

## The Escalera Nautica Land Bridge to Boating in the Sea of Cortez

**Escalera Nautica Update**  
**Byline GARY GRAHAM**

Friday May 25, 2007: Since 2002, we have sped down Mex 1 past the turn off to the west to Santa Rosalillita. We had noticed the signs of activity, new road signs, turnouts, etc., but we were always headed for the next Baja "hot bite".

Gene Kira had written about the Nautica Escalera and the fishing village back in June 2002 for WON. So I decided to satisfy my curiosity and with no "hot bite" that couldn't wait a day, I made a hard right and headed west on a wide forty foot ribbon of asphalt that extended 15 kilometers (9 miles) to the Pacific. As we neared the coast it was clear that the area's transformation has been in earnest. Following the

paved road as it dropped down to the beach, it was evident that the project was well underway with its man-made jetty and tilt up walls forming the skeletons of buildings to come. Portable lifts were already in place to remove boats as large as fifty-five feet from the Pacific and load them onto trucks to transport them to the sheltered Sea of Cortez less than half a day away by highway.

Until recently, Santa Rosalillita was just another remote fishing village on the west coast of Baja, four hundred miles below the border between Punta Prieta and Jesus Maria. That was before the Mexican Government came up with the Nautica Escalera concept.



La Escalera Nautica, a 1.9 billion dollar project, is another one of Mexico's attempts to develop tourism in Mexico. Existing ports to be used for this project include Ensenada, Cabo San Lucas, La Paz, Guaymas and Mazatlan. Ports that will be expanded include San Carlos, Loreto, Mulege, Santa Rosalia, Puerto Peñasco and Topolobampo. Existing ports to be used for the project include Ensenada, Cabo San Lucas, La Paz, Guaymas and Mazatlan. Ports that will be expanded include San Carlos, Loreto, Mulege, Santa Rosalia, Puerto Peñasco and Topolobampo. Ports to be built from scratch include Cabo Colonet, Puerto Canoa, Santa Rosalillita, Bahia de Tortuga, Punta Abreojos, San Juanico, Bahia de Los Angeles and Bahia San Luis Gonzaga on the Baja Peninsula, and Bahia

Kino in the state of Sonora, as well as Altata in the state of Sinaloa.

The plan is to provide safe harbors throughout Baja and Mainland Mexico spaced roughly a day's cruising distance apart. The cornerstone of the plan is a seventy mile land bridge that will allow visiting trailer boats and larger yachts (up to 55 feet in length) to be transported from the west coast of Baja to the more user friendly Sea of Cortez on the eastern side of the Baja peninsula.

This is where Santa Rosalillita comes in. Talk about winning the Mexican Lottery, this tiny remote village in its new role as Gateway to the "land bridge", has suddenly been transformed into a much larger bustling community. Architects, Engineers, construction workers descended like frigates on a bait school. New homes, administrative buildings and shop buildings have all been built to accommodate workers and the anticipated hordes of boats that are expected.

Even the narrow two lane Mexico 1 that tourists traveling by car and RV's have become accustomed to is being renovated to facilitate the heavy equipment that will be used to transport boats between the two bodies of water. Large turnouts to allow trucks and trailers to pull off to the side of the road have been added along the highway and the road leading to Bahia de Los Angeles from Punta Prieta. After many years of driving up and down the highway, it's quite a shock to find shoulders of any kind.



While the merits of the Mexican Government's ambitious plans continue to be debated, it is clear that the government is serious about injecting a tremendous amount of money and effort into the project which will have a profound effect on the region, residents and visitors for a long time to come.