

Gringodog Travels, 2007
States of San Luis Potosi, Queretaro, Guanajuato,
Pacific Coast and Camino Real de Tierra Adentro

with Bill and Jane Wilkinson and dogs Milo and Pancho Villa
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Part III – Pacific Beaches

A detour over to the Pacific coast beaches always brightens our trip, a place where one loses track of the both the date and day of the week. ate and the day of the week. Since we were arriving in March after many of the regular “snowbirds” had turned north, we found a number of front row camping spots. Our favorite was our campsite in front of our favorite snorkeling inlet at Playa Tenacatita. (In previous years we stayed at this beach in a tiny hotel). “Chuy,” an incredibly shriveled prune of a man, with dark brown skin and a snow-white ponytail and beard, is the self-appointed campground custodian. (I noticed he would not be bad-looking if someone could hydrate him little). He charges \$3.25 a night, and for that you get a reasonably level spot facing the bay, garbage collection (but no electricity), and Chuy maintaining order. A somewhat diverse crowd (age-wise) of a dozen or so campers was squatting there (some had been there all winter, and a few, whom we'd seen in previous years, arrived and never left). As with all the RV parks we've visited in Mexico, Canadians dominated this one. Nevertheless, there were several groups of younger European campers there and Mexican families would drop in for day use.

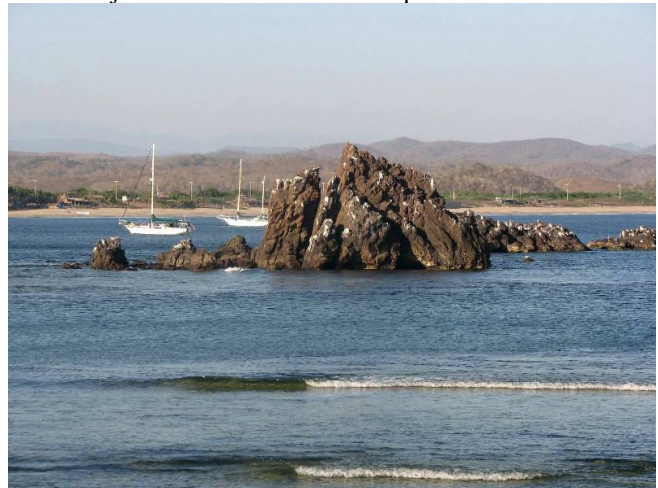
Before arriving here we visited a pretty little beach town named La Manzanilla. Some 40 caimans (crocodiles) inhabit its nearby lagoon and although somewhat camouflaged, we spotted six of them. These guys were big, huge, rivaling those we saw in Australia, which surprised us, because I had been under the impression that the Mexican critters were smaller. Only a flimsy chain-link fence separates the gawkers from the lagoon. The best bargains in beach real estate north of Acapulco to the US border are in this area. Not because of the crocs, but because of the ejido that claims the land. (Ejidos are communities that were given land during the land reform era of the early 20th century). Up until recently, accepting title from an ejido was very risky business. A recent change in the law now permits the transfer of clear title, but only after various hurdles are cleared. In La Manzanilla, buyers are optimistic about the process, as a number of pretty substantial homes are being constructed. But, most of them lack clear ownership at this point.

The rough roads we had driven jiggled an important metal fitting on the truck loose and we had to stop for repairs. We were directed to a SINGING mechanic/welder/machinist, who competently tooled replacement parts that were not as pretty as the originals, but did the job. We sat in the blazing heat (this was several miles inland and 10 degrees warmer), listening to our man croon his heart out while working on our job. His "shop" was an interesting place. Unfortunately, our photos failed to capture the full panoply of chickens, cats, dogs, iguanas, geckos and metal junk that shared his space.

Our final five days at the beach were in one of our favorite towns, Sayulita, about a one-hour drive north of Puerto Vallarta. We did very little there. On several days, pelicans and other birds lined the sea about 75 feet out and they frequently dive-bombed for fish. Curious, I snorkeled out to them and found they were after hundreds of thousands of minnows just below the surface. It was quite a site to behold.



Beach at La Manzanilla



Playa Tenacatita



Camper Ensnconced at Chuy's Campground



Workshop of the Singing Machinist