

Friday, April 1. Arrival at the Boat and Launch by Dr. Wise

Today was the day to head to the boat. Remarkably, the five of us all made it into San Diego yesterday with no delays and all of our gear intact. There are five of us here: Myself, Johnny Wise, Rick Walker, Mark Martin and James Wise. James is our driver. It's his job to drive us around to gather gear we need to get here for the trip. Then his major job is to drive us 4.5 hours to San Felipe, Mexico, drop us off with our gear at the boat and return the car to San Diego as one way car rental trips to Mexico are not allowed.

You'll remember Johnny from our Gulf voyages. He is now a graduate student in neurotoxicology at Purdue University. You'll also remember Rick from those trips. He is still the gentleman from Vermont. Mark is new to these email blogs. He works in Vieques, Puerto Rico for the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust (VCHT). Mark has been working with us for 5 years on toxicology issues in Vieques. It's a small team for us, but one with experience and great camaraderie. I am looking forward to a couple of weeks at sea with them.

The drive to San Felipe was filled with good conversation and humor. There was a brief uncertain moment when we reached a military inspection station in Mexico and we were asked to get out of the car. Fortunately, our trusty Puerto Rican (Mark) was able to clearly explain what we were doing to the soldier and we were quickly back on our way – crossbows and all.

The scenery was remarkable. Mountains on one side and large swaths of desert on the other. Mostly uninhabited and looking very hot. Our eyes delighted when we saw the first traces of the sea on the horizon. A lovely and inviting turquoise blue. For those who have not seen it, the Sea of Cortez, which is also known as the Gulf of California or the Vermillion Sea is the body of water located between Mexico and Baja, California.

San Felipe is a small town, a bit run down and dusty. One can see why there are no commercial flights into the area anymore. With a bit of luck we found the boat. The boat crew numbers six. Our Captain Oona who hails from France/Columbia and has spent most of her life at sea. Our first mate, Mike who is from Michigan and transplanted to San Diego. Sean our engineer originally from Massachusetts and now from Maine.

Shannon who is our cook from Canada. JP our medical office/dive master from Chile now living in Mexico. Mar our second mate from Barcelona, Spain. Most of the crew are volunteers and they work for an organization called Sea Shepherd. You may have heard of the Sea Shepherd from the television show "Whale Wars". Joining us on the science team is Carlos, a Ph.D. student in Mexico who brings our sampling permit and will spilt the samples with us so he can do ecology related studies.

They are a pleasant crew and experienced at sea. It should be a fun and productive trip. Counting me, there are 11 of us in total on board.

I have attached images of the drive to San Felipe, our first glimpse of the Sea of Cortez, and our vessel for this voyage - the RV Martin Sheen.

John



