



## Nude Sailing to the California Channel Islands

By Peter Connolly

There is something primal that stirs the soul when melding naturism and the ocean. What better way to experience this but sailing with only the sound of the ocean wind passing across your bare skin?

Each summer, I invite my personal friends and members of my naturist club, the Southern California Naturist Association (SCNA) and their guests, to join me for a nude sailing weekends to the pristine beauty of the Channel Islands National Park, off the coast of Southern California. Home port for my 32-foot sail boat named *Talisman*, technically a “sailing sloop,” is Channel Islands harbor in Oxnard, about an hour’s drive north of Los Angeles.

Some trips take more than one day, as when we head south to Avalon on Catalina Island, or up the coast to the city of Santa Barbara, but most of the others are one-day excursions that take about 8 hours to do a round trip to a specific island and back.

I have sailed from Santa Barbara to the Channel Islands to Catalina for years, all while being nude, and without fear of legal problems. When the rare encounter with another boat occurs, we almost always just get a friendly wave. At our destination we try to remain at least a couple hundred yards from other boats or populated shores when anchoring, this distance allows us to remain comfortably nude aboard the boat. The only destination that requires us to be clothed is the densely populated Avalon Harbor on Catalina Island.

For the overnight trips, *Talisman*, can sleep 6, but often people prefer to sleep outside in the cockpit under the stars. She is fully equipped with food galley, a 4-seat inflatable dingy for shore excursions, and two 2-seat sea kayaks. When the wind does not cooperate the auxiliary diesel engine provides reliable power to maintain our schedule. After a few hours journey, most of my guests start to consider themselves crew members and it is gratifying to see them all joining in to help sail the boat as much as they want.

For those unfamiliar with the Southern California coastline, the Channel Islands National Park consists of five islands, lying 11 to 30 miles offshore, and most are visible from the mainland on a clear day. These nearly uninhabited islands, contain a wealth of natural and cultural resources with unique animals, plants, and archeological resources found nowhere else on Earth.

### Anacapa

One of my favorite single-day destinations is Anacapa Island, the closest of the islands. Barely peaking 200 feet above the Pacific, this is the home of the wildlife-protected brown pelican who love to dive bomb the ocean looking for food. The surf crashes into numerous caves and lava tubes blowing spectacular displays of water into the air with each wave. Because Anacapa lies only 14 miles from the mainland, it provides the ideal single-day sail destination.

On one trip last August, our crew was greeted by a pair of blue whales, who kept us company by playfully diving around the boat and spouting water through their blow holes with majestic grace. Sadly, our paths diverged about 30 minutes later, but we got some spectacular photos.

As we approached the Island the sun broke through morning overcast, so all of our clothes came off and we were able to remain nude the rest of the day. Soon after dropping the anchor the brave jumped in for a refreshing swim and snorkel, and then it was time for lunch and sun bathing on deck. A couple of hours later we did a circumnavigation of the island, passing the iconic 40-foot high Arch Rock at the east end of Anacapa. We pick up the afternoon winds, allowing the *Talisman* to “come alive”, and we enjoyed a spirited sail powered trip back across the channel to home.

### **Santa Cruz**

Another favorite island of mine is Santa Cruz. This unspoiled island is the largest at over 96 square miles and offers year-round springs and streams. There are 77 miles of craggy coastline cliffs, pristine tide pools, expansive beaches, and giant sea caves to explore. The deepest sea cave in the world, Painted Cave, is on Santa Cruz Island.

Last July, our 3-day trip there was punctuated by playful dolphins riding *Talisman*'s bow wave.

Because the popular anchorages there can fill up to over 100 boats on busy summer weekends. Luckily we found an empty small bay that we claimed as our own naturist anchorage for the weekend. Other boats passed by at a distance, but none ventured in to join us. With anchors set, we enjoyed lunch and margaritas. In the afternoon some of us used the inflatable boat and sea kayaks to do a nude exploration of the beach area. That night, we were treated to a sky full of stars that mainlanders who live in the city rarely see. Except for the evenings, which got chilly, we spent the entire 3-day weekend nude! On Sunday, dolphins escorted our return trip, as did some distant whales. When approaching the breakwater to the Oxnard harbor, sadly the clothes went back on.

### **Santa Barbara**

Another 3-day trip took us up the coast to the city of Santa Barbara. This city of 100,000 is one of Southern California's premier getaway destinations, sailing or otherwise. With its Spanish influenced architecture, fine restaurants, and shops, this picturesque coast is sometimes called the American Riviera. Inland about 2 miles is the historical Santa Barbara mission established in 1786. Sipping wine in a sidewalk café on State Street is one of my favorite ways to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Our five-hour sail was planned to coincide with the city's annual Summer Solstice Parade, June 19. As a record breaking heat wave settled over Los Angeles that weekend, our weather on the cloudless ocean could not have been better. At Santa Barbara, we anchored a short dinghy ride from Stearns Warf where we have easy access to State Street and the center of town. This anchorage proximity is just far enough away that it allows us to remain nude while on the boat. Saturday at noon, we met up with other SCNA members who had driven up to watch the wacky Solstice Parade with us. The parade itself is all volunteer with no advertising allowed. It has a Mardi Gras atmosphere with just homemade costumes allowed, the more outrageous the better (although no nudity is allowed, many participants come right up to the edge.)

After the parade the full group enjoyed lunch, then a little shopping and wine tasting. After dinner our boat group returned to *Talisman* and relax with the colorful night lights of Santa Barbara in the background.

Sunday morning, the *Talisman*'s large main sails pulled us quietly downwind to the south, and home.

### **Catalina and Santa Barbara Islands**

The longest multi-island trip we take each year is the four-day voyage to Avalon on Catalina, with a stopover on tiny Santa Barbara Island.

As memorialized 50 years ago in the pop song by the Four Preps, Santa Catalina truly does make a great romantic sailing destination. Most of the island is preserved in its natural state, thanks to a conservancy established during the 1920's by the island's former owner, chewing gum magnate William Wrigley. The town of Avalon attracts thousands of visitors each year from Southern California, who travel there mostly by shuttle ferry or by short-hop prop planes. .

Avalon is 60 miles from Channel Islands Harbor, so it takes a full day of downwind sailing to get there. On most of our sails we are escorted by hundreds of playful dolphins.

The tourist town provides visitors with a full city block of small hotels and shops for those who wish to buy touristy remembrances of their visit. There is a public beach for swimming, coves for scuba diving and snorkeling, and a pier for fishing. The 3-story Casino movie theatre – formerly a dance ballroom from the 1920's – dominates the shore skyline. Upslope from the town is a golf course, horse riding trails, and hiking and bike paths. With all there is to do, it makes up for the inability to be nude while here. We enjoyed our evening at a quiet hillside restaurant overlooking the harbor.

The next morning, we left Avalon for Santa Barbara Island, the smallest of the Channel Islands. Because it is only 600 acres in size, it is rarely visited. Hundreds of nesting sea lions and elephant seals resting on the cliffs greet us with a cacophony of

barking that lasts all day and all night. The only anchorage is adjacent to the one landing platform. We found ourselves to be the only visitors on the island that day, so we explored the hiking trails and fields of brilliant purple flowers without clothes. Back aboard Talisman after sunset, we are surprised to be dive bombed by dozens of flying fish, apparently trying to avoid being dinner to the seals.

### Summary

Except for the occasional nude beach or hiking trail, naturists have few opportunities to enjoy the outdoors without the fear of legal hassle. Nude sailing helps fill this void. I look forward to future sailing trips this summer with friends from our naturist community. For more information, visit the SCNA website: [www.socalnaturist.org](http://www.socalnaturist.org) , or call: (818) 225-2273



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