



Canyon wall north of Santa Rosalia, Photo by: Doug Driskell

10 Santa Rosalia to Mulegé



Santa Rosalia

Isla San Marcos

San Bruno

Punta Chivato

Mulegé

This is a short leg and somewhat developed. There are a few small communities dotting the coastline, the most prominent being Punta Chivato; wilderness beaches are hard to find unless you go via Isla San Marcos. Highway 1 parallels a portion of the leg, but views up coast to the dramatic peaks of the Volcans las Tres Virgenes make up for a lot. It is a pleasant leg despite the nearness of civilization.

27°20'

15'

10'

05'

27°00'

26°55'

112°15'

10'

05'

112°00'

111°55'

Santa Rosalia to Mulegé



After rounding a point with a **lighthouse**, which defines the southern end of the Santa Rosalia area, the city is left behind and the highway veers inland for a bit. A short stretch of coast comprised of pretty sandstone bluffs unfolds.

27° 18' 00", 112° 13' 54"

1 This would be an interesting camp in fair weather for a small group of open-minded boaters. It is in the middle of the bluffs and quite pretty, but the sleeping is on sandstone shelves, so it is not for the Ritz Carlton crowd. There is a protected landing on cobble.

San Lucas Cove. The outer arm of San Lucas Cove is a low rock bar with one tiny hill on its north corner. The exposed bar makes for poor camping. Inside the cove, there is a military base, a trailer park/campground, and a panga launch/beach at the north of the cove. All campers in the cove will have no problem waking up early, as a very loud, corny-sounding reveille is played from the military base's loudspeakers before dawn.

27° 12' 06", 112° 12' 14"

2 A cleared boat landing in an otherwise rocky shore leading to an opening under a set of palms. There is some protection from north swell. There are two old concrete holding tanks here, and it sees occasional car traffic. If nobody is hanging out here already, the clearing makes a pleasant enough camp considering the lack of options around, and offers a beautiful view of the volcanoes up north.

27° 10' 11", 112° 10' 00"

3 **La Salina.** A small **light** and a panga launch on the inside of a jetty. There are a few private property signs nearby, so I'm not sure if camping is allowed, but the area is wave-protected and has a beach with enough places to sleep. It can see heavy panguero use, however.

27° 09' 42", 112° 09' 30"

4 **San Bruno.** San Bruno is a small, peaceful town with fresh water but limited food or other supplies. The harbor is tiny with a panga beach just south of it. The panga beach is good for landing but not camping, and sees some surf on windy days. San Bruno is discussed more in the Isla San Marcos chapter, as it is the probable launch point for a trip out to that island.

The 14-mile long San Bruno to Punta Chivato leg is predominantly exposed, except for the San Rafael fish camp. The land behind shore is low, lined by a very low bluff in front, and there are some gravel beaches with camping above the bluff. The immediate offshore area sees large breaking waves on big north wind days.

27° 08' 58", 112° 07' 05"

5 A semi-protected camp in some lowland dunes.

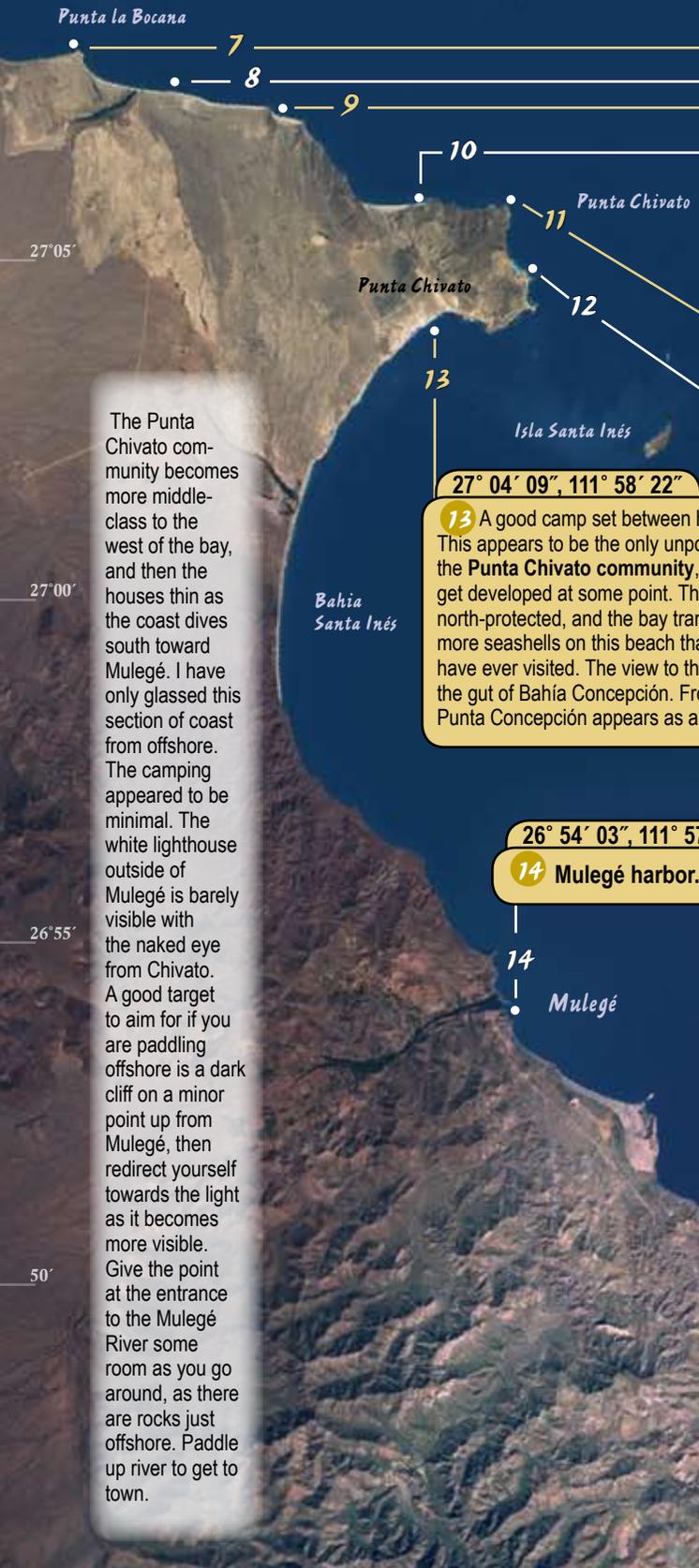
27° 08' 34", 112° 06' 51"

6 **San Rafael.** A small inlet with a gravel beach, this is the best north-protected landing in the area. It is a fish camp but there is plenty of room for all and there is car access.



San Bruno panga launch

Santa Rosalia to Mulegé

The Punta Chivato community becomes more middle-class to the west of the bay, and then the houses thin as the coast dives south toward Mulegé. I have only glassed this section of coast from offshore. The camping appeared to be minimal. The white lighthouse outside of Mulegé is barely visible with the naked eye from Chivato. A good target to aim for if you are paddling offshore is a dark cliff on a minor point up from Mulegé, then redirect yourself towards the light as it becomes more visible. Give the point at the entrance to the Mulegé River some room as you go around, as there are rocks just offshore. Paddle up river to get to town.

27° 08' 00", 112° 04' 17"
7 Punta la Bocana. A scruffy lowland point. There is supposed to be an estuary, Boca de Magdalena, just south of the point according to some maps and the satellite image; but if there is one, it is hard to spot from the water. The entrance might be blocked by a land bridge.

27° 07' 24", 112° 02' 38"
8 An exposed but beautiful, long beach. The landing is over low blocks of sandstone, which are softened on top by algae growth. This would not be a good landing if there were any waves, but if it's calm, this beach makes a great camp. From here, the sunset views of the volcanoes up north are special.

27° 07' 08", 112° 00' 59"
9 A charming white sand beach around a small point. There is a residence here above the area of most protection.

27° 05' 41", 111° 58' 30"
10 Ensenada Muerta. An attractive bay with a beach at the back of it.

27° 05' 44", 111° 57' 13"
11 Punta Chivato. Lighthouse. This is the first of a series of headlands that make up the point. The geology is beautiful red and orange rock. The snorkeling opportunities look promising, though Chivato is rumored to be somewhat of a shark hangout. In 2004, local fishermen mistakenly caught an 18-foot great white in their nets. A second great white was caught off the point later that fall.

27° 04' 48", 111° 56' 56"
12 *** A gorgeous orange and black rock point with nice beaches. The beach to the north of this reading has better sleep spots, but this one has a more protected landing. This point is easily accessed from the community right around the corner, so it may not be as private as it looks.

Around the point, you will enter north-protected waters, but shore is largely developed. Upscale homes sit above a thin beach. There is one pay campground towards the east end of the settlement. A handsome hotel in from the point has a great patio with sublime sunset views; the drinks are not totally pricey, though the atmosphere is chic and the clientele primarily European. There is a small store behind the hotel.

27° 04' 09", 111° 58' 22"
13 A good camp set between hard dune hills. This appears to be the only unpopulated zone of the **Punta Chivato community**, though it may get developed at some point. The landing is very north-protected, and the bay tranquil. There are more seashells on this beach than anywhere I have ever visited. The view to the south is down the gut of Bahía Concepción. From this camp, Punta Concepción appears as a large island.

26° 54' 03", 111° 57' 13"
14 Mulegé harbor. Lighthouse.



Punta Chivato south beach, Photo by: Doug Driskell

Mulegé

Mulegé is one of the “big four” sea kayaking towns of Baja, the others being Bahía de los Ángeles, Loreto, and La Paz. But it is not a big town, just an important town. It sits at the top of Bahía Concepción, which is a great training ground for kayakers; and is the start for one of the major sea kayaking legs along the peninsula, “Mulegé to Loreto.”

Mulegé is about as cute as a town gets in Baja, with small, tight streets running amongst older buildings. It is sandwiched in a narrow valley busy with palm trees and bougainvilleas, and there is a spring fed river lying in it. Most amenities are available in town, but it is not overflowing with shopping. And that is a good thing—the stores are small and the mail doesn’t always go out on time. Some non-boating draws to Mulegé are a mission built in 1766 and ancient cave paintings in the not-to-far-away interior.

In September 2006, Mulegé was the scene of a devastating flood. When the remnants of Hurricane Juan parked themselves over the mountains surrounding town, twenty inches of water rained down in one day. Mudslides cascaded into the swollen river, sending torrents of silt and debris downstream into houses, restaurants, and campgrounds. Town is recovering slowly, and parts of the river corridor will be a long time rebuilding and rebudding before things return to normal.

The restaurant in Mulegé I find myself returning to time and again is Las Casitas. It is located east of the plaza on Calle Madero. It has a garden terrace with water features and parrots, and they serve killer Margaritas. A restaurant I have yet to check out but hear good things about is Los Equipales on Calle Moctezuma. The taco stand of choice is Donie’s Tacos just inside the entrance to town where a tasty and inexpensive meal can be had; you can’t miss it if they are grilling their meats in the smoker outside on the sidewalk.

Downtown Mulegé is not located directly on the sea; it sits inland more than a mile, though there is access to the sea either with a short drive or by boating down river. If you are using Mulegé as a staging ground for a “Mulegé to Loreto” leg, it is best to camp near town. Though there are some picturesque camps on Bahía Concepción south of town, they are probably best left for travelers driving farther south or wanting to kayak Bahía Concepción. Listed here are three places off the highway south of town that are good to start a trip from, or to stay at if you are passing through town.



Orchard RV Park



Mulegé Plaza, Photo by: Lissoni Associati

26° 53' 42", 111° 58' 30"

14th Orchard RV Park. Orchard has long been a favorite for kayakers launching from Mulegé. It is clean, has beautiful trees, good showers, is on the river, and is a just a pleasant walk into town via the river path. Sad to say, however, that Orchard’s days as a camp are numbered, due to its being subdivided and developed into small home sites. It might only be around as a camp for a couple more years. Orchard management says they will continue to allow car storage for the public however, even after build-out of the houses. In 2005 it was \$3.00/day to leave a car there.

A few words about the river: don’t swim in it because of questionable water quality, and if the tide is coming in, paddling to the mouth is an uphill battle. This can hinder a trip planning to cross the top of the bay to Punta Concepción. Also, if it seems a little windy up river near town, it can be really windy out on the sea.

26° 53' 54", 111° 57' 53"

15th Villa Maria Isabelle RV Park. Good, friendly, clean, and convenient. There is access to a river ramp. The walk to town is longer than Orchard’s. If you were set on not driving, it might be easier to boat into town, but leaving boats unattended in town could be sketchy.

26° 53' 56", 111° 57' 34"

16th La Serenidad. La Serenidad is on the river and is a good place to camp, launch, or leave a car. It is a bit of a hike to town without a car, however. There is a restaurant and a pool here, as well as a hotel. There is a traditional Saturday night pig roast, and a big Halloween party every year. The proprietors are Don Johnson and his daughter, Diana.