



DRAFT v5

Cruise Guidebook



<https://cruisingclub.org/event/sea-cortez-international-cruise>



Table of Contents

1 From the Commodore

2 From Your Cruise Chairs

3 General Cruise Information

- 3.1 Cruising Guides & Navigation
- 3.1 What to Bring
- 3.2 Weather
- 3.2 Language
- 3.2 Currency / Credit Cards
- 3.3 Provisioning
- 3.4 Transportation
- 3.5 Communications
- 3.5 Medical / Emergencies
- 3.6 Safety
- 3.6 Fuel/Water
- 3.6 Berthing/Mooring/Anchoring
- 3.7 Supplies/Boatyards/Repairs
- 3.7 Fishing
- 3.7 Formalities

4 Suggested Itinerary

- 4.1 Friday, May 3 – Sunday, May 5
- 4.2 Monday, May 6 – Wednesday, May 8
- 4.3 Thursday, May 9 – Friday, May 10
- 4.4 Saturday, May 11 – Sunday, May 12

A1 Appendix 1 – CCA Recommendations on Life Jackets and Tethers

A2 Appendix 2 – Roster of Boats and Crew

A3 Appendix 3 – Cruising Destination Chartlets



From the Commodore

Western Flyer was the 76' sardine boat chartered by John Steinbeck and his co-author and collaborator, marine biologist Edward Ricketts, for their 4,000-mile journey in 1940 from Monterey, California, around the Baja Peninsula and into the Sea of Cortez. Both authors were ready for a break after their respective masterpieces were published in 1939: *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Between Pacific Tides*. So, needing a rest, why not take 4,000-mile voyage on a boat?

The discovery of the spectacular biodiversity of sea life, and the indigenous peoples of this remote area, as well as stories of history, navigation, philosophy and life itself, formed the subject of two books about the journey; the first, published in 1941 by both Steinbeck and Ricketts, included a phyletic catalogue of the specimens collected, analyzed and preserved by Ricketts. The second, Steinbeck's the narrative portion of the book, is *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* published in 1951.

In the coming days we will cross parts of the Western Flyer's wake, beginning in Puerto Escondido near Loreto, and concluding in La Paz. A festive itinerary has been carefully planned by Cruise Co-Chairs Dan Gribble and Gary Davidson and many others. Please be sure to thank them for making this cruise happen!

Having never cruised these waters before, Elizabeth and I are very excited to be joining all of you for this adventure.

John (Jay) Gowell
Commodore





[DAN TO PROVIDE]

From Your Cruise Chairs

Dan Gribble

dogribble@cox.net
949-350-6120

Gary Davidson

gdavi2535@gmail.com
949-922-2193





General Cruise Information

What to Bring

The weather in May is generally moderate and should be quite good with air temps in the high 70's and 80's and water temps in the 70's- perfect for shorts and bathing suits and, of course, sunscreen and wide-brimmed hats.

For evenings- light jackets, sweaters, shawls should suffice and for sailing- light coastal foul weather jackets will be more than adequate. We are not planning any formal events, but some nicer casual clothes for the welcome and farewell parties are encouraged – blazers not required.

Where possible please use reef-friendly sunscreen.

Other items to consider bringing along – especially on charter boats – includes:

- CCA Burgee or Member Aboard Flag
- Portable VHF
- Personal flashlights
- Binoculars – yours may be better than charter boats'
- Sailing or garden gloves for line handling
- Portable speaker
- Backpack
- Extra masks, fins, snorkels
- Sailing tape, small lines, zip ties
- Water shoes – beaches can be gravel
- Shoes for hiking
- Epi-Pen and/or Benadryl for wasp and bee stings
- Bug spray
- Personal PFD's/tethers if desired
- Rashguard or swimming shirt

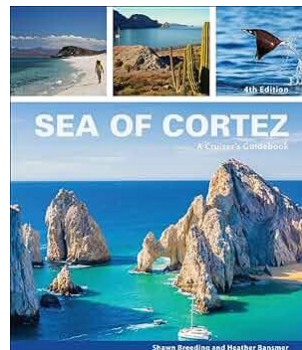
Cruising Guides & Navigation

Most of our planned daily sails are relatively easy, line of sight navigation. That said there are reefs, rocks and obstructions to watch for.

The highly recommended cruising guide for the area is **Sea of Cortez: A Cruiser's Guidebook 4th Edition** by Shawn Breeding and Heather Bansmer. The book is available from Landfall Navigation at <https://www.landfallnavigation.com>. We've provided some chartlets from this book of the areas referenced in the suggested itinerary in Appendix 3.

While all boats should have a GPS plotter, a navigation program installed on an iPad designed with connectivity and a GPS chip is a great backup.

Each boat should also carry paper charts of the area. Our understanding is that the charter boats will have basic paper charts.



General Cruise Information

Weather / Time Zone

Most of the Sea of Cortez is on Mountain Time.

As noted earlier, the anticipated weather should be mild – good sailing conditions with light northerly/northwesterly winds to 15 knots and perhaps some southerly breezes. Swells and waves are typically minimal at 2-3 feet or less.

NOAA issues a weather report for the area at <https://tgftp.nws.noaa.gov/data/raw/fz/fzpn27.knhc.off.pz7.txt>. Look at the report for Southern Gulf of California. Predictwind and Windy.com are also fairly accurate for the area.

Occasionally at this time of year the area closer to La Paz can experience Coromuel winds. Occurring primarily in the late spring and summer, Coromuels are a south to south-west wind that typically starts late in the afternoon or early evening and blows throughout the night into the mid-morning. It has a rapid onset and can be very strong especially in the Bay of La Paz. We'll monitor the weather and recommend anchorages to accommodate the weather as needed.

Language

Most folks in Baja are fairly good at deciphering English, but Spanish is definitely the predominate language spoken. If you do know some basic Spanish, please consider using it as it will be appreciated by the locals. Consider using Google's translation features when you're stumped with a language barrier.

Currency / Credit Cards

The standard currency of Mexico is the Mexican Peso (\$MXN). At press time the exchange rate is about 16.5 pesos to the US dollar. They do use the dollar sign (\$) when pricing items so don't be alarmed when you see the marked prices!

While many places accept US dollars, plan on exchanging/carrying some pesos for taxis, small purchases and tips as the locals prefer pesos to the dollar currently. There are banks and ATM's available in both Loreto and La Paz. We were told that Banco Azteka offers the best exchange rate. Credit cards are widely accepted at most larger stores and restaurants. PRO TIP: if offered to pay in pesos or dollars when using a credit card, you'll likely get a better exchange rate paying in pesos. Tipping is always appreciated.



General Cruise Information

Provisioning

Note that there are basically two opportunities for provisioning – La Paz or Loreto/Puerto Escondido. Between those two areas there are virtually no stores except for a very small tienda in St. Evaristo. The islands we're visiting have no provisioning resources.

Officially, our cruise begins in the Loreto/Puerto Escondido area so these provisioning tips are focused on that area. We recognize that many will do their initial provisioning in La Paz, but for those provisioning or reprovisioning in the Loreto/Puerto Escondido area, there are a few good options.

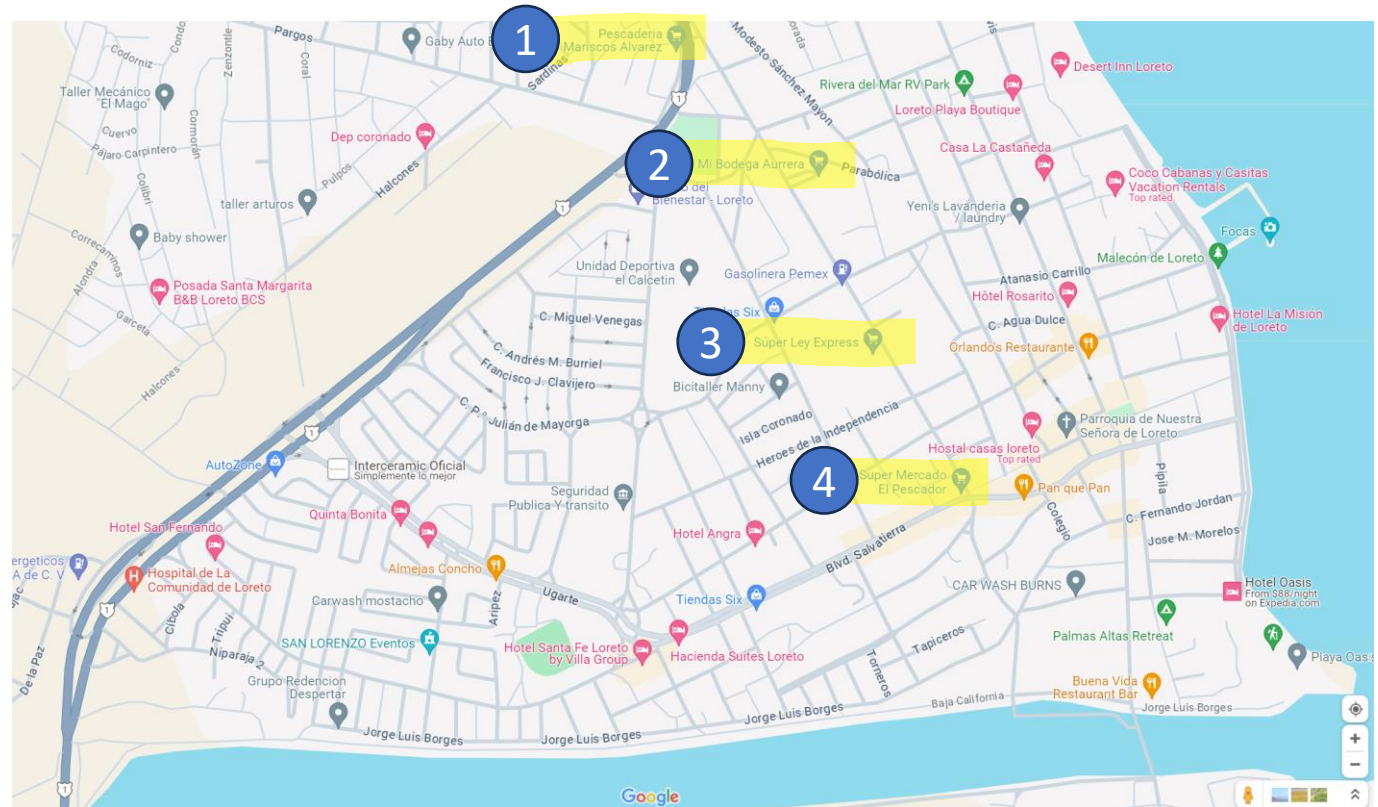
- There are 3 large grocery stores in Loreto. **El Pescador** at the traffic light, **Super Ley Express** on Ayuntamiento, and **Bodega Aurrerá** further down on Ayuntamiento. There's also a pescaderia (fish market) and panaderia (bakery) located in town.
- El Pescador is locally owned and sort of like Trader Joe's. Super Ley Express is a larger market like a Ralph's and Bodega Aurrera' is a smaller, more cluttered version of Smart & Final.
- For adult beverages, there's a **Cactus** liquor store across the street and a little east of Pescador. There's another Cactus on the malecon.
- **Waldo's** is similar to Target.
- Taxi drivers will know where you're going if you mention any of these names.
- Additional provisioning options are available at Marina Puerto Escondido:
 - The small **Marina Market** has a surprisingly good stock of just about everything you may need. And the market has teamed with our welcome party hosts from **La Brisa** restaurant to offer a pre-provisioning package. See the pre-provisioning list online at the Cruise Event Webpage for more details on that.



General Cruise Information

Grocery Stores in Loreto

- 1 Pescaderia Mariscos Alvarez (Fish Market)
- 2 Bodega Aurrera
- 3 Super Ley Express
- 4 El Pescador



Transportation

Taxis are readily available throughout the Loreto/Puerto Escondido area. Plan on paying for your taxi in pesos if possible. Credit cards may not be accepted. At press time your co-chairs are working on arranging a shuttle service for May 3rd and 4th to be available for provisioning runs into Loreto.

While we found Uber and Didi ride-sharing available in La Paz, we did not explore this option in Loreto.

General Cruise Information

Communications

Cellular Service

The IDD code for Mexico is 52. Wifi is typically available in the marinas and hotels. Most US cellular carriers will offer an international data plan and we recommend contacting your carrier for details. Cellular service in La Paz, Loreto and Puerto Escondido is fairly consistent. That is not necessarily the case once we get out onto the Sea. There are many areas along our way which will have no cell service.

We may have a few boats on the cruise with Starlink, so we suggest making friends with those folks if connectivity at sea is important to you.

There's a roster of cruise participants with cellphone numbers in Appendix 2 at the end of this guide.

Medical / Emergencies

Anyone with significant allergies might want to bring along an EpiPen-type of injectable device and/or Benadryl as there will likely be wasps and or bees around some of the islands. The bees search out anything liquid so take care to eliminate potentially enticing water, drinks, etc.

We do not have an official fleet surgeon along on this trip, but anyone experiencing an emergency situation should reach out to the CCA flotilla via VHF radio channel 22A for assistance.

There are pharmacies and hospitals located in both La Paz and Loreto, but not much medical assistance in between. Be sure to bring any normal medications you take.

VHF / Cruise Net

While under way all boats should monitor VHF channel 16 for emergency use and calling. Additionally, we will use VHF channel 22A for our group cruise communications.

Veteran Mexico cruiser Al Garnier will host a cruise net discussion at 0830 each morning of the cruise on this channel. Please plan on joining this discussion each morning for destination and weather updates, and to share experiences or provisioning/support needs.

There's also a general cruise net in the Loreto area on 22A at 0800 each morning. Might be fun to listen in there as well.

You may also want to bring along a simple first aid kit.

For **EMERGENCIES AT SEA** we've received conflicting information, so here's everything we heard:

The Fourth Naval Zone can be reached via phone at 615-111-505-59 or 615-152-82-52. Also, the Navy shares the following contact number 800-627-4621.

Both La Paz and Marina Puerto Escondido monitor channel 16. The La Paz Harbor Master can be reached at +52 6121 222 035 or +52 6121 22 060.

Search and rescue can be reached at +52 6121 226 513

General Cruise Information

Safety

While the cruising area is stunningly beautiful, it's also rustic and can be dangerous. There are many opportunities for mishaps. Exercise extreme caution when navigating the Sea and while in dinghies or ashore.

Please see the official CCA recommendations on the use of life jackets and tethers in Appendix 1.

Berthing / Mooring / Anchoring

Skippers are responsible for securing their own berths in Puerto Escondido Marina and in La Paz.

That said, we have arranged a med-tie along the long dock at the Puerto Escondido Marina for all vessels for the night of Friday, May 3rd.

Know that Puerto Escondido Marina is exceptionally busy this time of year and has asked each skipper to provide information about their vessel ahead of arrival. Please coordinate with Dan Gribble to coordinate the marina's requirements.

All vessels taking part in the med-tie must coordinate directly with the marina officials to arrange payment for berthing and electricity use.

Along the cruise, all vessels will anchor in the various island coves we'll visit. Depths in most anchorages are between 15-40 feet deep with good holding ground. Take care to avoid anchoring in coral beds.

Skippers are encouraged to share their destination and anchoring plans each morning on the cruise net. We may elect to do a group raft up at one or more anchorages along the way.

At the end of the cruise, the charter fleet will return to the charter base at Marina Costa Baja. Private vessels should have already made their berthing arrangements at one of the other marinas in La Paz or plan to anchor off the city.

Fuel / Water

Fuel and water are available in Puerto Escondido Marina and at Marina Costa Baja in La Paz. Charterers are reminded that they must return their vessels with full fuel and water tanks (including dinghy tank).

Cruise participants are encouraged to avoid drinking water from the local water supply. Be sure your provisions include enough bottled drinking water for the duration of the trip.

General Cruise Information

Supplies / Boatyards / Repairs

There are a few hardware stores and a marine store located in Loreto, and more located in the La Paz area.

Agencia Arjona is the local marine store and also has fishing supplies. This is similar to a small West Marine.

Ferre Mar is a good fishing/diving/marine store.

Marina Puerto Escondido has a boatyard with Travelift, marine services and outboard repair facility.



Fishing / Park Permits

The Sea of Cortez is a great place for angling with a huge variety of fish available. Be aware though, that as long as there is fishing equipment aboard, every person aboard requires a valid fishing license, regardless if they are fishing or not. Fishing licenses are available online (<https://sportfishing.bajacalifornia.gob.mx>), in Loreto at the panga marina, at Ferre Mar or at the Marina Puerto Escondido.

Individual licenses are about \$25 USD per week.

You **DO NEED** park permits for the Espiritu Santo and Partida Islands area and for the Loreto National Park (the whole area around Loreto including Isla Carmen, Danzante and Coronado). Officials may come out and check in any of these areas for your permit and for your fishing license.

Park permits for Espiritu Santo/Partida/Balandra are included in charter boat contracts. Loreto National Park permits are available at Marina Puerto Escondido or at the Loreto panga marina.

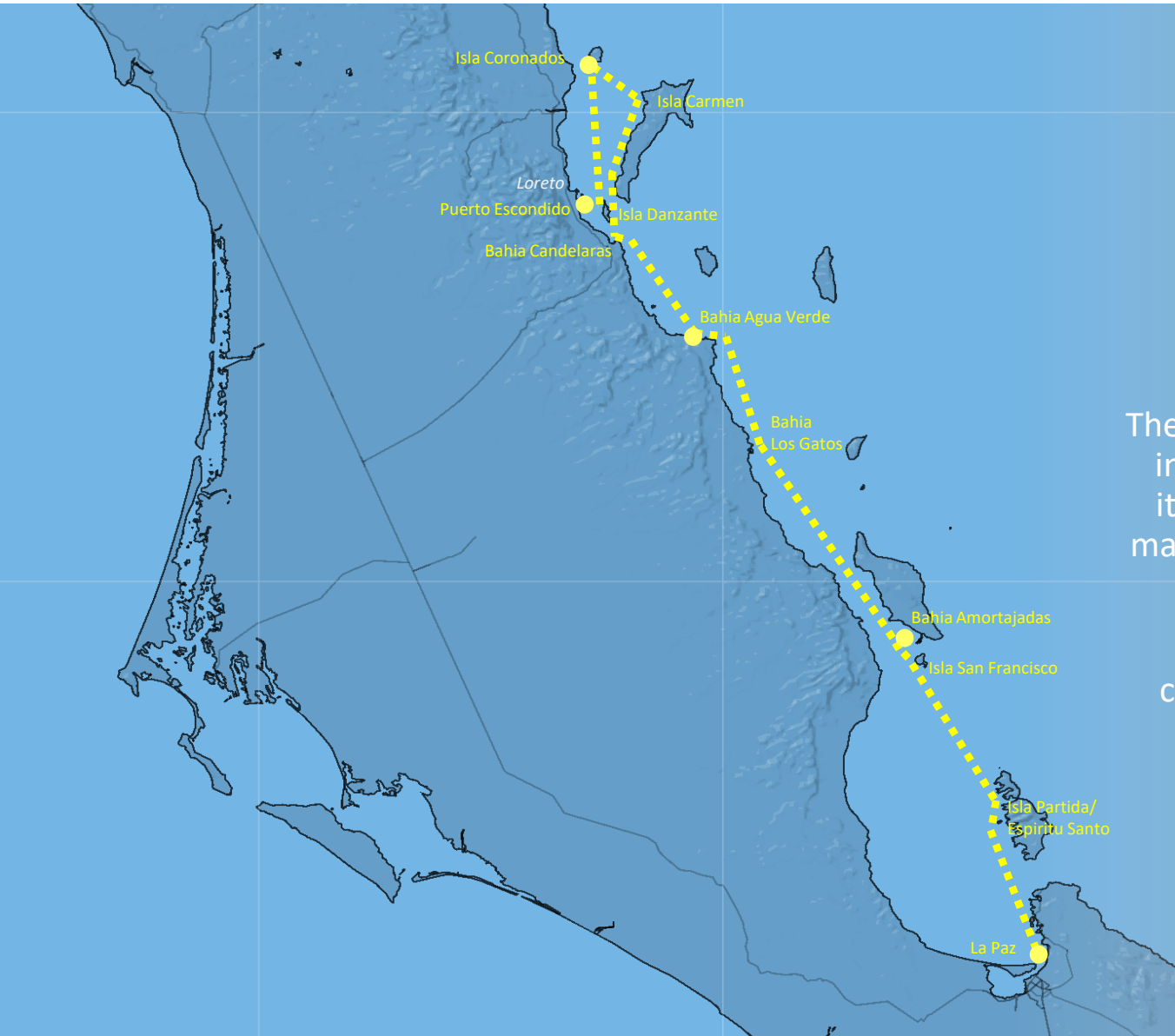
Formalities

When leaving Puerto Escondido, skippers should check out with the harbormaster on VHF channel 16. Likewise, when entering La Paz harbor, hail the harbormaster on channel 16.

All vessels should fly the Mexican flag as a courtesy from the starboard spreader on sailboats. The CCA burgee or member aboard flag should be flown from the port spreader on sailboats if it's not practical to fly it from a proper pigstick at the masthead. Powerboats should generally fly the CCA burgee from the bow staff. Refer to the CCA yearbook for proper flag etiquette.



Suggested Itinerary May 3rd – May 12th



Puerto Escondido to La Paz

The general idea is to sail the Sea of Cortez in a flotilla, but we've purposely kept the itinerary somewhat loose as there are so many great places to visit and the weather may affect our plans.

So, each morning we'll coordinate via a cruise net at 0830 to determine the next gathering spot and plan from there!

Suggested Itinerary

The following itinerary was developed by Dan Gribble based on a wealth of local knowledge gained from his extensive cruising in the area. It's a flexible itinerary with a couple open days and four planned get-togethers for the flotilla. A week doesn't do this area justice, so we'll discuss and adjust as weather and whims dictate.

Friday May 3, 2024 – Puerto Escondido Welcome Fiesta

- Arrive in Puerto Escondido and med-tie boats
- If time permits, go to large supermarkets in town to buy provisions
- Cruise Check-In at the marina 1500-1800 hours
- Welcome Fiesta at La Brisa restaurant at the marina in Puerto Escondido – 1800-2100 hours – Taco bar, beer, wine, margaritas, music – casual dress
- Spend night aboard vessels in Puerto Escondido



Saturday May 4, 2024 – Depart Puerto Escondido for Isla Danzante or Isla Carmen

- Provision boats if not accomplished on Friday May 3
- **OPTION 1:** Sail 3 nm across to Isla Danzante to anchor for the first night.
- There are three coves at the north end of the island between Honeymoon Cove and Divorce Cove (!!) which could accommodate the fleet.
- **OPTION 2:** Sail 10-15 nm to various coves on Isla Carmen
- Activities include snorkeling and hiking ashore
- Both islands uninhabited so no services



Sunday May 5, 2024 – Sail to Isla Coronado

- Hike the extinct volcano for breathtaking views, snorkel or lounge on the beach
- Uninhabited so no services



Suggested Itinerary

Monday May 6, 2024 – Begin the Sail South

- **OPTION 1:** Sail from Isla Coronado to Isla Carmen and anchor at Puerto Balandra (about 10 nm). This is a very well protected bay which could accommodate the entire fleet.
- **OPTION 2:** Sail from Isla Coronado to Bahia Salinas or Punta Perico on the back side of Isla Carmen
- Activities include snorkeling and hiking ashore
- Uninhabited so no services

Tuesday May 7, 2024 – Continue South to Bahia Candeleros or Bahia Agua Verde

- **OPTION 1:** Sail to Bahia Bahia Candeleros (about 25 nm depending on your departure point). This is a large bay that could hold the entire cruise fleet. It offers good protection except from north winds and swell and occasionally experiences westerly winds (Coromuels).
- **OPTION 2:** Sail to Bahia Agua Verde (about 40 nm depending on your departure point). There are three anchorages around the bay so we would spread out the fleet, but all are within a dinghy ride of each other. Personally, while a longer passage, it is a more interesting anchorage than Bahia Candeleros.
- Activities include snorkeling and hiking ashore
- There is a small village there with a very small market and a small taco place on the beach.

Wednesday May 8, 2024 – Bahia Agua Verde – Fiesta aboard *Peter B*

- Sail to Bahia Agua Verde. There are three anchorages around the bay so we would spread out the fleet, but all are within a dinghy ride of each other.
- Mid-way get together aboard Gary & Sandi Hill's *Peter B* – BYO cocktails & appetizers – 1500-1800 hours (tentative)



Suggested Itinerary

Thursday May 9, 2024 – Continue South to Los Gatos or Bahia Amortajada

- **OPTION 1:** Sail to Puerto Los Gatos (18 nm)
- This area is known for its colorful rock formations.
- While relatively protected, there are reefs and rocks to avoid when entering.
- **OPTION 2:** Sail to Bahia Amortajada on Isla San Jose (46 nm) This is a large and well protected bay that could hold the entire cruise fleet. The white sand beach there is several miles long.
- Activities include snorkeling and hiking ashore
- Uninhabited so no services
- There is a lagoon there accessible by dinghy through the surf. It is lined with mangroves and loaded with birds - a fun adventure!
- At the northwest end of the bay there is an abandoned salt mine that is interesting to explore.
- We may have a group lunch or cocktail party ashore on the beach. While I have not experienced them, word is there are no-see-ums after dark on the beach so back to the boats for dinner!

Friday May 10, 2024 – Continue South to Isla San Francisco, Isla Espiritu Santo, Los Islotes or Isla Partida

- Sail south. Could stop at Isla San Francisco for a lunch stop and hike (about 5 nm) or could stop at Los Islotes, some pinnacle rocks off the north end of Isla Partida, and swim with the sea lions before continuing on to your anchorage.
- Continue on to anchor at any of several anchorages on the west side of either Isla Partida or Isla Espiritu Santo (about 20 - 30 nm depending on your choice of anchorage).
- Activities include snorkeling and hiking ashore
- Uninhabited so no services



Suggested Itinerary

Saturday May 11, 2024 – Back to La Paz

- Depart to sail to La Paz (about 10 - 20 nm depending on where you anchored for the night)
- Could stop at Bahia Balandra at the north end of La Paz peninsula for a lunch stop on the way. This is one of the most photographed bays in the Sea of Cortez with a long white sand beach and snorkeling.
- Arrive Costa Baja Marina in the afternoon
- Farewell Fiesta at Hotel Indigo at Marina Costa Baja – 1800-2100 hours – Mexican dinner, beer, wine, margaritas, music – casual dress

Sunday May 12, 2024 – Adios!

- Disembark charter vessels by 10 AM
- Depart for airport to fly home – private vessels sail on!



Appendix 1: CCA Recommendations on Life Jackets and Tethers



The Cruising Club of America's Recommendation on Life Jackets and Tethers

Stay Onboard; if not, Stay Afloat!

Wearing a life jacket and tether when on deck and underway is part of a vessel's Culture of Safety. When operating in warm waters, in daylight, and in calm conditions, virtually any approved life jacket will work. When conditions are more challenging, an offshore life jacket plus tether become the "right tools for the job." It's vital that you not only have sufficient buoyancy for rough conditions but that you remain attached to the vessel by means of a tether. This greatly reduces the chance of going overboard when rescue may be challenging for your crew.

The use of tethers is recommended under the following conditions:

- Sea conditions: large waves, heavy winds, cold water, confused seas
- Low visibility conditions: nighttime, fog, heavy rain, large seas
- Crew limitations: shorthanded, less experienced, lack of training, age and fitness
- Vessel design: boats with fewer protected spaces, sailing at greater angles of heel, smaller or lighter displacement sailboats with quicker motions



Appendix 2: Cruise Participant Roster

IN PROGRESS



Appendix 3: Cruise Chartlets

IN PROGRESS

*The following pages contain cruise chartlets of the areas noted in our suggested itinerary. They have been scanned from pages of **Sea of Cortez: A Cruiser's Guidebook 4th Edition** by Shawn Breeding and Heather Bansmer. Our thanks to the authors. Please do not scale. Not for navigational use.*

0	Gulf of California Overview	13	Isla San Diego to Isla Santa Catalina
1	Loreto Area	14	Bahia Amortajada
2	Puerto Escondido	15	Isla San Francisco
3	Puerto Escondido Marina	16	Canal de San Jose
4	Danzante North	17	Los Islotes
5	Isla Coronados	18	Ensenada El Cardonal
6	Bahia Salinas	19	Caleta Partida
7	Puerto Ballandra	20	Isla Espiritu Santo & Isla Partida
8	Los Candelaros Area	21	Puerto Balandra
9	Los Candelaros Anchorages	22	La Paz Harbor
10	Bahia Agua Verde Area	23	La Paz Area
11	Bahia Agua Verde	24	Distance Chart
12	Puerto Los Gatos		