

COASTWISE – Ensenada to San Quintín

Upon departing Ensenada harbor, aim for the gap between Punta Banda and Islas Todos Santos.

Estero Beach: Shoals at the entrance to this large estuary 5 n.m. S of Ensenada prevent most ocean-going yachts from getting in, except for multihulls. Trailer boats and kayakers can explore the reeds for good bird-watching and fly fishing. The 5 launch ramps in this estuary area bring crowds on weekends.

Islas Todos Santos

These 2 small islands lie 10 n.m. SW of Ensenada, their S end only 3.5 miles NW of the seaward tip of the Punta Banda peninsula. They're popular destinations for land-based kayakers and trailered fishing boats.

North Island: The smaller N Todos Santos island is flat except for the tower of Todos Santos Light. A racon on the N end of this island doesn't always work. Scuba divers poke around the N side, but it offers no anchorage. Pangas transit the pass between the islands, but we haven't tried that, because this pass is a world-famous surfing spot.

South Island

The higher S Todos Santos island has 2 noticeable coves on its E side. In the larger N cove, 2 cooperating boats can usually anchor bow and stern or raft side by side in about 36' of water. Submerged rocks in the head of the cove prevent you from snuggling in closer. However, if you can take a stern line ashore, you'll find 2 eye bolts imbedded in a dark reddish rock pinnacle just N of the head of the cove. At times, this shore peg has been painted red or yellow. A

From inside the anchorage at Todos Santos Sur, the dinghy passage is a sheltered slot leading N.



small, grassy footpath leads up behind the stern-tie pinnacle. Yes, you can go ashore here, following the paths between cactus gardens and guano deposits. Don't hassle nesting seabirds. The night lights of Ensenada are visible from Islas Todos Santos.

This anchorage is safe only in NW or W weather,



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not in anything nearing E. If the wind swings around or a Santa Ana is predicted, get out pronto. If this cove is occupied, try anchoring just outside it in 45' to 50' of water.

The cove next door S is usually filled with an aquaculture operation with an offshore float and buildings ashore. A sign on the cliffs may say to keep out. Breaking reefs trail off the S end of South Island toward Punta Banda.

Opal eye, sheep heads and bass are the prominent catches in the kelp along the N shelf. Barracuda are the prize in the 3.5 mile wide pass between the Todos Santos and Punta Banda.

Punta Banda

Punta Banda and the 4-mile N side of the peninsula offer lobster restaurants to land-based visitors, but no reliable overnight anchorages for ocean-going yachts. The 'small hope' coves along its rocky S may serve for kayakers and small fishing boats, but the more protected indents are usually filled with fish-hatchery pens.

The first is tiny Bahía Papalote (also called Bufadero Cove) where the famous blow-hole spouts irregularly, and the next SE is Bahía Escondida, slightly wider.



These seasonal aquaculture pens sometimes fill the next cove S of the main anchorage on Isla Todos Sur. Otherwise, it's usually OK to anchor.

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S-bound from Ensenada, we make our departure from the Ensenada area by going midway between Punta Banda and Islas Todos Santos. Stay 0.75 of a mile off the NW tip which carries Punta Banda Light, and stay half a mile off the rocky SE tip of Todos Santos South Island. The racon on the flat N island doesn't always work, but the light does. Or go N and outside both Todos Santos islands.

Rocas Soledad about 12 n.m. SSE of Punta Banda is a composite pinnacle about a mile W of the rocks at the base of craggy multi-headed Punta Santo Tomás. We usually go outside this pinnacle, due to seasonal kelp beds off Punta Santo Tomas, but if you must pass inboard, favor the Rocas Soledad side, because it has deep water close on all sides. My GPS close on the W side of the Rocas Soledad is 31°33.306'N, 116°43.5'W.

Puerto Santo Tomás

As you will find throughout Baja, not every spot on the chart called *puerto* is a port.

Puerto Santo Tomás is a fair-WX rest anchorage. The picturesque village of sea-urchin divers is tucked up into the cove on the SE side of this multi-headed point. The tiny anchorage is surgey, open to SW swell – and sometimes clogged by kelp in winter cruising season.

But in settled weather we've anchored here in around 20' at 31°33.16'N, 116°40.69'W. We try to stay just outside the panga's mooring area. Stone steps and an arch lead up to the village, which has a lunch cantina and a part time motel.

The panga fleet has a beaching shingle, a seasonal floating barge and lobster pots around the cove. Pay attention to avoid the commercial divers in this region – they seldom show a "diver down" flag.

Playa Soledad beach just N of Punta Santo Tomas is not accessible from here. This gravel road leads 2 n.m. S to La Bocana, a beach campground at the river mouth where it turns inland for 35 miles to Highway 1. During Spanish colonial days, thousands of barrels of wine were loaded here from the Santo Tomás wine-producing valley 30 miles inland.

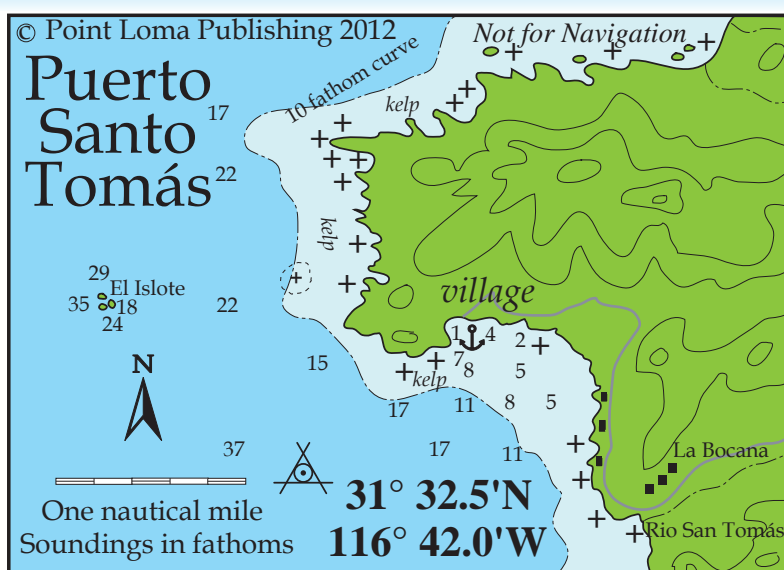
Ling cod have been taken around Rocas Soledad and S of the village, but we wouldn't suggest competing with the local divers for lobster or sea urchin.

COASTWISE continued

Punta China about 3 n.m. SE of Puerto Santo Tomas shows well as a narrow point on radar.

Punta San Jose Light is a small bluff 6.5 n.m. S of Puerto Santo Tomás, and on it you'll see a large processing plant for the local sea urchins and a seasonal offloading quay for pangas. In NW weather, you may find small shelter just SE of this point, but it's often clogged with kelp patties.

Fishing: At 20 to 25 miles SE of Santo Tomás, from shore almost out to the 100-fathom line, you'll



find a major mixed-bag fishing ground: barracuda, halibut, ling cod, giant sea bass, yellow tail, whitefish, white sea bass and various rock fish. One theory is that they're nourished by the agri-fertilizers flowing out of the San Vicente River. Two roadsteads are N of the river, where there's a beach camp, and about 5 miles N of that, off Punta Cabras Light.

Between Santo Tomás and Colonet, coasting down the 100-fathom line or about 2 to 5 miles off the beach keeps you out of the kelp and off lying rocks.

Cabo Colonet

Cabo Colonet (Punta Colonet) lies 41 miles SE of Santo Tomás, about 65 n.m. down the coast from Ensenada. These sheer cliffs and flat plateaus are prominent landmarks – visually and on radar. Binoculars reveal 300' to 400' vertical palisades rising from talus, sliced off to a flat mesa top. Cabo Colonet Light tower stands on the seaward tip.

Cabo Colonet: Flat topped, nose shaped on radar.

