

## **Ganges to Mexico – Mandolyn's Voyage South**

We manoeuvred our sailboat Mandolyn out of slip BW2 for the last time on May 12, 2022. We had quit our jobs, rented out our house, sold our car and pulled our kids from school, but giving up our slip at the club... this was serious!

My partner Sarah and I had always dreamed of doing some extended cruising. Our eleven year old twins Nyah and West had no such dreams, but you don't get to pick your parents, so they were shanghaied and we set off with a crew of 4 aboard our 38 foot cutter.

We spent the summer mostly in BC as a bit of a shakedown cruise for ourselves and Mandolyn. Up to Ketchikan, Alaska, over to Haida Gwaii then down the outside of Vancouver Island. On August 15th we pushed off from Bamfield and out of Canadian waters.

There are a few schools of thought about how to tackle the intimidating coast of Washington, Oregon and Northern California. Some boats go far offshore and sail directly to San Francisco or beyond. We chose to take our time and harbour hop down the coast. For what it's worth, we loved this option.

With plenty of time we could always wait for a good weather window to make our next jump. We made several overnight passages on our way down the coast, but never spent more than a single night at sea. We were able to cover the majority of the distance under sail. The strongest weather we experienced was sustained winds in the low 20kts, from astern. The most uncomfortable seas we encountered were around 5 feet at a 5 second period, also from astern. As we were running with these waves, it wasn't too bad.

Bar crossings, such as at the mouth of the Columbia River, are another intimidating part of the coastal hopping strategy, but again, timing is everything. The bar conditions are very predictable in the short term, and by making short hops we always encountered calm bar conditions.

We met a lot of boats along the way who experienced much worse conditions than we did, either too much weather or too little. This was usually due to a fixed schedule, such as a crew member who needs to catch a flight home, or simply an appetite for excitement greater than ours. If you are willing to take your time there is really nothing to fear, and the small coastal towns along the way are a lot of fun to explore.

The stops we made from Canada to Mexico were:

1. Bamfield, BC
2. Astoria, OR
3. Coos Bay, OR
4. Crescent City, CA
5. Eureka, CA
6. Drakes Bay, CA
7. San Francisco, CA
8. Halfmoon Bay, CA
9. Santa Cruz, CA
10. Morro Bay, CA
11. Santa Rosa Island, CA

12. Marina Del Rey, CA
13. Redondo Beach, CA
14. Avalon, CA
15. Newport Beach, CA
16. Mission Bay, CA
17. Ensenda, Baja California, Mexico!

Before we left Salt Spring, our intrepid sailing club friends Nick and Jenny Coghlan of Bosun Bird had warned us that cutting the ties with your land life and leaving the dock would be the hardest part. Now that we're 6 months in I think we'd have to agree, although homeschooling continues to make a run for the honours!

Speaking of homeschooling, in proofreading this for me, my kids just learned the definition of "shanghaied". Learning opportunities are everywhere :)

We're currently in Mazatlan, Mexico. We really enjoy hearing from people back home, so if you have any questions don't hesitate to contact us.

If you're interested in more about the trip, you can see the track of our route here:

<https://share.garmin.com/mandolyn>

And blog posts here:

<https://www.raisethemain.com/>

We're not missing the winter weather, but we are definitely missing Salt Spring. Our trip is still open ended, so it might be a little while before we get back, but we'll be sure to give the wharfinger plenty of warning before our return in the hopes of getting another slip one day :)

All the best, from the Mandolyn Crew, Doug, Sarah, Nyah & West

