

## The Baja Bash II

boat and cause you to do something in your pants that hadn't happened since fourth grade. The officer on the radio would then ask about your last port, next port, names of crew, registration or documentation and so forth. With increased maritime security between the U.S. and Mexico, be prepared for boardings from here north.

### Crossing Bahía Vizcaíno

You're anxious to get a mini-window at Punta Norte for busting out to jump north from Cedros across Bahía Sebastian Vizcaíno. This crossing is legendary for being snotty, and if you look at a chart you can see why.

Cedros Island really represents an extension of the landmass that makes up the Punta

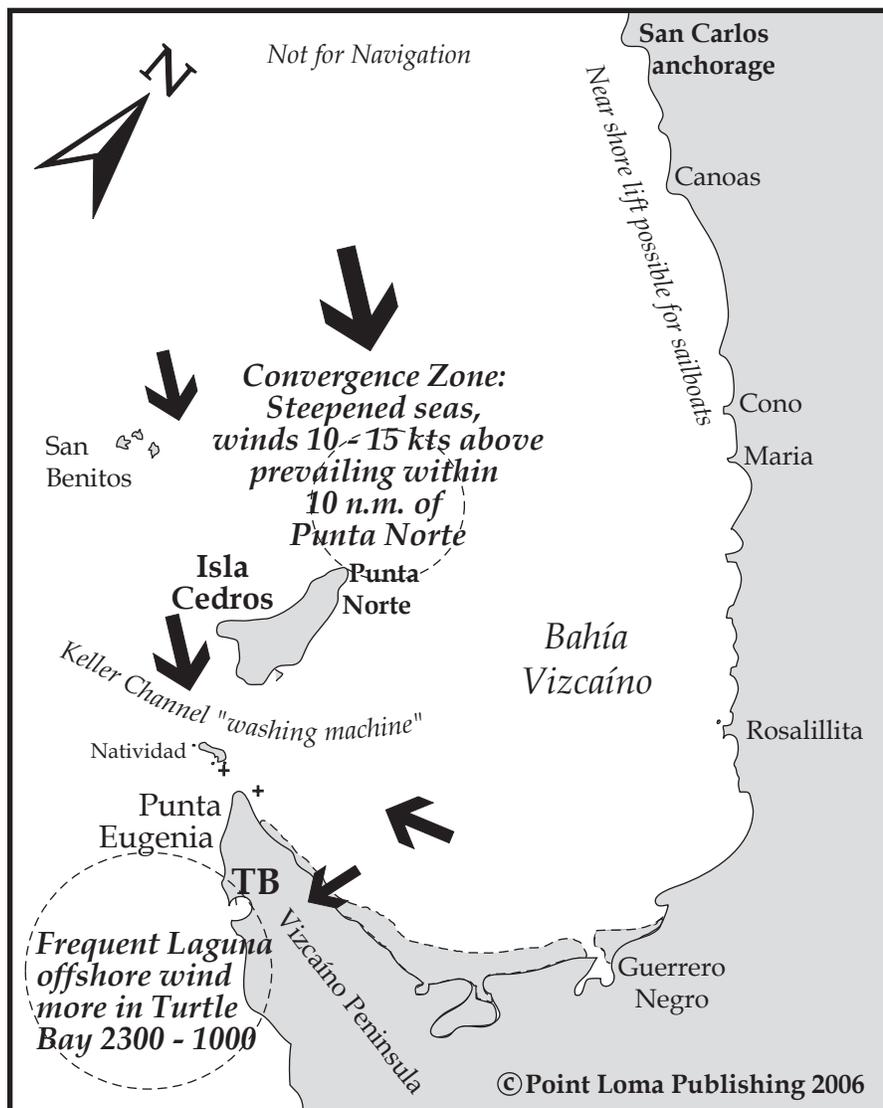
Eugenia area. So if Punta Eugenia can be exciting on occasion, she is just a pretender to Punta Norte's deserved throne, ruling over the entrance into Bahía Sebastian Vizcaíno. It was here that in 1540 the explorer who preceded Sebastian Vizcaíno, Francisco de Ulloa, spent two months trying to get across to the other side. He never made it.

Okay, okay, this is not a ploy to get more business for delivery skippers. If you have prepared your boat and have a healthy amount of good old-fashioned stubbornness, you can make this jump too. But while looking at how the dramatic indentation of the Baja coastline trends eastward toward Guerrero Negro, and how Punta Norte pinches off what is already a funnel effect, you can imagine how bumpy this zone can be at the wrong time of year.

If you're entering Bahía Vizcaíno from the west side of Isla Cedros, you will miss the worst of this area north of Punta Norte. Powerboats coming out from underneath Cedros will probably have to throttle back if they're going to take it more on the bow to alleviate rolling (my preferred tactic) or keep speed up if they're taking it more on the beam.

The rhumbline course to San Quintín generally puts the seas off the port bow, but for the first 10 to 15 miles the seas can be so steep that a twisting roll is set up in many powerboats. I like to alter course to seaward for a while to bust out into a nicer interval or, depending on the boat and exact conditions, keep revs up while taking the seas more on the beam. You know your boat, but the key is to get through that first 15 to 20 miles.

Not that things become a



lake after that. This book is oriented toward the return season for yachts, which is spring, and that is the worst time for this crossing of Bahía Vizcaíno. While you are unlikely to see anything over 30 knots, and usually more like 15 to 20 knots, it does tend to blow right through the night on this hop.

**Sailboats** starting this jump from the west side of Isla Cedros have a much better angle to start their hop and may miss the worst seas. If you have timed this passage according to my recommended departure from Turtle Bay at midnight, then you are probably just losing daylight as you enter Bahía Vizcaíno, which is perfect. Often I'm able to put up some jib here just as I get abeam of the San Benito group and kill the engine, going pure sail for most of the night. Although this course may track your boat a little south of your San Carlos waypoint, *don't worry about coming in a little low on the other side because you'll usually get a bit of a lift to assist* upon closing with the shore. If you have a waypoint in for San Quintin you'd better forget about the jib and just motor sail to stay on course.

But fundamentally the idea is to get your butt across Bahía Vizcaíno as fast as possible, since the seas along the opposite shore, particularly north of San Carlos anchorage, are much more conducive to making progress than the chop you often get slammed with here. Remember to *keep the mainsail driving* even if you have to fall off course a bit. Get pigheaded: this is the last big hurdle to making The Barn and you can smell it!

Coming out from Punta Norte you can also try pure sail to bust out of the worst zone, but in a cruising boat you will definitely end up tracking south of San Carlos anchorage. Let

*The Irwin 37 New Horizons had been experiencing repeated engine problems in the fuel system. The Perkins would be running fine and then suddenly the pickup tube somehow got obstructed, only to seemingly clear itself hours later. My own boat Mithri I was closest when they called on the VHF for emergency assistance.*

*We had just made the usual bumpy run from Cedros to just south of the San Carlos anchorage, and since the wind had finally dropped the skipper was drifting toward shore and afraid he couldn't anchor. He asked me for a tow, but with an 8-horse one-banger diesel on my 37' boat I was not exactly the ideal choice.*

*Nevertheless, with a storm front approaching, I took him in tow and we made the anchorage at two knots. There we rode out 48 hours of wind. Later in San Diego, we found out that when the boat was built a rag had apparently been stuffed into the fill pipe of the diesel tank, and it had dropped inside - causing a transient fuel blockage.*

yourself do that until the wind lightens and then motor sail back to rhumbline with just the main up. Although I've never anchored south of Punta Blanca some of the anchorages look pretty good in Jack Williams' guide. It wouldn't be the end of the world to explore that coastline.

I prefer to cross Bahía Vizcaíno at night even though the winds don't always abate here during that time. The reason is that the San Carlos zone on the other side can blow pretty good from noon to sunset, and I like to either get in there and anchor for a rest before afternoon or get past it to the increasingly calmer conditions north of Punta Baja.

## San Carlos Anchorage

If you are headed for San Carlos anchorage be advised that as you close with land the wind will be down from midnight to noon - but will kick in when you are within 10 to 15 miles of San Carlos anchorage itself. There is a reason why windsurfers come from all over to try this point. I've always been surprised at how decent the anchoring conditions are here, despite what looks like marginal protection. However it blows in here like clockwork in spring. The anchorage probably gets some swell moderation from Sacramento Reef.