Olga Ramos, and Julien and Javier at Dream Yacht Charters for providing the boats and meeting our logistical needs, Team Newport for the SWAG, Harbor Master Javier Fuerte, Concierge Wendy Cuellar, and Chef Alexis Rivera for making our visit to Marina Puerto Escondido so successful, Juel and Antonio of La Brisa Del Mar for a very fun and delicious afternoon, Kathy Hill for the Gecko Curios, and Aleyda Lopez for executing our wonderful finale at Hotel Indigo. I apologize in advance if I neglected to recognize and thank anyone. You all did a terrific job and I think I speak for everyone when I say that the 2024 CCA Cruise to the Sea of Cortez was a huge success!

Wishing you all fair winds and following seas,
Dan Gribble
Co-Chair