

The Chronicles of Carmen

Winter in La Paz

La Paz has its good, bad and ugly.

The "good" - the weather is nice, a little too hot, but no rain. The water is warm, or was but it has now fallen to 68 Fahrenheit. The wind blows a lot, in fact it nearly always blows whenever we go out to the local islands to anchor out, making the night decidedly uncomfortable. It seems to be calm when we are in the marina.

The town itself is quite interesting it has a newish walkway alongside the bay with some very striking sculptures. The actual commercial district is a few blocks wide and long. It has some very nice streets of residential houses, small but immaculate. It has no sense of a sidewalk. Those that exist do so in isolation of their next door neighbour both in terms of material and LEVEL. Grade is an unknown word here.

To walk anywhere, and we walk everywhere for the obvious reasons, you have to angle one eyeball on downwards to navigate the uneven sidewalk - pavement - dirt - cobbles - blocks - cement - whatever, and one eyeball angled upwards to see the low slung trees - cables - signs - awnings etc. It is most suited to mountain goats. The other neat thing is that all unused poles, iron stays, signs etc. are cut off at about 4" just to catch the unwary!

Folks here are proud of the safety of La Paz. We do not have any tourists like Cabo (used to have). However I see this as interesting for a town that has four different police forces plus armed military forces on show most of the time. All windows and doors are covered with iron/steel bars and our marina gate is covered with *razor* wire. So five armed militia groups and security guards everywhere as well as iron grilles - I suspect there might be a reason for it - but then again this is Mexico.

After about 5 blocks up from the waterfront it all goes to ugly, Mexico has a lock on brown and it also seems to know how to do real ugly. The folks are nice though.

Most restaurants and street vendors serve Mexican food, which seems to consist of corn (in a multitude of varieties) and beans. No one seems to be starving, however one must remember that two of the police forces are devoted to separating the non wealthy (make that real poor) from the in town poorer 'non wealthy'. So although we don't see them around town I have heard enough to know that they are out there ... on the edges of town.

Places with real chutzpah charge in US dollars while most places work in Pesos, probably due to the fact that this is Mexico. If it has to do with Boats and Gringos then it is (way over) priced in dollars. See previous post about \$56 burgers with limp fries in Cabo. Avoid if at all possible.

The language is interesting; Spanish is an old and cumbersome language that has been modernized by making it far more staccato and loud. So they do a lot of what seems like shouting, very fast, with no tonal variations. So pass the salt probably will sound very like abandon ship. It is a twisty language at best.

And so to the "bad" - no nation can succeed by eating Mexican food morning noon and night. Their meat cuts are weird and small. Their music is - well I guess Latin is the word. OK for the first five minutes, thereafter

The "ugly" you just don't want to know. Believe me.