



Club Cruceros de La Paz

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Cruising the Sea of Cortez

Section One: Services and General Preparation

In this segment we have listed services and do's and don'ts of the Sea of Cortez. Keep in mind that things do change from year to year and this is written to the best of our knowledge.

Anchoring

A delicate subject which needs to be addressed. There is PLENTY of room in most anchorages. There is no reason to anchor on top of your neighbor. There is also no reason to

anchor on top of the waypoint/anchor symbol in the guide books. They are for reference only. Use plenty of your chain if you have it (it's your best friend) and make sure your anchor is properly set by backing down on it. Don't let the wind do it for you. You'll be glad you did it when a chubasco (see [Weather Section 3](#)) decides to show up at 2:00 am. Use common sense. Don't forget that a boat on an all chain rode has less of a tendency to walk around the anchorage compared to a chain/rope boat. Avoid anchoring downwind of a rope/rode vessel. Be considerate and everybody will have a great summer. It is also a good idea to have a 2nd anchor ready to deploy at a short notice.

ATMs

There are ATMs available in 3 towns besides La Paz: Loreto (2 locations), Mulegé (1 location) and Santa Rosalia (2 locations). The whole Baja/Sea of Cortez is an all cash based society. Credit cards are rarely accepted. Your last chance to stock up with cash is Santa Rosalia. You will not have many opportunities to spend cash further north. If you do need to replenish with cash, it's a very expensive taxi ride from Bahia de Los Angeles to the next ATM (in the vicinity of 150-200 US Dollars round-trip). So do err on the high side when stocking up with cash. There are a few stores and restaurants now accepting debit cards in Bahia de Los Angeles but that depends on a working phone system, which is sporadic at times. So don't rely on it. Carry some small bills and coins for purchases in the small fishing villages. They don't always have correct change available.

Bahia de Los Angeles Park Area

As of November 2013 the greater area of Bahia de Los Angeles has been declared a protected area. The area ranges from Bahia de San Francisquito to the north end of Isla Angel de la Guardia (Puerto Refugio). The following popular anchorages are now off-limits: Animas Slot and next door Cala Puertecito de Enmedio and on Isla Coronado (Smith) Laguna Rada and across the East Bay. Profepa may fine and/or impound your boat. It's not worth it. The official text can be found [on the internet here](#) (47 pages) and the manual with more detailed maps can be found [on the internet here](#) (316 pages). There has been an issue with anchoring in the "La Mona" area. The law says you can anchor there, the locals say no. We clarified this subject with the head office of Conanp (Park People) here in La Paz and they agreed with us.

Battery Water

Stock up on battery water in La Paz. Aramburo, Chedraui and Walmart sell Arrowhead and Sparklets distilled water in gallon jugs. If you can't find it, ask one of the clerks for it. It's not always available. So if you see it, buy it.



Beach Landings

When landing your dinghy on a beach, wear some type of water shoes for protection. Shuffle your feet in front of you when wading in shallow water. Or even better, walk behind somebody else. You'll often find small rays in the water hiding under a thin layer of sand. By shuffling your feet, they get scared and go away. The sting can be very nasty. We found that Crocs are perfect shoes for this purpose. Should you get stung, soak your foot in hot fresh water (as hot as you can stand it) for several hours. Another way of curing it is to buy some Domeburo at a pharmacy (farmacia), dissolve in water and soak your foot in it. It looks like Alka Seltzer when it dissolves. It is highly recommended to see a doctor if you get stung by a ray. You may develop an infection. It is suggested

that you start a course of antibiotics immediately and continue the full treatment.

Bees and Other Insects

Bees are attracted by fresh water on your boat, i.e. standing water in sink or shower, freshly rinsed swim trunks or laundry hanging on the rail to dry, etc. They are mostly harmless, just very annoying. You can have bees one day in an anchorage and they are gone a few days later. In most cases removing the fresh water source solves the problem after a while. They will leave your boat at sunset. One good way to get rid of bees we just learned is to cut open a milk container, fill it with fresh water and either leave it on the beach or let it drift in the anchorage if there is little current. Having good screens on all openings prevents bees from getting inside your boat. We burn Incense sticks to keep the bees away. For obvious reasons burning "Jasmine" scented sticks may not help as well as wood scented sticks. Note: Even though you have "killed" a bee, it still can sting you. So be careful when removing them. For mosquitoes and no-see-ums we burn mosquito coils in the companion way and cockpit. It does the job most of the time. To get rid of flies, we used to use a product called "Snip". It's a fly poison you mix with water and leave on a dish outside in the cockpit. Just be careful when you have pets. The dead flies are poisonous to small animals. Another product we just recently found in the USA and also available in Mexico (Ace Hardware) is called "[Rescue Fly Trap](#)". They have the disposable version but they also make a reusable one .

Bee Sting Removal Kit

Once in a while you do get hit by a bee. In most cases it is by accident, because you leaned against it or thought it was dead. There is a Bee sting removal kit available in most Camping stores in the USA called "Extractor Snake/Bee Sting Kit" made by [Sawyer Products](#). It removes the stinger and the venom. Another way of removing a stinger is to slide a credit card along the skin.

Check In and Out Procedures

There are rumors afloat that it is no longer necessary to check in or out with the Port Captain. That is not correct. You ARE required to check in and out of every port in Mexico. It's the Mexican law and let's respect it. In La Paz this can be accomplished in many different ways:

- The marina you are staying will do it for you
- Hail the Port Captain on CH 16 when arriving or departing and advise him accordingly
- Go to the Port Captain's office and do it in person

Loreto doesn't care about checking in and out, but it doesn't hurt to stop by the office at the end of the pier from the small breakwater in town and say hello. In Santa Rosalia, the old both marinas have a simple form to fill out upon arrival and departure which they give to the Port Captain. Check with the marinas in San Felipe, San Carlos, Guaymas or Puerto Penasco (Rocky Point) for their procedures.

City Maps

Click below for PDF maps of

- [Loreto](#)

- [Santa Rosalia](#)
- [Bahia de Los Angeles](#) - showing stores

Courtesy Flag

It's the law, you have to fly a courtesy flag. Fly a Mexican flag off your starboard spreader and everybody, especially the Mexican Navy, will be happy. Make sure they look nice. Shredded or tattered flags are an insult.

Cruising Guides and Charts

There are 3 major useful cruising guides for use in the Sea of Cortez

[Shawn and Heather's "Sea of Cortez A Cruiser's Guidebook"](#)

[Gerry Cunningham's guides \(Lower and middle\)](#)

["Charlie's Charts of Mexico"](#)

Shawn and Heather's "blue" guide is by far the best and most accurate one currently available (and is a must have). Cunningham's guides are good but keep in mind they were written a long time ago for a small boat and haven't been updated in a long time. Charlie's Charts was newly updated in 2015.

Most paper charts are outdated and inaccurate and should be used for reference only. Some of them date back to the late 1800's. The digital charts available in chart plotters are digitized versions of the old charts. You'll find yourself many times navigating over land. Most of the navigation in the Sea of Cortez is done by eyeball and/or radar at night. There are new very accurate paper charts available from the Mexican Navy. Club Cruceros periodically orders these. Check [here](#) for ordering instructions. The Navionics charts and mapping software for iPad, iPhone, and android seem fairly accurate throughout the sea.



Dinghy Wheels

Make sure you have a good set of dinghy wheels, unless you plan to carry your dinghy up the beach. The further north you travel the greater tides you have. It is not unusual to have 12 foot tides in Bahia de Los Angeles. The bigger wheels work a lot better than the smaller ones. Most all the places are accessible by dinghy and the wheels will greatly enhance your stay. If you don't have wheels, at least carry a dinghy anchor with some chain and rope.

Distances

To give you a perspective of the size of the sea of Cortez, here are some of the main distances:

La Paz to Puerto Escondido: 115NM

La Paz to Santa Rosalia: 224NM

La Paz to Bahia de Los Angeles: 343NM

La Paz to San Felipe: 479NM

Within this area you have approx. 70 anchorages along the Baja Coastline and the many islands along the way. Many are listed in the various guides, some you find on your own.

Diving/Snorkeling

You'll have plenty of opportunities in the Sea. For some special spots see [Dive Sites We've Enjoyed](#) by Jay and Janice, S/V Ceilidh

Fans

Install additional 12V fans for cooling. You'll be surprised what a difference it makes when you have constant air movement inside the cabin. We use spray misters in conjunction with fans. It's instant air conditioning when sprayed on your skin.



Fishing

When underway, troll one or two lines a boat length behind with either a feather or cider plug for dorado, tuna, yellow tail and sierra. Favorite feather colors are purple and black, pink and white, blue and white and the all time favorite, the "Mexican flag", so called because of its color combination of red, green and white. Wire leaders and special lures are needed to catch wahoo in the southern part of the Sea of Cortez. When trolling along shore lines for cabrilla, trigger fish, and snapper, use rapala type lures. Ferremar stores in La Paz and Loreto have an excellent lure selection and they also give good advice. So does BajaMark on Allende Street 2 blocks up from the Malecon in La Paz. Try to avoid catching puffer or stone/scorpion Fish. They have poison in their spines. Most likely you will not like it to get stung by them. For

additional fishing tips see [Fishing Tips Sea of Cortez](#). For how to make a killer lure see [Super Secret Incredible Free Fishing Lure](#).

Fishing Licenses

As long as there is fishing equipment aboard, every person aboard requires a valid fishing license, regardless if they are fishing or not. Boat, liferaft and dinghy no longer require licenses. See [Fishing Licenses & Rules](#) for more information.

Fourth of July Party

Geary, Sonrisa's Net weather guru throws a 4th of July party every year in El Burro Cove (Conception Bay). It's a potluck party, Geary supplies the hot dogs plus fire works and the cruisers supply the side dishes to share. A fun day with water games and music. Don't miss it. If you haven't made it that far north yet, Juncalito (The bay north of Puerto Escondido) also throws a nice 4th of July party. Check on the nets.

Fuel

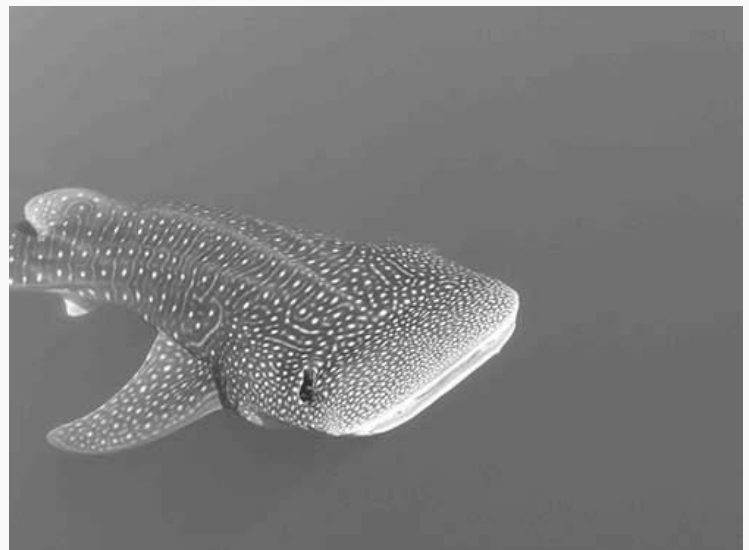
Fuel is available at the fuel dock in Puerto Escondido (check availability, 12% surcharge) and at the fuel dock in Santa Rosalia (12% surcharge). Fuel can also be jerry canned in Loreto, Santa Rosalia and Bahia de Los Angeles. Consider purchasing a foldable cart to carry the jerry cans full of fuel. Helpful especially in Bahia de Los Angeles. Filtering your fuel before it goes into the tanks might also be a good idea. We use a Baja filter and it has caught a lot of dirt over the years.

Hailing Channels

The La Paz private boat fleet, while in harbor only, monitors Ch. 22, the rest of the Sea of Cortez uses CH. 16 with the exception of the Bahia de Los Angeles area which uses Ch. 68 (same as the locals use). Puerto Escondido has a morning net on CH 22 but switches back to Ch. 16 for hailing purposes. Mexican (and International) law specifies that you have to monitor Ch. 16 while underway and at anchor at all times. They are getting very serious about it and failing to do so can earn you some pretty stiff fines.

Hydration

It is very important to stay hydrated while cruising the Sea. Gatorade and electrolytes are available in powder form. Watermaker water lacks all of the minerals and nutrients



found in regular water. Make sure you take vitamin and mineral supplements to make up for it. Another way of making drinking fluids more enjoyable is mixing the water with either C-Light, Tang or Zuko/Zuko Light. They are available in powder form in most supermarkets and tiendas along the way and come in a variety of flavors. Also good to mix with Vodka for a refreshing cocktail/sundowner. If you get cramps in your legs due to lack of potassium, eat fresh bananas and oranges. Minimum water intake per day is 1 liter of water. If you drink alcohol or coffee double the water intake.

HF Nets

There are 3 major nets every day. One of them is on Marine SSB frequency (Amigo Net) and two on Ham Frequencies (Sonrisa Net and Baja Net). Volunteer to become a net controller, especially if you have a Ham license. Not only will you contribute to the cruising community and help keep the nets going (they are all on a volunteer basis), it is also a great way to get to know everybody. Besides, where else can you go to work extremely "casually" dressed?

HF Net Frequencies

- The Sonrisa Net is at 3.968 LSB (with alternate frequencies on 3.962, 3.965 and 3.972, depending on QRM (noise)). The net starts at 13:30 zulu and weather is brought by Geary at around 13:45 zulu .
- The Amigo Net is on 6.227 USB and starts at 14:00 zulu. The net changes in July to 14:10 zulu for the summer.
- The Baja Net starts at 8:00 am pacific time, regardless of time of year on 7.233.5 LSB.

Double check starting times as they do change between summer and winter seasons.

HF Weather Forecast in Text Form

There are many ways of getting weather forecast delivered via HF radio in text format. One of them is available from Stan in Santiago Bay, a former cruiser now living on land. To subscribe to Stan's service, send an email from your HF radio via Airmail (using Winlink or Sailmail) to: queries@saildocs.com. No subject line required and in the text field write: send weatherfiles. You will get a file sent back giving you instructions in how to subscribe to the different weather digests available from Stan. In the summer time we use his Sea of Cortez and his Chubasco forecast. The file is pretty self explanatory. The other is through Geary on Sonrisa Net. To subscribe to his forecast, get instructions at [Saildocs for Sailmail](#). Check also the new experimental NOAA weather forecast service available through Saildocs. For instructions go to [Southbound Evening Net](#).



Internet

Internet café's are available in Loreto, Santa Rosalia and Bahia de Los Angeles. For those boats with good wifi antennas, in many cases open routers can be found along the way. Keep in mind that these folks use satellite based systems, so be respectful. Get your mail and log off immediately. Do not download movies or other larger files. After a certain over usage their systems shut down. Another option is to subscribe to the 3G (Banda Ancha) program available through Telcel. It will give you internet access in many areas in the Sea of Cortez (where there is cell phone coverage) but currently not available in the Puerto Escondido and Bahia de Los Angeles area. Rumor is there will be cell towers soon in Bahia de Los Angeles and Puerto Escondido.

Laundry

Laundry services are available in Puerto Escondido, Loreto, Santa Rosalia and Bahia de Los Angeles. Some cruisers do their laundry in salt water with ammonia.

Limes

Can be used to heal heat rashes, mosquito bites, jelly fish stings and as a general disinfectant. Rub the juice on the affected areas several times a day. Also good with your beer and other cocktails.

Lycra Suits

Katty's in La Paz makes custom made full body lycra suits and hoods. They are strongly recommended due to instances of jelly fish in the Sea and they can prevent you from getting a nasty sunburn after a prolonged snorkel trip. The suits are good to wear when cleaning the bottom of your boat, especially the hood, which prevents those tiny little crabs from getting into your ears. An easy way to clean your lycra suit after a bottom job is to put it into a bucket filled with water and ammonia.

Medical

After leaving La Paz, medical care can be had in Loreto, Mulege and Santa Rosalia. Bahia de Los Angeles has very limited medical services. Stock up on medications for the whole summer in La Paz, since availability is sporadic up north in the Sea.

Mexican Navy Boarding

If you get stopped by the Mexican Navy for a boarding, do not panic. They will hail you on VHF channel 16, identify themselves and give you instructions in how to proceed. Follow the instructions and you'll have a very pleasant experience. They may check your documents to make sure you are not in the drug trade. A Mexican Navy boarding is in most cases a better experience compared to a boarding by the US Coast Guard.

Museums

Santa Rosalia has an interesting museum showing the history of this former French mining town. Bahia de Los Angeles has a very nice museum which is also worth a visit showing all of the Bahia de Los Angeles as well as some Baja history. Check for opening times as it is not always open.

Park Permits and Fishing Licenses

You DO NEED park permits for the Espiritu Santo and Partida Islands area, for the Loreto National Park (the whole area around Loreto including Isla Carmen, Danzante and Coronado) and for the Bahia de Los Angeles Park. They may come out and check in any of these areas for your permit and for your fishing license. For a trip up into the Sea the annual park pass will be cheaper than daily ones. Get your park permit early since there are not always available. See [Park Passes](#) and [Fishing Licenses & Rules](#) for more information.

Pets

Pets need special attention during the summer. For more information, please read [Summer in the Sea with Pets](#) by Janice of the SV Ceilidh (K-Lee). Janice also does pet talks several times during the summer season on the Sonrisa Net. They are very informative and worth listening to.

Propane

Last place to get your tanks filled is in Santa Rosalia. In Bahia de Los Angeles propane is available but only on a tank exchange basis. If you have aluminum tanks, you'll either be out of luck or you need a propane transfer hose to do a gravity fill from one tank to the other one. Very slow process.



Provisioning

Get a soft cool bag to transport frozen or cold items and a good back pack per person to carry the rest of your purchases. Your back and arms will be forever grateful.

- **La Paz**

Do your bulk provisioning in La Paz, since everything up north is more expensive. Items like alcohol, paper towels, toilet paper, canned goods, olive oils, vinegars, coffee, crackers, boxed milks and juices, in other words, all bulk and heavy items. Any “gringo” types of brands are scarce up north. If you have a freezer, stock it up with your favorite steaks, meats and chicken. As a rule, it’s better to err on the high side. Don’t worry about fish products, you’ll catch plenty. Keep in mind that you have almost one stop shopping in La Paz, while up north you have to go from tienda to tienda to find all of the wanted items.

- **Loreto**

Here you will find several stores, a medium quality supermarket, A Ley Express larger supermarket, a farmers market every Sunday morning (highly recommended but check for day of week as it changes once in a while) as well as a restaurant supply place which also sells retail (formerly Dali’s). Loreto is either accessible by taxi from Puerto Escondido or you can anchor in front of the town’s breakwater in about 10-12 feet of water during calm weather. Take your dinghy inside the breakwater and use the API dock to go ashore. No charge as of last year. You can also rent a car for a very reasonable amount from the hotel resort in Candeleros.

- **Mulege**

You can leave your boat in El Burro Cove and hitch hike to Mulege. The locals are very friendly and more inclined to give you a ride than foreigners. Mulege has a few markets and a market specializing in some gringo products called Saul’s.

- **Santa Rosalia**

Your last major provisioning point before heading into the summer playgrounds in the Bahia de Los Angeles area. Santa Rosalia has several markets.

- **Bahia de Los Angeles**

Bahia de Los Angeles has several tiendas but supply and freshness is sporadic.

When provisioning in the Sea, check for expiration dates on products, especially on butter, cream cheese, cheeses and bacon. You’ll be surprised once in a while what you find on the shelves. You will also find a small tienda (abarrotes) in several fishing camps like San Evaristo and Agua Verde. Supplies are limited, so don’t grab everything in sight. These stores are meant for the local residents and are very often their only source for food staples. When shopping in Loreto and Santa Rosalia make a point and stop at the local ISSTE stores. They are government run stores and are a good store to provision for dry and canned goods. Once in a while you also find good alcohol buys in these stores.

Shelling

Every beach and anchorage has different types of shells. Some of the good shelling beaches are Amortajada on Isla San Jose, the beach south of Punta Chivato known as “Shell Beach” and the beach at Santo Domingo. But other beaches have shells too, so have fun. Every beach has different shells.

Spanish Words You Might Find Helpful:

Aground - Escollar (es-ko-yar)

Anchor - Ancla (on-cla)

Rain - Lluvia (you-vee-ah)

Broken - No Sirvey

Rope - Cuerda (coo-air’-dah)

Bottom - Fondo (fun-dough)

Sail - Vela (bay’-lah)

Buoy - Boya (bo-yah)

Sinking - Hundiendo (oon-dee-end’-oh)

Chain - Cadena (kah-day-nah)

North/South – Norte/Sur (nor-te) (sewer)

Trash - Basura (bah-sor-rah)

Deep/Shoal - Hondo/Bajo (on-dough)(baa-hoe)

Water - Agua (ah-ga-wa)

Dive - Bucear (boo-say-are)

Waves - Olas (own-dahs)

Dock - Muelle (moy-yeah)

Wind - Viento (vee-en-toe)

East/West - Este/Oeste (es’-te)/(oh-es-tay)

Engine - Motor (moe-tore)

Store - Tienda (tee-en-dah)

Squall - Chubasco (chew-bahs-ko)

Clear - Claro (cla'-roh)

Tide - Marea (mah-ray-ah)

Clouds - Nube (new-bay)

Tow - Remolcar (ray-mole-car)

Current - Corriente (co-ree-en'-te)

Help - Ayuda (ah-you-dah)

High/Low - Alto/Bajo (al-toe)/(baa-hoe)

How deep? - Que profundidad? (kay)(pro-fun-dee-dahd)

Hurricane - Huracan (oo-rah-kahn'-oh)

Ice - Hielo (yey-low)

Lighthouse - Farro (far-row)

Mechanic - Mecanico (may-kaan-ee-ko)



Sun Shades and Screens

You should be able to screen your portholes, hatches and companion ways with a suitable screening material. There are times when bees decide to come by for a visit and check your fresh water supply (see Bees and Other Insects above). You should be also able to cover part of your boat with some type of shade material. Keep in mind when designing it, that it is advisable to take it down every evening before going to sleep. Also bring hats and any other sun protection with you. The sun is strong in the Sea. Use plenty of sunscreen; your skin will be grateful.

Tides and currents

If you don't have a working tide program aboard, download [WxTide](#) from the internet. It's free and works pretty well in the Sea of Cortez. Tide Ranges are up to 22 feet in the upper

sections of the Sea. Currents are also something to take into consideration when traveling.

Time Zones

Most of the time you'll navigate in Mountain Time. Only when you head north of Santa Rosalia do you change to Pacific Time, about halfway to San Francisquito. Don't forget to change all of your time pieces and computers (especially important for the tide programs).

Theft

Use common sense when going ashore by dinghy. Don't leave any valuables behind, no need to tempt anybody. Although dinghy theft is rare in the Sea of Cortez it is advisable to raise your dinghy out of the water (or secure it) at night while anchored in major populated areas.

Trash

When provisioning discard as much packaging material as possible while on land. Things like cartons, cardboard boxes, and plastic wrappings do not need to be brought aboard. Washing of empty containers helps eliminate odors. There are trash bins in San Evaristo, Agua Verde, Puerto Escondido, Loreto, El Burro Cove, Santa Rosalia and Bahía de Los Angeles. In Bahía de Los Angeles you pay a small monthly fee to the city. Where ever you go, please do not leave any trash behind. Always leave a clean wake.

Trips to USA

Should you have to travel to the USA or Canada while in the Sea, you have few options where to leave your boat. In the Loreto area you can leave your boat in Puerto Escondido and catch a flight from the Loreto International airport or the bus from the bus station. In Santa Rosalia you can leave your boat in one of the 2 marinas and catch the bus from the bus station right next to Singlar marina. The third option is San Felipe, which has a Singlar marina and bus service to the border. Across the Sea in San Carlos and Puerto Penasco/Rocky Point there is bus service to the USA.

Veterinary Services

After La Paz, you might get help in Loreto, Mulege and Santa Rosalia. There is no veterinarian north of Santa Rosalia, except across the Sea in San Carlos or Guaymas. If you have a problem with your pets in the Bahia de Los Angeles area contact Janice on S/V Ceilidh (K-Lee) on channel 68 or call KG6RSL on the Sonrisa Net on 3.968 LSB at 13:30 zulu. Janice is a veterinary surgical technician with limited supplies on board and is in contact with veterinarians in the States. An additional veterinary contact in the Bahia de Los Angeles area is Susana. She can be reached on VHF Channel 16.

Water Supply

For those without a watermaker on board, there is water available at the desalination plant in San Evaristo, the fuel dock in Puerto Escondido, the marinas in Santa Rosalia and in 5 gallon garafones (large plastic containers) in Bahia de Los Angeles.

Water Sports

Favorite past times in the Sea are kayaking, scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing and swimming. Make sure your equipment is working properly; there are no service stations up north.

Water Toys

You will spend a lot of time in the water and there will be impromptu noodle/cocktail parties in the water. Buy a pair of good noodles in La Paz (Walmart), they are difficult to find up north. Other flotation devices will do the job also as long as you can remain afloat and your cocktail/ beer doesn't get any salt water into it.

Zip-lock Bags

Don't underestimate them. Not only are they good to preserve leftovers, they also protect your camera and other valuables during those wet dinghy rides. Don't leave La Paz without a good supply in various sizes.



"Cruising the Sea of Cortez" has been compiled by Alex and Sue on M/V Maitairoa

To keep this series updated for future cruising generations please email mvmaitairoa@gmail.com with your suggestions, corrections, additions and deletions.