



Baja Bits & Bytes

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM DISCOVER BAJA TRAVEL CLUB
DECEMBER 2012

FELIZ
NAVIDAD

A small, dark green Christmas wreath with red and white ornaments is positioned to the right of the word "NAVIDAD".

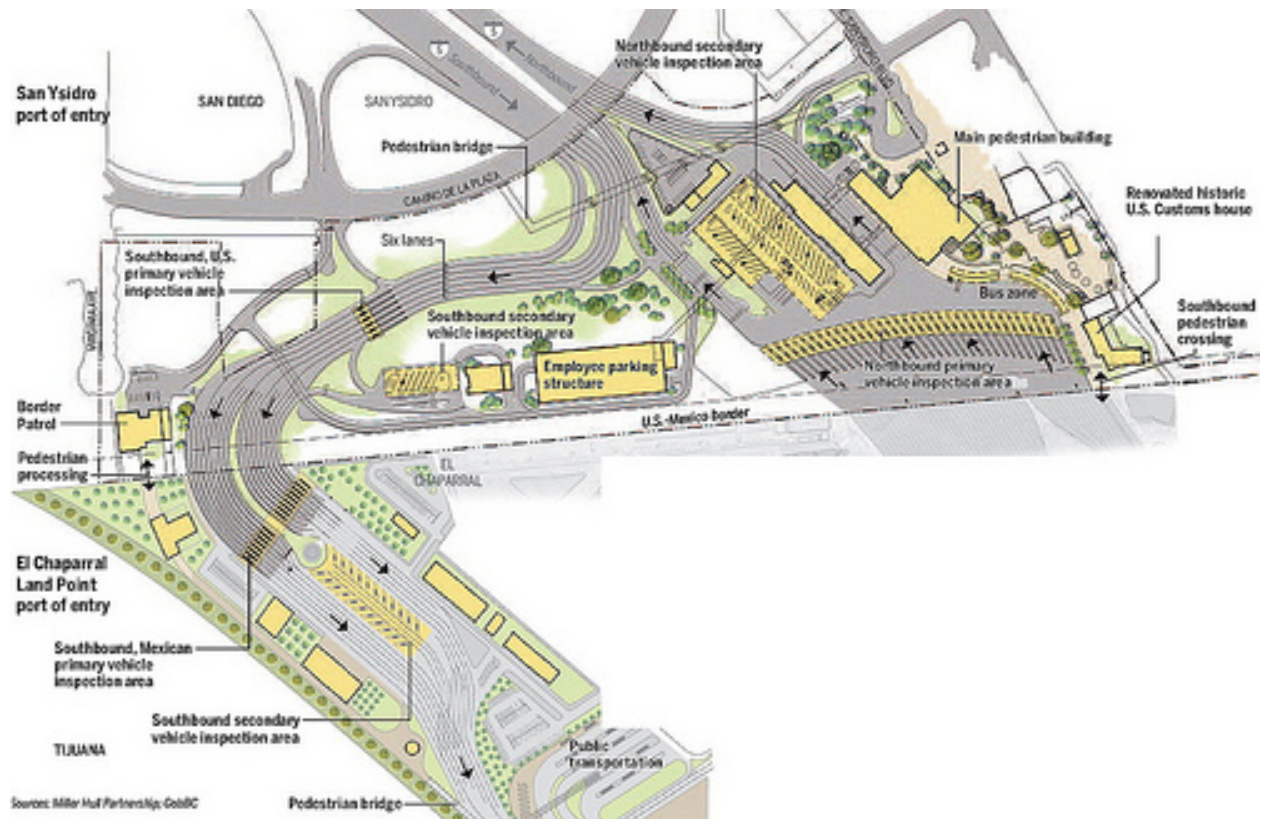
Traffic Flowing Well at New El Chaparral Port of Entry

Discover Baja members and staff alike have found the new port of entry from San Ysidro into Tijuana to be relatively easy to negotiate. The awkward routing (hard right turn, go ¼ mile, hard left turn) moves as best as could be expected and as will be required until the U.S. re-routes I-5 to this new El Chaparral crossing (as pictured on the next page) in 2015.

The multiple new lanes allow more cars to be processed (the usual green or red light) for entry more quickly, although a higher percentage of cars are getting the red light to go into secondary inspection. Our own experience (red light 4x, green light 2x) would lead us to believe that this is being done to provide an opportunity to train new



staff for this much larger facility, since each inspector is assisted by a trainee. Hopefully there will be more green lights in the future.



Getting to the immigration office for the first time to get the date of entry stamped on your tourist permit (FMM) can be a challenge. After making the sharp right at the old border entry point, and driving the ¼ mile, **do not** turn left, but continue straight toward the tall Mexican flag pole. Go through the entry gate marked AUTO DECLARACION and turn left to the large parking lot. After parking go through the entry doors of the blue building and continue past a number of offices on the right (including a Banjercito) and left side. Continue through the second set of doors, and turn left down the next hallway to the second door on your left--the Immigration office. *Buena suerte.*

New Pedestrian Entries: One Down, One To Go



In September, pedestrians walking into Mexico at San Ysidro got a new crossing, just east of the old port of entry, replacing the former pedestrian crossing that was at the port's western end. The new crossing is located a few hundred feet south of the San Ysidro trolley station.

The General Services Administration is planning another new pedestrian crossing west of the new El Chaparral port at Virginia Avenue. Construction is scheduled to start next December, with completion in 2015.

The big problem for pedestrians, though, is not the southbound crossing, but the northbound one. At the current San Ysidro pedestrian entry from Mexico, the wait time in line to cross into the United States from Tijuana can sometimes be two to three hours. Various bi-national agencies have expressed their dissatisfaction with this current situation, and that waiting three years for the new pedestrian crossing to ease the problem is unacceptable

Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrated on Both Sides of Border

December 12 saw celebrations of Our Lady of Guadalupe (or *La Virgen de Guadalupe* as Mexicans call her) on both sides of the border. As the patroness of Mexico and the patroness of the Americas, most countries in Central and South America celebrate the feast as a national holiday.

An unusual celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe was held in Leucadia, a beach community 25 miles north of San Diego on that date. The 10-ft mosaic depicting Mary surfing a wave with the words "Save the Ocean" found a permanent home there on a wall between a surf shop and a café on Pacific Coast Highway (PCH 101). Her feast day called for a celebration.

Artist Mark Patterson is glad to see his work, now commonly called the "Surfing Madonna", again on public display after it had been removed from an underpass where he originally installed it without authorization.

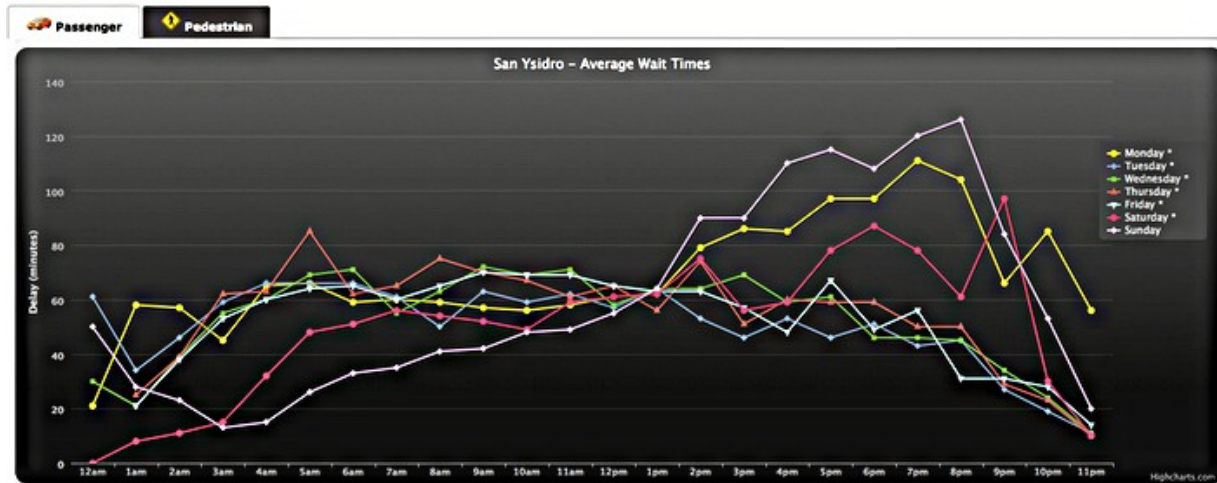


New App Tells Best Time to Cross Border

A new app developed by the University of California, San Diego will tell you the best time to cross the border from Mexico into the U.S.

For all of you with smart phones, this free app can be downloaded from your app store. The name of the app is **Best Time to Cross the Border**, and it gives border crossing wait times for standard, Senti and Ready lanes for both vehicles and pedestrians. It includes all borders for Mexico and Canada, and includes live web cam views.

Best Time to Cross the US Border



This app is different from other border crossing wait times apps, in that in addition to providing current wait times to enter the US from Canada and Mexico, it also tells you what is the best time to cross the border, via graphs, based on the average wait times for the past three months.

Check out their companion web site at: <http://traffic.calit2.net/border/border-crossing-wait-times-map.php>

Here's a photo from Discover Baja member Brett Tolly of a guy who didn't check out the new app, and tried to cross the border the hard way! (a real photo)



Discover Baja 2013 Gift Guide Ready

The 2013 Discover Baja Gift Guide is available for use. You can access it directly at this link: <http://www.discoverbaja.com/pdf/2013-Gift-Guide.pdf> When our new, totally revised web site is completed in early 2013, we will be able to offer online purchase capabilities. Until then, browse the guide and call us [800-727-BAJA] or email us an order and we will get it into the mail pronto. Our special buys currently are:

2013 Journey Down Baja Calendar

***The Old Missions of Baja and Alta California
1697 -1834***

Baja California Plant Field Guide

***The Baja Highway: a Geology and Bbiology
Field Guide for the Baja Traveler***

***We also have a beautiful assortment of Mata
Ortiz Pottery---perfect for your home or as a
gift.***



The **2013 Discover Baja Gift Guide** can be viewed in its entirety at:
<http://www.discoverbaja.com/pdf/2013-Gift-Guide.pdf>

Tecate Border Crossing

The border and the immigration office at Tecate are open 5am to 11pm daily. The Banjercito, right next door to immigration is open every day from 8am to 4pm. The Banjercito is used for paying FMMs and for obtaining temporary car permits.

Discover Baja Holiday Hours

Discover Baja offices will be closed **December 24 and 25** for Christmas and **December 29, 30, 31 and January 1** for New Years. Have a wonderful, safe holiday season. We look forward to seeing you in 2013...and being able to assist you with the preparations for your upcoming Baja trips---insurance, FMMs (tourist visas), fishing licenses, books, maps and information. We're ready when you're ready!!

Gas Prices In Baja



PEMEX prices have increased slightly over the past month, but are considerably lower than US prices: Magna (regular) \$3.19, Premium \$3.36 and Diesel \$3.30.

Peso Exchange

As of 12/20/12, the Mexican Peso is exchanging at 12.93 to the US dollar.

FROM OUR MEMBERS:

COMMENTS, INFORMATION AND "FIELD NOTES" FROM OUR DISCOVER BAJA MEMBERS

Discover Baja members, and **Baja Amigos RV Caravan Tours** owners and operators, Dan and Lisa Goy, recently returned from one of their Baja tours with valuable information they would like to share with Discover Baja members:

Watch for police in Tecate who were very active pulling drivers over for various reasons.



Also in Tecate, be sure your dog is on a leash when out of your vehicle, and even in your vehicle your dog should be on a short leash or in a kennel since owners of unrestrained dogs have been cited.

The road south of Cataviña has been repaved.

EJ Nuevo Rosarito to well past military check point southbound, all paving is complete.

Watch out for potholes from Pedregosa to the LA Bay turnoff.

The four-lane highway from Cabo San Lucas to Todos Santos is completed, with some minor hurricane damage repairs in progress.

A by-pass around Todos Santos is under construction and could be completed this year, providing four-lane travel from Cabo to La Paz.

Contact Dan & Lisa at www.bajaamigos.net or 866-999-BAJA for information about their adventurous Baja tour packages.



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3264 Governor Drive San Diego, CA 92122

Phone: 619 275-4225 or 800 727-BAJA Fax: 858 458-0722

www.discoverbaja.com email: ask@discoverbaja.com

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*The staff of Discover Baja Travel Club wishes you and yours
a very joyful holiday season.*

*May we experience more understanding and peace on our planet
in the coming year, and may you experience many safe and
memorable travels throughout the magnificent peninsula.*