

Cat's Baja Log

Oct 15, 2008 – Oct 24, 2008

10/15/08

Last night drove down to hotel near SF airport with June & Jerry. Met Bill and Sylvia. Went to brew pub for dinner.

This AM awoke early to catch 7:30AM flight from SF to LA, then LA to LaPaz. We arrived at LaPaz mid-afternoon. Sig & I swam in pool at Los Arcos hotel. Then all 6 of us went to dinner at Carlos and Charlies and ate Molcajetes and drank margaritas.

Balmy, mildly humid weather. Walked the malecon. Malecon had usual after dark party atmosphere, music, skate boarders, strollers. There was a small political event and we spoke to a gentlemen who is walking across Mexico to rally the cause that Mexico abide by the results of democratic elections (apparently the loser sometimes gets placed in power to



maintain the economic status quo). The rally was to educate people that Mexico (having the 4th largest oil reserve in the world) exports all its oil and has none of its own refineries. In the past some law was passed, like in Alaska, that each Mexican shall receive a dividend each year on government oil profits. This has never happened because the government can't organize this and lease oil rights to mega-corporations. Too much corruption I think.

10/16/08



Awoke leisurely and walked to café for breakfast. Met up with June and Jerry and walked to BOA along the malecon. (Bill and Sylvia explored LaPaz). The walk is pretty far about 35 minutes each way, so by the time we ended up back near our hotel it is was almost lunch time. For the

next several hours we drank margarita's and beer, ate chips & tacos at an outdoor café. We meandered home via a very funky and eccentric hotel called the Stuffed Monkey (he stayed there 10 years ago). By then all we could do was take a dip in the pool, read and nap poolside until our 6PM rendezvous with Raphael our kayak guide. Meeting went well, cute young Mexican man who will be our kayaking buddy. There will also be a 30 ft skiff with the skiff captain and cook carrying all our supplies for the week.

For last supper (luxury supper) we went to el Patron, the restaurant at the end of the pier surrounded on three sides by water and one side by the prerequisite mariachi band singing to us. June and Jerry, Silvia and Bill had paella (with lobster). I had scallops and saled (Yelm!). Sig had a shrimp dish. Usual margarita's were ordered as "Cadillac margarita's", but I stuck to white wine. Very pleasant outdoor eating experience. Needed to wander back to hotel to pack and organize. The Raphael bus picks us up at 6:30 AM and we want to have washed or hair our last time...

10/17/08

7:00 AM left hotel with us six, Raphael our guide and Mario the driver. In a van with seven kayaks on a trailer. The 5 hour trip took 9 hours.

1. Road check. We all have to get out while very serious young Mexican men look over the van.
2. Tire tread on van then came off. Had to change tire in the middle of nowhere (in the hot desert).



3. Road washed out by hurricane... Saved by a nice gentleman and in his four wheel drive pickup truck with wife and daughter who towed our boats for us over the **most treacherous washed out dirt road** on steep cliffs of cactus for over an hour (we accosted him going the other way).

June and then I swore on holy bibles we would never take that dirt road again! It took five

years off our lives easily. The whole dirt road episode took about 3 to 4 hours to go 25 miles. Scenery stupendous, red and green eroded rugged cliffs and mountains, turquoise waters. Finally arrived at Agua Verde, a tiny settlement (maybe six dwellings) and our ponga boat awaited us with shaded tables, cold beer, and food (tamales). We had essentially no food all day... Then a 1 hour



glorious paddle to shake the horrors of the day off (it worked) followed by tent setting up, margaritas, and, cerviche, chicken and veggies, chocolate cake.

The stars are amazing, the ocean is soothing, the sand is sandy and camping good. Tomorrow another adventure awaits.

10/18/08 Agua Verde – Punta el Gato

What a day! Raphael said 20 miles, felt like 40. Started 9:00 AM and it ended at 6:00 PM. Stop for great cerviche lunch prepared by Mario and cliffs. Saw a turtle swimming. Jerry caught a few fish. Water



warm and pleasant. Wind and waves to our back, but still a **long** kayak day. Camped at Punta el gato. Another great dinner with washing up in the ocean. Stars incredible. Pina coladas, wine in a box.

Some other campers at site, but plenty big enough. Totally pooped. Was towed by Sig around last point when waves seemed big. Ponga boat rescued June, Sylvia and I at various times near the end when finding campsite “around next point” didn’t quite happen.

We mentioned and said we’d never go so far again in one day. I think it was the solid 4 hours without break in the morning that got us so cranky.

10/19/08 Punta el Gato –Rancho Dolores

Gorgeous day! Water flat, little breeze. Lounged around camp having eaten yogurt and fruit with guacamole. Sig snorkeled. Bill Sylvia June and Jerry left early to “dink off the shore”. Water was clear. We also saw lots of fish. Sig, caught one off the beach, June caught two from her kayak. Lots of nature: orcas, seals, turtles, all kinds of birds most noticeable pelicans and Blue footed boobies and frigates. Colorful fish.

Lunch at Punta Villa, tuna salad, cabbage pepper salad, fresh fish soup. Then onward through the hot still afternoon. Completely exhausted, when we’ve reached our picturesque beach, it was covered in garbage! Maybe from the hurricane.

Made a decision to plow forward four more miles. Sig and Raphael kayaked. Rest of us joined Mario



and Alberito on the Ponga towing the kayaks like ducklings. Local fishermen caught 13 lobsters for us so we had a feast of all the lobster you could eat, potatoes (in some great sauce) and garlic bread. Warm tequila soaked apples for dessert. It was a great feast. Usual setting up in the dark, so beach was very buggy. There is a ranch nearby with people, dogs, goats and cows. Stars incredible (20 miles again!)

10/20/08 Layover day – hooray! At Rancho Dolores

Awoke to the hysterical screams of goats being loaded the onto a ponga (numerous goats). This ranch hidden from the beach by palm trees, apparently is now cut off by land due to the recent hurricane. They were apparently loaning some of their goats to another cut off village for food and milk. After a lovely breakfast of fresh fish tacos and guacamole we went off in the Ponga to snorkel around a nearby rock island. Wow! Schools of multicolored, beautiful varied fish. It sounds like rice Krispies underwater



between the heavy snorkel breathing. Watched Alberito and Raphael collect shellfish, spearfish and lobster. The ocean was full of tiny creatures floating all around, schools and silvery fish darting about. Small colored fish went in and out of rocky hideaways. Beer and chocolate on the ride back. Mario's delicious salad lunches. Then lazy afternoon under the canopy, Sig and June paddled to a nearby point. Some of us slept, read, sketched.

Later Sig and I walked down the beach and thoroughly bathed. Felt great. Salty, stinging skin and matted hair is not comfortable. Other things I don't like: pooping like a cat in the sand, and blisters, buggy sand, bugs in your nose and eyes to around 6 to 7 PM, and aching back.

Otherwise food is superb fresh fish daily, expertly prepared and presented with vegetables, fruit and garnishes. Went to bed early after shrimp stew over rice: steamed veggies and fish, mangoes and warm margarita's, ice getting low.

10/21/08 Rancho Dolores – Arroyo Evaristo

Awoke before sunrise (6:30AM) to rooster crowing. Slept well and long (had gone to bed early). Yogurt, papaya, eggs for breaky.

Started kayaking at 9:30. Three ½ hours of gorgeous scenery, great cliffs, turquoise waters and colorful sea life. Lunch of potato salad with fish tacos, veggies, beer. We spent 2 ½ hours at rocky secluded (and actually shady beach, shade from sun behind cliffs). We snorkeled and saw usual cool fish, sea stars, sponges.

Mario and Alberito went off to get supplies somewhere, I think ice and tequila, but maybe some other stuff.

Short 45 minute kayak past stunning geologic array of cliffs, layered and great fallen boulders cracking off the sheer straight rock walls. Set up camp at a protected cove with long the sandy rocky beach.

Sig and I went on a walk around to the shaded rocky area and bathed. He also fished, caught five smallish fish and let them go.

Dinner of rice, shrimp and veggies and fried Dorado (that Alberito caught today, yum). Tiny bugs so numerous that we ate walking up and down the beach.

10/22/08 Arroyo Evaristo – Arroyo Verde

Awoke earlyish - sun rises at 7:30 AM so is still completely dark with Moon and stars at 6:00 AM. Beach is still buggy and it is very very hot and still. I decided to take the Ponga (back hurts, blisters on hands and feet sting). I went with Alberito and Mario to San Evaristo, small fish camp, to buy some supplies. I sat on boat and watched pelicans dive and eat a nearby. We then motored Pointa Arena, a large sandy point, and moored on the southern facing side. Windy, gorgeous beach with a large collection of pretty shells that I couldn't help but gather into my pockets. As I walk north around the sand point I caught



sight of the paddlers across the choppy bay.

After everyone came ashore we sat and talked in the sun shade. Lunch of fresh fish, lobsters stew and fried rice and jicama. As usual Modelo beer. Sig and Raphael kayaked onward while the rest of us rode in the Ponga. Arrived at a beautiful deserted sand/rock/shell beach. Set up camp and then snorkeled in a shallow rocky area. Lovely afternoon. Cliffs here are geologically interesting in colored layers like stripes.

Whole fish stuffed with seafood, peppers and onions, wrapped in foil and cooked slowly over

burning embers, white wine fruit punch. No bugs! Cute hermit crabs.

10/23/08 Arroyo Verde to just north of Coyote point

Usual 10 hours in the Tent since it is pitch dark for that long at least. Beautiful last morning on gorgeous beach. Chocolate cake, juice, tea and fish tacos for breakfast.



Ran out of coffee! Poor June was up all night with the runs. She says she had a "shitty" night. Luckily everyone else was well. She's determined to kayak the last few miles to the takeout and she did along with everyone else except me I've decided going by Ponga is more fun. I rode with Mario and Alberito and watched gorgeous striped and layered colored cliffs (like grand canyon, sort of only with more green), and practiced my Spanish.

We arrived at takeout point when we met the driver Mario on a beach. He brought lunch of- hooray! American Food, cold cuts, bread, chips. Usual Modelo beer, also ice cream.

Ponga took off with Mario and Alberito. Back to LaPaz Then we all piled into the van with our luggage, driver Mario and guide Raphael. Long ride on bumpy dirt road (no hills!). Arrived back at Los Arcos hotel around 3:00 PM. A shower after six nights camping is wonderful. We're all blistered, bug bit and bruised and exhausted (also overdosed on the strong sun).



After a brief rest we all filled out BOA evaluations in the lobby, Tanya from BOA came to administer them.

Went to dinner at Carlos and Charlies. Wondered back after having margarita's, agua con gaz, lemon and entrees (no fish!). Ice cream on the walk home down the malecon on, very warm night lots of people out. Sig and Jerry rented a van for us to go to Todos Santos tomorrow.

10/24/08

Left Los Arcos hotel around 9:30 AM all piled in a van to go to Todos Santos, an artsy community directly south of LaPaz, but on the Pacific side of Baja. About how 1 1/2 hour drive. Walked around Todos Santos looking at art galleries, arts and crafts shops and spend some time in a museum type "cultural center" looking at photographs, artifacts and various items of historical interest. Lunch at beautiful Hotel California, artsy place.

After lunch we journeyed onto Punto Lobos, a small fishing beach, then to playa Los Cerritos, a gorgeous large beach with perfect body surfing and regular surfing type waves. Water was warm but we were unprepared to swim (and kind of sick of salty water). We sat under a thatched hut at the end of the beach near the rocks and watched amusedly as people learned to surf, throw tennis balls for dogs, skim boarded, and in general fun the in the water. It was very hot out, but comfortable in the shade. After about 45 minutes we sweated our way back to Todos Santos, did a bathroom and drink break, and then drove back to LaPaz. Countryside is desolate, filled with cactus and low bushes, high and dry and forbidding. Despite that there's a lot of building activity around Los Cerritos near the beach.

June and Jerry went to do laundry back in LaPaz. They met up with us and Bill and Sylvia at the Peliconos bar and ate appetizers and drank more margaritas, men went off for ice cream.