

Adventure Learning Foundation  
World of Wonders Project  
2008 Central America Return Expedition

March 1, 2008

We left Lanquin early in the morning, knowing that we had a long drive ahead. After finishing up the dirt road back to the highway we turned north and drove the main highway up through the Peten. After a long day we found a nice spot to camp on private property in an area of limestone mountains full of caves. The spot we chose to camp used to be a hotel, but is now a private home and the owners graciously let us park outside their gate on lovely grounds.

March 2

Mid day we arrived at the port of Sayaxche on the Rio de la Pasion and arranged a boat trip up-river tomorrow through the Laguna Petexbatun to the Maya ruins at Aguateca.

We were able to camp on a bluff overlooking the river where we could watch life at the ferry port. The river is on the major north/south highway and there is no bridge across it so all traffic and pedestrians must cross the river on the ferry or passenger boats.



March 3

We had an early morning departure on the boat to the ruins so that we could miss much of the heat of the day. Now that we are in the lowlands the temperatures are in the 90's with high humidity. The river had an ethereal covering of fog when we started which slowly lifted by the time we reached the lagoon.

We spent about 3 hours wandering around the ruins, watching the spider and howler monkeys in the trees before returning to camp. The ruins were nice but the highlight of the trip was the 1½-hour boat ride each way. We saw lots of birds and local river life and we stopped at a fresh water spring where the rush of fresh water forced away the river water and was crystal clear.



Returning to our camp spot, we arranged for a fish lunch that might be the best fish we've ever had. The fish were so long that they hung over the ends of the plate and were accompanied by beans, rice, plantains, salad and tortillas. Yum.

#### March 4 - 5

After a short drive the next morning we arrived in Flores on the shore of Lago Peten Itza, the jumping off place for trips to Tikal. Since we visited Tikal on our Central America Expedition southbound we decided to make time to explore one of the other "lesser" Maya ruins in the area. We ran lots of errands in Flores before looking for a camp spot. We spent some time driving around the lake before deciding on a hotel near the village of El Remate. The hotel's camping area was down a steep narrow road, but it ended right at the lakeshore. We had the area all to ourselves and we had our own private palapa right on the water. The water felt great after a long hot day and we decided it was a great spot to spend a couple of days.

#### March 6

The Maya ruins at Yaxha were next on the agenda if for no other reason than that the setting overlooking twin lagoons sounded impressive. We were quite surprised at the quality of the dirt road leading there, especially since our last attempt to visit a ruin was aborted when the road turned into a rutted trail. The government had obviously put some money into the area and this was even more evident when we reached the entrance gate and found that the entrance fee was more than seven times what was listed in our guidebook. But once we got to the ruins, we were overwhelmed by the immense size of the site and the work that had put into it.

Much of the site was recently restored by the government after a 3-year archeological study and just completed earlier this year. To explore the various pyramid groups (there were four main groups plus several individual pyramids) it took us nearly four hours! We would highly recommend a visit to these ruins to anyone coming into the area to visit Tikal. We were even able to set up camp right on one of the lagoons at the foot of the archeological site. Unfortunately we couldn't go swimming as we were informed that there were crocodiles (albeit small ones) in the lake.



March 7

We had a relaxed morning since we were not planning to travel very far, notwithstanding the fact that we would be crossing the border from Guatemala to Belize. The exit from Guatemala was as easy as could be, the only surprise being that the local town government had placed a barrier across the road to the border and demanded payment of 50Q from all foreign vehicles heading to or from the border. We paid our exit fee of 10Q per person and received our exit stamp from the CA4 pact countries. We surrendered our vehicle permit and changed some money with the moneychangers. There are always fees to pay so it is a good idea to get some local currency at the border.

And then it was into Belize where we had to roll up our vehicle windows and close our vents as we drove through the fumigation building with all of its jets spraying who knows what on our vehicle. That fee was 10B.

We arrived at immigrations/customs where we received our passport stamp and completed the paperwork for our vehicle permit. Then came the customs inspection to make sure we didn't have any meat, cheese, vegetables or alcohol. Then we had to buy mandatory vehicle insurance, but in less than an hour we were officially in Belize.

We stopped for lunch on the banks of the Belize River and watched as people in kayaks and inner tubes went floating by. This looked like a lot of fun so we decided to find a camping spot nearby so that we could kayak the river tomorrow. As one group came floating by us we asked where

they got out of the river, the response was Clarissa Falls. Not knowing where this was we set off in search of it.

Clarissa Falls turned out to be an actual river falls, short in height but wide and pretty. At the foot of the falls was a small lodge and restaurant that allowed us to camp in their parking lot.

March 8

In the morning we walked around the property and found a really nice picnic area right next to the river, so we moved our camp and then inflated our kayak for a paddle in the Belize River. Later we arranged for one of the employees to shuttle us back up to where we had lunch yesterday so that we could float down the river back to our campsite.

The float lasted nearly 2 hours as we stretched out the ride by paddling as little as possible. Along this part of the river were a number of short falls that were just right to kayak over, filling the kayak with water but not capsizing us. This stretch of the river flows away from all roads and provided us with a "jungle" experience.

We had such a peaceful day that we decided to stick around Clarissa Falls for a second quiet night.



(Clarissa Falls)

### March 9

The next day we drove to Gales Point along the old Coast Highway driving through miles of orange groves. Gales Point is a very small Garifuna community that is built along a narrow peninsula of land that juts out into the Southern Lagoon. We had read that the lagoon has the highest concentration of Western Manatees in the Caribbean. If we can find out where the manatees like to hang out we can try to kayak with them.

Driving into the village was really interesting. The village has only one street that travels the entire length of the peninsula with raised wooden homes built along the street. As we drove through town we felt like we were in a parade as all of the residents stopped to watch us. So we rolled down our windows and said hi to just about everyone in town.

After reaching the end of the peninsula and not finding a suitable camp spot, we stopped and asked one of the locals if

we could park next to an empty home that we had passed. As it turned out our new friend was the caretaker for the home and welcomed us to stay as long as we wanted. After we set up camp we had a steady stream of townsfolk come by to greet us and talk. It was really interesting.

### March 10

We got our kayak into the lagoon early in the morning while the temperature was still cool and before the wind picked up. It turned out that the manatees are attracted to a warm freshwater spring that surfaces in the lagoon only about 300 yards from where we camped. We paddled over the springs which are marked with poles in the 5 foot deep water to warn away boaters, and just hung out for a couple of hours.

Although none of the manatees were curious enough about us to come close and check us out, they were close enough for us to count at least a dozen of them grazing on the sea grass and swimming. Every time one of the manatees surfaced to breathe, they announced themselves with their loud exhales and deep breathing before ducking back under the surface.

Since we had gotten such an early start, we found that we had the whole day to sit around. Deciding that we didn't really care to sit around for another day, we said our goodbyes to the people in town and went to the coast where we expected the temperature to be cooler. Inland the temps reach into the 90'sF and the humidity is nearly as high. At the coast the winds blow away the humidity and make things much more comfortable.



In Dandriga we found a park along the beach where we could camp for the night. We also decided to visit Tabacco Caye (pronounced "key") an island along the barrier reef. The island is less than an hour off shore from here so we spoke with some of the boatmen and arranged to be taken out to the Caye tomorrow. When we get there we'll find a place to spend the night. This Caye is only 5 acres in size and is supposed to be much more quiet and relaxed than the Cayes further north. Also, it is one of the few Cayes that have good snorkeling right off shore. Apparently on the other islands we'd have to take another boat to get to any good snorkeling spots.

March 11

We parked our Fuso at Val's Hostel and Laundry and she promised to keep an eye on it while we were on the island. Since she wasn't going to charge us anything, we decided to drop off some laundry, saving us one chore and paying her for helping us.

After a beautiful and fast ride across the flat water inside the reef, we arrived at Tobacco Caye. We checked out all five "hotels" and picked the one that had small bungalows built right at the water's edge. If we wanted to we could jump off of the porch right into the water. Appropriately enough the place was called Paradise!



We immediately got our snorkel gear and went swimming. We got really lucky and were able to swim with the biggest stingray that we've ever seen, and several smaller eagle rays and barracudas. WOW!

March 12

We found out that the truck parts that we ordered for our Fuso had arrived in Belize City, so we made an appointment to get some service done tomorrow morning. So after a morning snorkel, we got ready to take a boat back to the mainland.

While we were getting on the boat, a couple of conch fishermen in dugout canoes paddled in with their catch. Going over to have a look at all of the conch shells, we found we could buy some of the meat and make ceviche with it. OK, so we got our fresh conch meat right from the source and after we got back to our Fuso, Kim cut up some conch,

mixed in fresh squeezed lime and orange juice to make some excellent ceviche.



We drove toward Belize City, stopping at a restaurant about an hour from town where we could spend the night in their quiet parking lot. In the morning we'll get an early start to get to the repair shop. While we were enjoying some nachos in the restaurant we met some expats who lived nearby. They told us about their 7,000 acre property on which they grow oranges and cocoa, as well as raising cattle. They also told us stories of their sightings of panthers and pumas on their property. Very exciting and as it turned out we had driven along their property a couple of days earlier when we drove along all of the orange groves.

March 13 - 14

We spent a couple of very exciting days sitting at the repair shop in Belize City while the mechanics serviced our Fuso and tried to find out what the problem is with our brakes.

Unfortunately and very confusingly, the mechanics told us that our brakes were in good condition contrary to what we had been told by the Mitsubishi dealer in Guatemala City. So all of the parts that we ordered and had shipped to us in Belize turned out to be unnecessary! Oh well. We still haven't found out what the braking issue was, but now we have extra parts that we will use some day.

March 15

As we were making our way north toward the border with Mexico, we stopped at a sugar mill that was grinding up sugarcane and asked for a tour, but found that unfortunately they don't do tours on the weekend. We did check out all of the different trucks and tractors bringing in their loads of sugarcane to be processed.



We stopped along the beachfront in Corozal where we joined the locals enjoying a day at the beach and decided that it would make a fine camp spot for the night. Some other overlanders that we had passed on the road in Guatemala



stopped by to say hi, but decided that they wanted to get a little further north before stopping.



March 16

Today was our Mexico border-crossing day where a normally easy process turned into a 2-hour plus wait. Immigration went fairly smoothly, although they did only have one officer handling all the paperwork on a busy Sunday. When we got to the Customs desk however, the couple in front of us had to argue with the Customs official for nearly two hours before Customs allowed them to bring their vehicle into the country. Their problems had to deal with their residency in Guatemala, the fact that they were Mexican citizens and where their car was registered. Despite the fact that our paperwork was all in order, we couldn't get anyone to help us until they were done with the other couple. When our turn finally came around, we had our ten-year permit in about 10 minutes! Aargh!

We did some grocery shopping in Chetumal as the selection of food is much greater than it was in Belize and at better prices. We also filled our fuel tank as the price of diesel was about half the price as in Belize.

We then drove to some smaller ruins in the Rio Bec region where we were able to camp in the parking lot of one of the ruins, Chicanna.

March 17

Chicanna is a small ruin in the Rio Bec and Chenes styles. It has several nice buildings with roof combs. Its most famous building has a large open-mouth doorway that is thought to depict the god Itzamna, the creator of all things.



Leaving Chicanna, we headed west a few kilometers to the turnoff to Calakmul, another huge Maya ruin in the jungle. The road to the ruins is 60kms long and paved but narrow and is therefore very slow going. We arrived right at lunchtime so we didn't start exploring till about 1:00pm.

Calakmul covers over 100sq km and contains over 6,500 buildings. Its heyday was from 250 to 750AD when it competed with Tikal for dominance. The site has quite a few restored pyramids and building groups and is very impressive, but the lack of good directional signage results in lots of extra walking and frustration. We were there until just about closing time.

Considering the length of the road out and the time of day, we decided to spend the night in a quarry we had noticed on the way in. It was nice and quiet until the driver of a truck pulled into the one lane entrance, parked and left. Uh-oh, what if he's still there when we want to leave in the morning? Not to worry, the driver returned about an hour later and moved the truck.

#### March 18

Today was a long driving day on roads that alternated between narrow with no shoulder or under construction. We stopped for a great lunch in a small town and ran into...other Americans.

At the end of the day we reached Palenque where we ended up in the narrow streets of downtown when the fuel station on the outskirts didn't have any diesel. We accidentally

ended up going the wrong way on a one-way street and had to back up into traffic to get going the right way.

After finally getting gas, we headed toward the ruins where we knew there were places to camp. We went as far as the "entrance" to the park, which has been moved several kilometers closer to town from the actual park entrance, and where they charge a fee separate from the park fee to enter. Well this eliminated the Mayabelle campground since it was on the other side of the entrance and we didn't plan to visit the park this time around. So we turned around and started looking for other options.

The best option started looking familiar as soon as turned into the driveway. Exclaiming "we've been here before!" it turned out to be the same spot we had camped at when we returned from Bonampak on our last Mexico expedition in 2004. It was very hot and humid, but there was a nice pool where we spent the afternoon and as soon as the sun went down, the temperature got much more manageable.

#### March 19

In the morning there were tons of birds to watch and a little bit of an overcast sky. The overcast kept the temperature low so we ended up sitting around the enjoying the beautiful spot till late morning.

We finally headed off toward the first tourist attraction of the day, Misol Ha where the Rio Misol Ha drops 35m (116ft) into a pool surrounded by lush vegetation. There is a path that leads along the edge of the pool and behind the waterfall.





(Behind the falls)

It is quite a lovely place and probably very serene if you are not there during Semana Santa. The same goes for Agua Azul which is a little further down the road. A quite beautiful set of waterfalls "thunder into turquoise pools surrounded by jungle." *Lonely Planet* And it truly was beautiful even with the throngs of people visiting. We extended our visit by purchasing a grilled chicken from one of the many vendors and enjoying it while watching all the comings and goings.



(Agua Azul Falls)

The rest of the day was spent making our way slowly, very slowly across the state of Chiapas toward San Cristobal de las Casas. The going was so slow because every city, town and village along the way has erected topes (speed bumps) to get traffic to slow down. And then it started to rain, pour in fact, further slowing us down. We finally arrived in San Cristobal at 6:00pm, just as it was getting dark. Fortunately we found the campground with no problems. All in all, the 200km (124mi) drive from Palenque with just the two stops (totaling no more than 2 hours) took us seven hours! That averages out to 25mi/hr on the only highway linking the two cities.

#### March 20

Last night after we arrived, we attempted to find a restaurant but ended up at the shopping center across the street ordering a Dominos pizza. It was much more relaxing to eat in the comfort of our Fuso and enjoy some wine and ice cream for dessert.

Since we were planning on staying in San Cristobal for a couple of days, we relaxed in the morning and spent some

time talking to some other people in the campground. We finally made our way into town via a combi and enjoyed walking around and visiting the churches and shops getting ready for Good Friday celebrations. We had a terrific lunch in the municipal market of tacos stuffed with pork, chicken or beef. They were small but between the two of us, we ate ten of them!



After lunch we wandered around some more, before stopping at an indigenous coffee cooperative and buying a bag of whole beans.

March 21

On this, Good Friday, we made our way out to the indigenous village of San Juan Chamula. The Tzotzil people have lived in the area for hundreds of years and San Juan Chamula is

their main village. The centerpiece of the village is the church that is home to some interesting religious practices. While visitors are welcome, cameras are not and a large sign upon entering the village strictly forbids photography in the church or anywhere rituals are being performed. We were allowed to take photos until the statues of the saints exited the church.

On this busy religious holiday, we arrived on the hill above town and easily found a parking space in a large lot. We walked down into the center of town, immediately struck by the large numbers of the local indigenous. We had expected a large tourist turnout, but there were far more locals than anyone else.



Making our way through the crowds, we entered the square in front of the church where at least a thousand people were waiting for something to happen. What, we weren't sure, but we didn't want to miss whatever it was. The front entrance to the church was overflowing with people and we joined the throng to see what was going on inside. Making our way slowly forward, we finally got far enough into the church to



see to the front. At the front was a large structure covered with plants, flowers and men in traditional white clothing and red sashes, lighting candles.



Waiting and watching for about twenty minutes, we made our way back outside and wandered around some more. While we were wandering, we noticed an effigy of a man hanging from the roof of the church. Shortly after noticing it, it began to be lowered into the waiting arms of more white clad men, who then cleared a path out of the square and ran, carrying the effigy into the town. Shortly after that, other men began clearing people off the walkway around the edges of the square and began spreading pine needles on the walkway.

Finally, we noticed movement at the front of the church and out came the saint statues being carried from inside on the shoulders of men and women.



Outside the entrance, the men went to the right and the women to the left. They carried the statues over the needle-covered walkways as the observers removed their hats when they passed. At the far end of the square where the men and women passed each other, the saint statues bowed in deference to each other and were sprinkled with flower pedals by observers perched on an archway above.





It was a very time consuming process and it had to have been difficult for the people carrying the statues to hold them aloft for so long. Eventually the saints were returned to the church and we made our way back to the Fuso.

During our time waiting, we were able to mingle with and observe the local people and they were able to mingle with and observe us. It was a very interesting afternoon and it gave us a look into their social, familial and religious practices. We hope we left a good impression for them as well.

March 22

We left San Cristobal the next morning and started making our way across the isthmus of Mexico. We spent a long day driving, passing some other overlanders heading the opposite way. Crossing across the middle of the isthmus, it got very windy and we heard a strange sound that neither one of us could identify. Then in the passenger side mirror, we saw something strange go flying by. Not sure what was happening, we were lucky enough to have a large pull-out appear and pulled off the road and out of the worst of the wind. Getting out, we were shocked to find that our 11.5ft (3.5mt) long awning had somehow come unhooked from its case, had unfurled and then flung itself over the top of the Fuso.

Fortunately, despite the fact that the shade consisted of metal legs and a metal roller, we had very little damage to the passenger side and no damage on the top of the Fuso. We were heartbroken though at the sight of our awning, twisted, bent and broken. We considered the possibility of

repairs and determined that with the extent of the damage, the awning was not repairable. So with heavy hearts we removed the broken legs, cut the awning off the case and lowered it to the ground. We then had to figure out a way to remove the case from ten feet up the side of the Fuso. After carefully removing the bent screws that had once held it to the side, we were able to slide the case off its bent holder without doing any further damage to the vehicle. Due to its size we were unable to dispose of it anywhere other than where we removed it, but we are sure that it is living on, recycled to some other use by a local family.



(Our shade lying across the roof)

We ended our day at a walled motel where the proprietor let us park outside one of his rooms, provided we left by 7:30am(?)

March 23

We made our way down to the coast and headed toward Puerto Angel. Knowing that today was Easter, we didn't know what kind of crowds we could expect on the road or at the

beach. The traffic wasn't bad and we arrived midday near Zipolite. We checked out a couple of the beaches and discovered that it wasn't going to be the crowds that were the problem, it was going to be the fact that the entire coastline has been built up so much that the beach is nearly inaccessible and certainly not accessible to a big beast like the Fuso. Not sure where we wanted to stop, we decided to visit the Centro Mexicano de Tortuga and learn about Mexico's turtles. We spent an hour enjoying their indoor and outdoor displays of turtles of all shapes and sizes.



Continuing on, we found a nice campground that was so full of campers and holiday-makers that we decided to find something else. We ended up at a quiet campground, a short walk from the beach where we were able to relax and enjoy the Easter sunset.

March 24

The next day we headed north up the coast. We stopped in Puerto Escondido mid morning to get our wheels aligned and switch out the front tires for the spares.

After lunch, we continued north and the road headed inland and into the state of Guerrero. It was a long driving day and our goal was to make it back to the coast at Marquelia for the night.

We got to Marquelia about half an hour before sunset, but then where to? Our guidebook had very little to say about the town other than there was a lagoon. So making our best guess, we turned down a road at the beginning of town that headed in the right direction. After about 7kms, we saw a sign that said "camping". Ah, hah. We turned down the road until it dead-ended at the beach. A good sign. We turned left and found a little spot next to the camping area that our vehicle would fit in. The owners welcomed us very warmly and didn't charge us anything to park, even though they said we could use their facilities. Very generous of them.

We pulled out our chairs and were just in time to watch the sun set over the mountains to the west. We continued to sit and relax in the quiet of the beach until we got hungry for dinner.

March 25

In the morning we decided that it was such a nice spot, there was no reason to get on the road that day. We took a stroll down the beach and then we pulled out our bicycles and rode down the beach as far as we could in one direction and then turned around and rode as far as we could in the other direction.

After returning to the car, we decided doing laundry was a good idea as it was warm and breezy, so we collected a bunch of dirty clothes and washed up until we were tired. We then spent the rest of the afternoon and evening relaxing. It was a terrific spot and we recommended better signage to the owners to get more clientele.

March 26

We decided that we needed to get back on the road, so we headed toward Acapulco. But not wanting to actually drive through Acapulco, we did quite a roundabout bypass, paying some outrageous tolls for the privilege.

After another long driving day, we found another nice beach at Playa Escondida and parked outside of a restaurant right on the beach. We spent the evening relaxing in the restaurant and chatting with the owner until she closed. It was a very quiet night.



March 27

Once again back on the road, we headed north to Zihuatanejo where we knew we would be able to run a bunch of errands. We were able to find a grocery store, an internet café, a bank and a Laundromat. We washed up the bigger items that are difficult to hand wash and left after lunch.

We continued north along the beach and passing into the state of Michoacan near the city of Lazaro Cardenas. We bypassed the city and made it as far as Playa Dorada before stopping for the night. We found another restaurant right on the beach and once again enjoyed watching the sunset.

March 28

The Michoacan coast is famous for its beautiful beaches and the road runs right along it, affording for some pretty spectacular views. It is also spectacularly winding and slow. It isn't the type of road you take if you want to get somewhere in a hurry. We eventually made it to the city of Manzanillo and once again skirted around it on the bypass road. North of Manzanillo are a string of beach towns and we decided on San Patricio-Melaque for our night stop.

Melaque (as it is known) is a tourist-friendly town, with restaurants, hotels, campgrounds, you name it, available. At the very end of the beach is a camping area with no facilities, but no high price either. For the sixth night in a row, we were able to watch the sun set over the coast.



March 29

In the morning we took a long walk down the beach, through the "expensive" campground at the other end, and back through the town. Along the way, we passed the crumbling Casa Grande Hotel and Resort which was destroyed in the October, 1995 earthquake. The hotel has been fenced off and 13 years later, just sits, occupying a huge amount of beachfront.

After our walk, we had breakfast and finally set off back up the road toward Puerto Vallarta. Much of the drive was inland, but when we reached Bahia de Banderas, on which Puerto Vallarta sits, the views became spectacular. It took a while to get to the actual town of PV, but it was such an enjoyable drive, we didn't mind. The north side of PV, however, looks just like any American resort town. Traffic and shops abound and it is just crazy for a lot of miles. And then it ends and you are back in open space again.

And once again there are a series of beaches with camping facilities to choose from. We chose Sayulita and a fine choice it turned out to be.

March 30

Sayulita Beach has been discovered by Americans and Canadians, but it was a jovial crowd that welcomed us to the campground. The sites were small and ours didn't have any shade, but the beach was nice and we had things to catch up on, so we decided to spend the day.

March 31

Another day on the road, but after winding our way, once again on small roads, to Tepic, we finally hit the first of the toll roads that will take us to the US border. The last 10 days were slow-going with narrow roads winding through small towns, but there were times when the scenery was spectacular and we did find some really nice beaches. But now we were on the final stretch (with \$55.00 in tolls to show for it).

We made it into Mazatlan late in the afternoon and wound our way around so that we could do some grocery shopping and then find a campground. After our shopping, we pulled out our camping guidebook (which is now about seven years old) and started looking for a campground. Seven years ago, there were quite a few along the coastal road north of Mazatlan, but this time around, we found a sign for one (right in town) and then no more. The land has become so valuable and the growth so rampant, that it is no wonder the campground owners have sold out. But amazingly, at the very end of the beach where there used to be a free camping area, someone has purchased the land and turned it into a high-end campground with lots of upgrades available. Luckily for us, the manager still had some unfinished spots that he was willing to let us use overnight for \$15.00. That worked out just fine and we spent our ninth night on the beach.

April 1

After spending the morning strolling around the campground and watching the Canadians packing up for the season, we once again hit the road. With another \$52.00 in tolls under our belt, we rolled into Topolobambo to find a camping spot. There were several places to choose from and while we were

checking out a beach on the far side of town, we came across a couple who attempted to cross the sand in the 2-wheel drive vehicle. Needless to say, they got stuck. So we pulled down our Maxtrax and helped them get unstuck. It took a little while, since they had gotten really bogged and Don finally took the wheel in their car and powered it back on to the road. They were very grateful and in return they warned us that camping on the beach wasn't a good idea since people like to party out there. We said thanks and headed back into town and parked on the beach next to a closed restaurant. With the exception of the barking dogs that took up residence underneath the truck in the middle of the night, it was a fine spot and we were treated to an amazing sunset.



April 2-3

The next morning we continued north, with the goal of San Carlos in mind. With a further \$36.00 in tolls (which was better the slow roads or the toll roads?) we arrived in San Carlos with the desire to relax. Having been here several times in the past, we had a pretty good idea where we

wanted to go, as long as everything hadn't been built up in the last couple of years.

Finding the beach on the east side of town the way we remembered it, we pulled into the beach access road. It also helps when you know about a little used section of beach and you have four-wheel drive to get you into and out of that little used section. We settled into our spot on the sand and watched the traffic come and go down the way. But for a day and a half, not a single car showed up on our little section of beach and we spent our 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> nights on the beach. Heaven.

April 4

After another \$20.00 in tolls, we finally reached the US border. Our adventure driving in Central America with our Fuso had come to an end. As we crossed the border, we told the Customs officer where we had been and not surprisingly, they sent us into secondary for a look-see. The search was actually quite cursory - no dogs - and we were on our way quickly. We found a spot to spend the night in a truck stop, way off the freeway, and enjoyed our first night back in the United States in 3-1/2 years.