



BAJA NEWS

For more Baja news, see:
www.discoverbaja.com/baja-california-information/baja-news/



PedWest: New San Ysidro Pedestrian Crossing Now Open

The PedWest San Ysidro northbound pedestrian border crossing opened in July 2016. The new pedestrian bridge and crossing facility is located just west of the southbound vehicle El Chaparral crossing and has 14 lanes—12 northbound and two reversible. PedWest is meant to supplement the original pedestrian crossing east of the northbound vehicle crossing lanes at San Ysidro. The original eastern pedestrian crossing will be reduced to six lanes before being demolished and reconstructed as a new crossing facility which will open in 2019.

The Mexican side currently has a temporary bridge in place to access the PedWest facility. The temporary structure on the Mexican side is supposed to be replaced with a permanent structure by September 2016.

More information and a video with how to access PedWest can be found at: www.discoverbaja.com/2016/08/01/pedwest/

From the DBTC Office

We have a few tickets left for sale for the Valle de Guadalupe Vendimia Paella festival on Sunday, August 21. This fun event takes place under the oak trees with plenty of wine and paella to enjoy. See page 3 for more information.

The Discover Baja offices remain open on Saturdays by appointment only. Please call 800-727-2252 by Friday 4pm in order to make an appointment for Saturday. The offices will be closed Saturday, Sept. 3rd and Monday, Sept. 5th in observance of Labor Day.

See you in Baja!

Hugh, Carol, Jen, Maythé, Monica,
& Arlene

DBTC BAJA CAJA *All of the Baja info you need in one box!*

PESO EXCHANGE RATE: \$18.8 to \$1 U.S. dollar

FISHING LICENSES: Day: \$12.25, Week: \$31.20, Month: \$42.80, Year: \$54.40 for members.
www.discoverbaja.com/go/fishing-licenses

PREPAID FMMs: \$30 DBTC members only. Advance seven-day FMMs now available for \$5 each.
www.discoverbaja.com/go/fmm-tourist-permits

BOAT TEMPORARY IMPORT PERMITS (TIPs): \$45 fee for DBTC to handle processing. Service for DBTC members only. www.discoverbaja.com/go/temporary-boat-importation

NAUTICAL FMMs: \$10/person fee for DBTC to process. Service for DBTC members only.
www.discoverbaja.com/go/nautical-sportfishing-fmm

MEXICAN AUTO INSURANCE: Special yearly rates for members. www.discoverbajaonline.com

ON OUR RADAR FOR AUGUST

For more information about the events below and to keep up on all of the latest Baja events, see www.discoverbaja.com/events

AUGUST 5-21 Fiestas de la Vendimia



The Valle de Guadalupe Fiestas de la Vendimia have arrived. The wine harvest festival consists of two weeks of dinners, parties, concerts, and more throughout the region, including the famous Paella Fest (DBTC has tickets for sale – see page 3 for more info). For a full schedule of Vendimia events in English:

<http://bit.ly/DBVendimia>

AUGUST 19-20 Pesca la Baja: San Quintín



The fourth fishing tournament in the Pesca La Baja 2016 sportfishing tournament series will take place in San Quintín.

www.pescalabaja.com

AUGUST 19-21 Rosarito Baja Blues Fest



This three-day music festival will feature live entertainment, local vendors, and food and drinks. Profits go to benefit children's charities in Baja.

www.bajabluesfest.org

AUGUST 31 Sabor de Baja



This all-white affair will take place at the Rosarito Beach Hotel featuring 20 of Baja's best chefs along with Baja wine and craft beers.

www.sabordebaja.com



This year, we wanted to bring our members the opportunity to experience the Valle de Guadalupe Vendimia wine harvest festival. We're selling tickets to the Concurso de Paella, the best event of the festival. The event will take place this year on Sunday, August 21 under the oak trees at Liceaga winery. Nearly every Valle de Guadalupe winery will be in attendance serving wine, and over 50 dishes of paella will be served. Wine and paella are included in ticket price.

You can read more about the event at our link below: <http://bit.ly/DBTCpaella>

Tickets are available on a first-come, first-serve basis by emailing ask@discoverbaja.com or calling 800-727-2252. US \$60 for DBTC members. US\$70 for nonmembers.

Please note that hotels in the Valle de Guadalupe book up far in advance for this weekend. We recommend booking a hotel ASAP in Ensenada, Rosarito or Tecate if there are no available accommodations in the Valle de Guadalupe.

Join Baja Test Kitchen's "Baja Tasting Club"

Geared towards Southern California Foodies, the Baja Test Kitchen "Baja Tasting Club" will explore Baja California's emergent culinary movement via curated tasting tours of the region. As a foodie interested in Baja California's food, wine, and craft beer, you now have a new and easy option for exploring the Region's gastronomy. For a limited time, membership in Baja Test Kitchen's newly formed Baja Tasting Club is free to Southern California culinary insiders!

About the Club: The Baja Tasting Club will meet regularly on the US side of the border, and cross down into Mexico as a group for same-day and multi-day explorations of the Region. With input from Club members, Baja Test Kitchen is programing new culinary excursions monthly. Members will be the first to know about these discounted culinary expeditions. Round trip transportation, food, and beverage will be included in the price of the trips, which will vary based on itinerary. Those interested in joining can register at www.bajatestkitchen.com/baja-tasting-club

DBTC Office Updates:



Torri Kramer—the furry one on the left—is a rescue Sheltie who is our new Greeter. Come in to meet this sweet girl. She welcomes all pets and attention.

Arlene Lauina, on the right, is a new voice on the phone. She is our Administration Assistant, as well as Monica's daughter. Arlene takes care of all of us—filing, copying, sending out packets, preparing licenses and keeping us all on track. We welcome both Arlene and Torri and encourage you to come in to meet them.



Is the Baja lover in your life celebrating a special occasion? Help them celebrate with a custom Baja cake made by DBTC's own Monica Garcia. Cake features the ocean, desert, and of course highway Mexico 1! Email ask@discoverbaja.com with specific requests and for pricing. Please allow at least two weeks.

La Antigua Ruta del Vino

BAJA'S HISTORIC WINE ROUTE



While the popularity of Baja wine has just taken hold with the rest of the world in the past decade, wine has been made commercially in Baja California for over 125 years. The Valle de Guadalupe has been coined Baja's "Ruta del Vino" and even those who have not yet visited, have heard of the region's *campestre* restaurants and boutique wineries. But there are five grape-growing valleys in this region, and while Valle de Guadalupe is the most well known and developed, a majority of the grapes used to make Valle de Guadalupe wines come from other valleys where there's more water and more land.

Baja's original wine route, the "Antigua Ruta del Vino" is a separate wine region where Baja California wine making started. Located south of

Ensenada, this historical route consists of the Valle de Santo Tomás, Valle de la Grulla, and Valle de San Vicente. This lesser-known, intimate wine region is one of Baja's best-kept secrets. You won't find the crowds or the scene of the Valle de Guadalupe here—what you'll get is quality wines, beautiful wineries, personal attention, and true Mexican hospitality. It's quality over quantity in this region with a handful of wineries and limited options for food.

The Dominican Spanish missionaries brought the first grapes (now called the "mission" grape) to the Valle de Santo Tomás in 1791. At the time, the king of Spain prohibited winemaking in Mexico with the exception of making wine for church purposes. It wasn't until Mexico

gained its independence in 1821 that winemaking was permitted for non-church use and production of wine began to increase. In 1888, the lands of the former Santo Tomás Mission were sold to a private group that established Bodegas de Santo Tomás, the first winery in Baja California and the second-oldest winery in Mexico (Santo Tomás is the oldest Mexican winery to be in continuous operation).

Bodegas de Santo Tomás anchors the Antigua Ruta del Vino and is supported by a handful of boutique and family-run wineries that now constitute the region. A trip to the Historic Wine Route is guaranteed to be an enchanting day of wine tasting, and a small lesson in Baja California history as well.



Baja Test Kitchen's Group Tour to the Antigua Ruta del Vino

Breakfast + 12 Wines + Pig Roast

Sunday, September 11th | [Inquire for pricing](#) | [Space is limited](#) | [Book Now!](#)

Sit back and enjoy the ride, experience the culture, and learn the history of Mexico's Historic Wine Route as we guide you and your taste buds through a mouthwatering exploration of this lesser known wine region. On this special same-day group tour from the border, you'll eat a freshly prepared Mexican-style breakfast at the famous La Cocina de Doña Esthela (named best breakfast in the world by Foodie Hub), you'll enjoy a relaxing tractor ride through the oldest vineyard in Baja California at Santo Tomás Winery as you taste handcrafted artisan wines from the "Antigua Ruta," and you'll feast on a privately catered all-you-can-eat pig roast overlooking the vineyards of MD Vinos in the beautiful La Valle de la Grulla. Baja Test Kitchen tasting tours are designed for wine and food enthusiasts, and we've done all the planning and logistics work for you!

[Inquire for pricing](#) - **group discounts are available. Space is limited.** Book early to confirm your participation.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

All food and beverage as described in the itinerary above: a full Mexican breakfast, 2 complete wine tastings (taste 12 handcrafted artisan wines), and a privately catered all-you-can eat roasted pig lunch overlooking the vineyards | Round-trip transportation in a well-appointed air-conditioned tour vehicle from our designated border meeting point | Your bilingual culinary guide is a knowledgeable ambassador of Northern Baja California's culinary scene | All itinerary times above are approximate and vendors may be substituted based on their availability | Optional tour guide gratuity is not included | Baja Test Kitchen is a sister company of Discover Baja.

[BOOK THIS TOUR](#) | [VIEW PAST TOUR PHOTOS](#) | [TASTING TOUR FAQ](#) | [READ CUSTOMER REVIEWS](#)





Rancho de los Niños Dorm Update

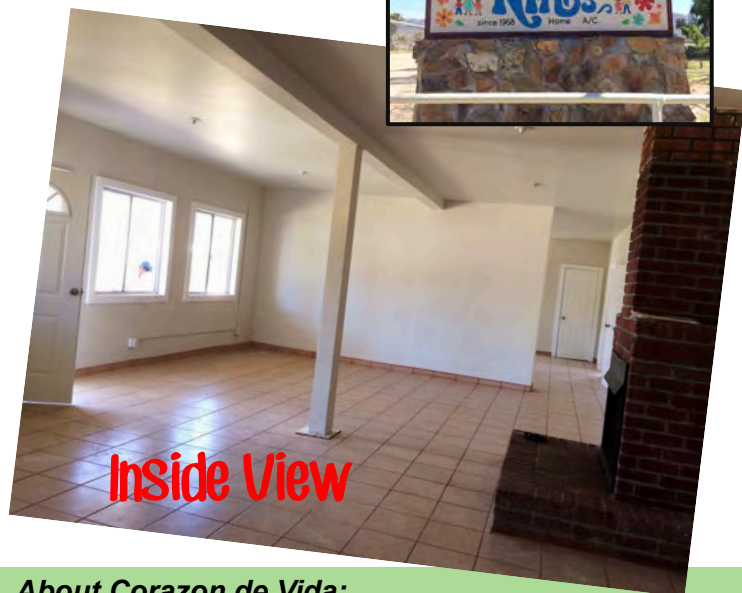
We want to thank those of you who donated to help construct a new girls' dorm at Rancho de Los Niños orphanage. Carol and Jen recently took a trip with Corazón de Vida to check out the status of the new dorm and are pleased to announce that the building is beautiful and almost ready for the girls to move in! The last step is furnishing the dorm and getting it equipped with bedding, linens, etc. to create a welcoming home for the girls. You can help by visiting the link below where you'll find an Amazon registry of items that are needed:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1Q1UNFXSTWZM0/ref=cm_wl_list_o_2

You can also find the link and more information at www.discoverbaja.com/rancho-de-los-ninos/

All purchases can be made directly through this link on Amazon and will be sent straight to Corazón de Vida so that they can get the items down to the orphanage.

We'll be arranging a group DBTC visit to Valle de Guadalupe to see the children and the new dorm in the next couple of months, so stay tuned for more details!



Inside View



corazón de vida

About Corazon de Vida:

Corazon de Vida (CDV) is a 20+ year U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing life-changing support for orphaned and abandoned children in Baja, Mexico by funding local orphanages, providing quality of life improvement services and investing in the children's future by funding higher education. Through their life-sustaining program they provide monthly funding for the orphanages under their care. These orphanages give abandoned children security, nutrition, shelter and access to a reliable education.

RANCHO MIL: SERENITY ON THE RÍO HARDY

Southeast of Mexicali winds the Río Hardy, a 26-kilometer river that brings life to the desert and mountain landscape of this Baja region that many travelers are uninitiated with. This is an area where life is serene and unassuming. Where travelers kayak along the river during the day and watch the sky blanketed by stars at night.

The Río Hardy is believed to be an old channel of the Colorado River, and is formed from residual agricultural waters from the Mexicali valley. Before eventually leading out to the Sea of Cortez, the river flows into the Colorado River Delta, which has been designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The region is full of wildlife and is an annual stop for migrating birds. Life centers on the river here, where visitors enjoy activities like kayaking, jet skiing, boating, or just relaxing.

Along the shores of the Río Hardy, is Rancho Mil. Don Thousand "Sr. Mil" (*Mil* means thousand in Spanish) first came to the Río Hardy *campo* here in 1977 and rented for a number of years before getting the opportunity to purchase the entire property. He named it Rancho Mil.

Life is *tranquilo* at Rancho Mil. The Río Hardy serenely flows before you, the Sierra El Mayor mountains stand behind you, and thousands of acres of open desert surround you. Rancho Mil has riverfront cabins available for rent as well as camping and RV spots. The campground area is equipped with a cooking area, showers, and toilets. For those who want to spend more time in the area, cabins and lots are available for sale.

While Rancho Mil is a perfect place for just relaxing, there's no shortage of activities for those who want to get out. For those interested in getting out on the river, kayaks are available to rent. There are plenty of trails in the surrounding area for hiking or riding ATVs.

Located just 58 kilometers south of Mexicali just off of highway Mexico 5, Rancho Mil is just an hour from the U.S. border and makes for an easy Baja getaway.

Rancho Mil

www.ranchomil.com

US tel: 949-466-2069

Email: D1000@sbcglobal.net



PENINSULA PICKS: 5 BOUTIQUE WINERIES IN VALLE DE GUADALUPE

There are currently over 120 wineries in the Valle de Guadalupe, which means that while there are plenty of options, it can be difficult to find the best places to go. We've picked some of our favorite boutique wineries that capture the true essence of the valley with rustic charm, intimate atmospheres, and great wines. For a winetasting tour to any of the wineries below, contact www.bajatestkitchen.com

Vena Cava

Information: www.venacavawine.com, tel: 011-52-646-156-8053, tasting room open 11am-5pm daily with tastings on the hour.

Why We Love It: The great wines and unique architecture of Vena Cava have made this winery a popular choice for both customers and the media (Vena Cava has been mentioned in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *NPR*). Architect Alejandro D'Acosta constructed the winery out of five vintage wooden fishing boats from Ensenada, turned upside down to create the roof of the winery. Winemaker Phil Gregory can often be found around the winery regaling clients with stories and explaining his winemaking methods.

Wine to Try: Vena Cava is one of only two wineries in the Valle de Guadalupe creating a sparkling wine. The Espomoso Brut Rosé is a delectable sparkling rosé that takes three years to make by hand. It's not included in the tasting, but buy a bottle to enjoy for a special occasion.

DBTC Insider Tip: TROIKa food truck, by Chef Diego Hernandez, is located right outside Vena Cava under a canopy of recycled irrigation tubing. Enjoy Baja-style gastropub fare like *lechón* tacos and sliders with beer-battered tomatillo and bacon marmalade.



Las Nubes

Information: www.vinoslasnubesbc.com, tel: 011-52-646-156-8037, tasting room open 10am-5pm daily

Why We Love it: With a name meaning “the clouds,” Las Nubes is perched up on the hillside with impressive sweeping views of the valley best enjoyed from the large outdoor patio. The beautiful stone winery was constructed from rocks mined from the property and takes advantage of natural breezes to help keep things cool. Winemaker Victor Segura is a knowledgeable and hospitable host who's created a welcoming environment for customers to enjoy his wines.

Wine to Try: They just released their new vintage of Selección de Barricas (a red blend) a month ago. The bold but easy-to-drink wine is available as a part of their classic tasting.

DBTC Insider Tip: Order their cheese plate here and you'll get the chance to try olive oil and cheeses made just down the road at Rancho Cortés, the valley's most well-known dairy ranch. Also, as a helpful guide, they provide a graph on the back of every bottle of red letting you know how long to store the wine for optimal drinking pleasure.

Lechuza

Information: www.vinoslechuza.com, tastings by appointment only

Why We Love it: This family-owned and operated winery is not only producing some of the best wines in the Valle de Guadalupe, but they're delivering them to customers with personal attention. When you make an appointment for a wine tasting here, you're meeting the owners, hearing about their wines, and seeing their process—all firsthand. Winemaker Ray Magnussen works along with his daughter Kristin and her husband Adam to make premium wines.

Wine to Try: All of their wines are incredible, and unlike many other wineries in the valley, you'll find all mono varietals here, with the one exception being their Amantes (lovers) blend, which was the wine served at Kristin and Adam's wedding.

DBTC Insider Tip: While they can likely accommodate you any day of the week, you must make an appointment ahead of time. This is a small family-run operation so expect quality wines (along with a delicious bread and cheese spread) and a personal experience when you visit.



Vinos Pijoan

Information: www.vinospijoan.com, tel: 011-52-646-127-1251, tasting room open: Mon.-Fri: 10am-4pm, Sat.-Sun: 11am-5pm

Why We Love it: This intimate and peaceful winery has friendly service and good wines. Relax and enjoy your tasting on the patio looking out over the vineyards. Wines from the classic line are named after winemaker Pau Pijoan's family members with the characteristics of the wine reflecting the personalities of the family member.

Wine to Try: For a unique experience, try wine from the "Coordenadas" line. Pau Pijoan and a few other winemakers in the valley took the same grapes and grew them in the Valle de Guadalupe as well as in Rousillon, France. They then made wines using the grapes—one wine made from all Mexican grapes, another from all French, and a third from a combination of the two.

DBTC Insider Tip: If they aren't too busy in the tasting room, ask for a behind-the-scenes tour of the production area and the unique wine cave.

Bodegas F. Rubio

Information: www.bodegasfrubio.com, tel: 011-52-646-156-8046, tasting room open: Wed: 12-4pm, Thur: 12-6pm, Fri.-Sun: 12-7pm

Why we love it: This small winery is making some really exceptional wines. The family-run operation includes a small restaurant headed up by Chef Alex Rubio who's making some delectable dishes like corvina tiradito and adobo ribs. There's a lovely new patio area with canopies for enjoying vineyard views.

Wine to Try: The Montepulciano is a red Italian grape variety, not often seen in this region. F. Rubio is the only winery in the valley making a single varietal of the Montepulciano, and it's definitely worth trying.

Insider Tip: This is one of the very few spots in the Valle de Guadalupe where you'll find air conditioning. When it's over 100 degrees in the valley, come here to sip wine and eat food in the luxuriously cool air. They also open later and stay open later so when most of the other wineries have closed at 5pm, you can always head here for one last tasting.



BAJA FISHING REPORT

with Gary Graham



Amalia Meza fishing in San Quintin

This season, the dorado have been small with very few over ten pound and even fewer over twenty. It seems that the warnings of the past regarding overfishing the dorado have become a reality. The is the second year of practically no mature dorado -- only juveniles.

During the month of July this year, several tournaments targeted dorado. The "Dorado Shootout" hosted by Palmas de Cortez was one of the largest ever, with 123 teams and 380 anglers participating. New records were set in "jackpot money" with over \$122,000 collected and just over \$103,000 paid out; yet only seven dorado came to the scales with the largest weighing only 12.6 pounds -- 3 ounces less than last year's winner. Team Borracho with anglers Don Southard, Bill Refice, Rhonda Butler and Steve Cole on the cruiser *Bite Me* won the Toyota Tacoma and the \$200 and \$300 Jackpots totaling \$34,000 with that

12.6-pound dorado.

Lack of sardina ... overfishing ... El Niño or just cyclical? Time will tell.

Fishing remains steady at Coronado Islands. Lots of yellows on high spots around North Island produced 12- to 25-pound fish on fly-lined sardines or yoyo iron. If you strike out, try Gun Sight and Genoa Kelp. Inside of South Island at Ribbon Kelp, South Kelp Ridge and down at the Rockpile there are even more yellows, bonito and a few barracuda.

Ensenada has similar action for calico bass and yellowtail on Rapalas or on yoyo iron and bait inside of Todos Santos.

San Quintin, same story. Also limits of rockfish and lings; great family fishing and nice weather! Julio Meza couldn't resist and had a fun day with his daughter and some of her friends.

Pesca La Baja has now completed three of the Championship events at San Felipe, Gonzaga Bay and BOLA with another at San Quintin on August 19 and 20, and the Finale to be held in Ensenada on September 23 and 24. For information www.pescalabaja.com Top Twenty Best Scores for the First Three Events are:

1. Richard Elizondo 85
2. Jose Lozano Perez 57
3. Horacio Ruiz Salas 54
4. Paul Chee Chavez 51
5. Alejandro Coria 44
6. June Silva 43
7. Hector J. Ramirez 41
8. Arturo Honold 36
9. Alex Coria 34
10. Miguel Meza 27
11. Manuel Monteverde 27
12. Jose Ruiz Gamez 25
13. Guillermo Pimentel 25
14. Earl Roberts 25
15. Jorge Orozco 25
16. Octavio Ascolani 23
17. Alejandro Zozaya 21
18. Ismael Gonzalez 21
19. Aaron Manuel Rochin 21
20. Ricardo Machado 20

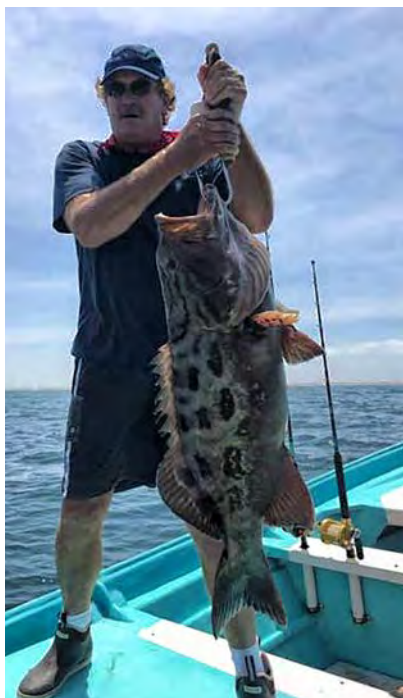
The season at Cedros Island continues to kick out memorable fishing for yellows and calicos with a few striped marlin and thresher shark showing up recently.

Down the west coast to Abreojos, the fishing has been sporadic. There was a sprinkling of yellowtail and even a striped marlin in the mix.

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LEFT: A yellow at the Coronado Islands. **CENTER:** The BOLA Pesca la Baja tournament. **RIGHT:** Fishing at Cedros Island.



LEFT: 160-pound yellowfin tuna caught in Cabo. CENTER: Grouper caught in Bahía Magdalena. RIGHT: 600-pound billfish caught on the East Cape.

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On the Sea of Cortez side, there was a rare report offshore from Isla San Ildefonso to just south of Isla Marcos, about a 50-mile stretch of prime water seldom mentioned which provides some insight into offshore conditions. The water temps climbed from 76 to 83 degrees traveling southward. Again dorado were scarce -- found only on one day out the five fished, though there were plenty of kelp paddies about 15 miles offshore. The marlin didn't seem to be interested in any of the bait offered.

Mid-month, at Loreto's Fishin' for the Mission, they had good grouper and roosterfish while dorado and yellowtail were fewer than hoped.

One family spent nearly a month camping and fishing out of Juncalito in their own trailer-boat moored in front of their rig on the beach.

Exploring Danzante, Carmen and near Puerto Escondido, they found bonito and triggerfish, but didn't connect with yellowtail or cabrilla. They commented that the water seemed cooler than prior summer trips, and they did spot a few

marlin but no dorado.

Wisely they fished two days on local pangas with experienced Captains Jose Torres or his son Manuel who operate Torres Sportfishing out of the area.

The first day was early in the trip; it was tough fishing with lots of action on junk fish and one good cabrilla on a yoyo iron.

The second time, a week later, they fished around Punta Perico (deep water) 450 to 470 feet deep -- having never fished that deep the Captain's local knowledge made the difference. By midday, they caught two fat yellowtail and a 40-pound grouper.

Sounds like Magdalena Bay is finally coming to life! Tom Gorman and Joe Vicic, fly fishermen from Hong Kong, came down to fly-fish Mag Bay. The first day inside they caught pargo, grouper, cabrilla and halibut.

Reports of wahoo on the Lower Banks compelled them to try *Aguila* out of Lopez Mateos for a 2.5-day trip outside and it paid off. Below La Paz at Las Arenas, after experiencing sketchy fishing for a few weeks, the billfish offshore

suddenly turned on with multiple hookups for many and everything from stripers to big blues and blacks over 300 pounds.

At East Cape, the buzz is also the billfish -- the 600-pound monster above right has fired up everyone with the Bisbee East Cape Offshore just around the corner in early August. Meanwhile inshore the big roosterfish have been taunting conventional and fly anglers alike.

The above photo above left is one of many of yellowfin tuna hitting the docks in Cabo. The impressive fish weighed 160-pounds, the largest of five caught. There was also a striped marlin released by David and Natalie Richardson from Nebraska. The same locals complaining about the lack of dorado are saying this many large tuna this early just isn't right. I remember when anglers would have been trying to figure out how to catch one -- not worrying about whether they were *too early or too late*.

Good Luck and Tight Lines...
Questions or comments are welcome.
garyg@garycgraham.com

RIDING BAJA: SUMMER MOTORCYCLING DESTINATIONS



Photo courtesy Rancho Meling

Temperatures in Central and Southern Baja soar to over 100 degrees in the summer so stick to the north until the mercury drops in October. Here are some cool—in both senses of the word—destinations.

GUADALUPE VALLEY

Baja's Valle de Guadalupe produces 90% of all of the wine that comes from Mexico and is growing famous worldwide. You'll find more than 100 boutique wineries, gourmet restaurants, and chic hotels, some of which have even been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and the *LA Times*.

If you're coming from San Diego, enjoy the ride along scenic Highway 94 from Lemon Grove

through Jamul and Barrett Junction to the Tecate border, then sweep down the newly paved Mex 3 with its smooth sweepers. There can be rocks in the road, and at night a cow or two might be lounging on the warm asphalt, so please don't go too fast.

Consider visiting [Rancho Cortes](#) to taste their famous cheeses and olive oil. Here are more of Discover Baja's reviews of [Valle de Guadalupe restaurants](#) and other attractions.

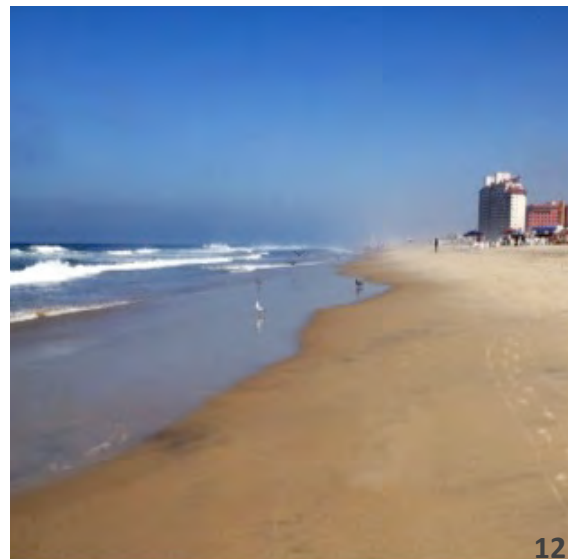
PLAYAS DE ROSARITO

Less than an hour south of downtown San Diego, you'll arrive at the quaint Mexican beachside town of Playas de Rosarito. This may or may not be the place where Lowell George found

Rosarita, but enjoy this classic as you read on.

With its beautiful beaches, delicious food, artisan shops and welcoming locals, Rosarito is perfect for a quick weekend escape or a weeklong getaway vacation. Cruise Benito Juárez and follow your nose to find the perfect taco stand. Treat yourself to sweets at the *dulcerías* with their galaxies of *piñatas* hanging above, and browse the streetside stalls to buy traditional Mexican arts and souvenirs. Restaurants are surprisingly diverse, ranging from traditional Mexican to Asian cuisine. Got an [inflatable surfboard](#)? Pack it on your pillion and catch the waves at K38!

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ENSENADA

Further down the peninsula the coastal city of Ensenada is only about two hours south of San Diego. It's the third-largest city in Baja and is an important commercial, fishing, and tourist port. The harbor welcomes multiple cruise ships a week and tourism is an important part of the local economy. The city is bustling! You'll find gourmet food, beautiful resorts, large beaches, surf spots, nightclubs and shops full of artisan crafts.

Don't miss the seafood market on the bay. Here's a video review by famed chef Rick Bayless for a mouth-watering look at the treats you can expect, including lots of history and instructions on how you can concoct the Baja fish taco at home. VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/qyZgKBdLro>

SIERRA DE SAN PEDRO MARTIR AND MELING RANCH

Head up to the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir National Park and plan a relaxing retreat at [Rancho Meling](#). (Rates are \$70 for two people to \$300 for a casa housing 11.)

About 100 miles southeast of Ensenada, you'll enjoy the cool weather and pine trees on these mountains that are covered in snow in the winter. You may want to ride all the way up to the observatory.

The ranch has been in the Meling family for over 100 years. There are 25 miles of trails for bicycling, horseback riding and hiking that wend through the rocks, mountains, and trees on this 10,000 acre ranch. If you're towing your dirt bikes, or riding them in from the border, owner Christian Meling assured me that you can take them on the trails, too.

During your stay you can lounge by the pool while the ranch hands work the cattle and tend to the horses, chickens, turkeys, pigs, sheep, and rabbits.

You might want to trade your bike for a horse on a ride through the high desert. Find out [more about Meling Ranch](#) and make sure to read Jen's new piece on the [San Pedro Martir National Park](#), in this issue!

ENTRY... AND RE-ENTRY

One last note. Entering Baja is easy from any border, but returning to the US the San Ysidro lines can be very long and slow. So try to take Otay Mesa or, preferably, Tecate. Tip: Don't idle in line with the cars. You'll get dehydrated, and if you've got an air-cooled bike, you know it'll overheat. So ride past the cars to the front. They have never failed to let me through.

Lane "sharing" is legal in California. In Mexico and many other countries it is a common

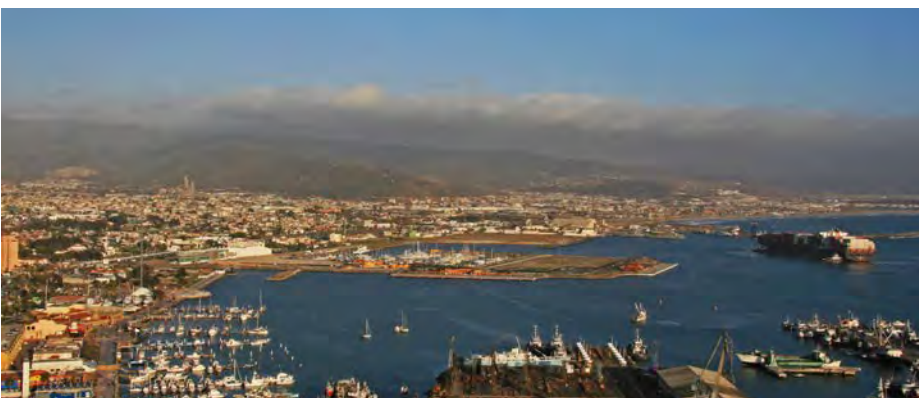
practice.

DON'T LEAVE WITHOUT THESE ESSENTIALS

Don't forget your passport, vehicle insurance, and tourist card. [Get details here](#). And just because it's hot doesn't mean you shouldn't gear up. Safety first! I wear Olympia mesh gear but there are a lot of other options for [mesh jackets, pants, and even gloves](#) to choose from.

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Carla King has been writing about motorcycle adventure travel since 1995. She spends most of her time in San Diego and Baja but has been known to wander as far as China and Africa. Wherever she is, you can find her at carlaking.com.



Sierra de San Pedro Mártir



By Jennifer Kramer

All photos by Chris Mejia of Baja Test Kitchen

Ask most people what they think of when asked to describe the landscape of the Baja peninsula and you'll likely get an answer ranging from cactus-filled deserts to the turquoise waters of the Sea of Cortez. It's only for a number of Baja travelers that pine trees and snow-capped mountains would make the list. If you're one of the uninitiated with this unique landscape of the peninsula, consider taking a trip to the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir.

For nature lovers and adventure seekers, the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir is a playground in the summer when temperatures are pleasantly cool, unlike other parts of the peninsula. Located in the northern state of Baja California, access to the national park is from a turn off of highway Mexico 1 in San Telmo (between Colonet and Camalú). The San Pedro Mártir is an attractive mountain region for hiking and camping, and is home to the highest peak in Baja, Pichaco del Diablo at over 10,000 feet.

With the high elevation, the landscape here consists of pines, cypress trees, and snow-capped mountains in the winter. The diverse fauna include mule deer, bighorn sheep, cougar, bobcat, and coyote. The region also provides travelers with the rare opportunity to observe California condors in the wild, because of a successful reintroduction program that released the endangered birds into the area in 2002.

With clean air and low levels of light pollution, the national park is home to the National Astronomical Observatory with the second-largest telescope in all of Mexico. Outside of the national park in the lower-lying areas of the mountains, there are a few ranches that have opened their doors to accommodate travelers looking for a serene place to stay in the area.



PARQUE NACIONAL

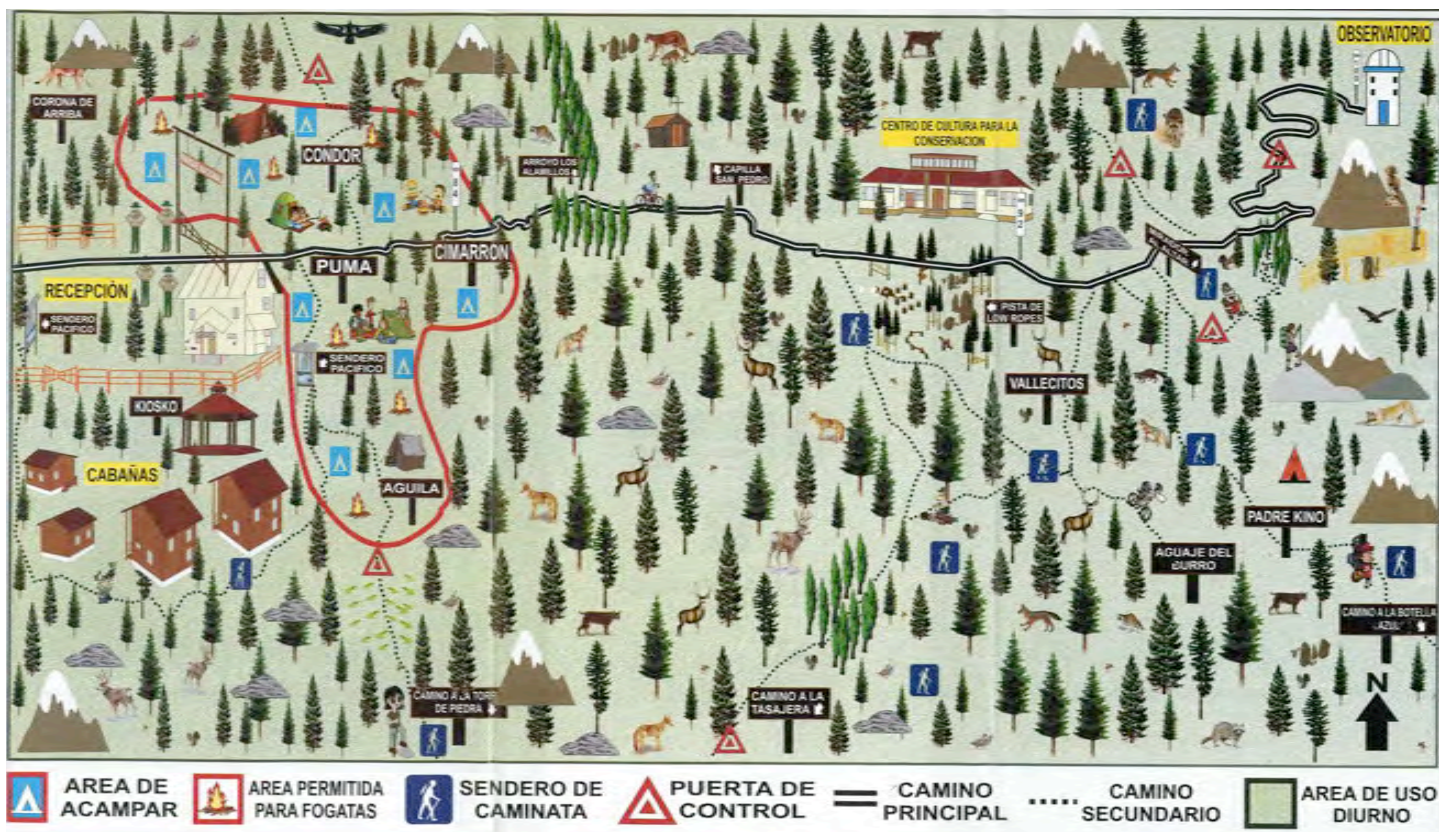
The 170,000-acre Parque Nacional Sierra de San Pedro Mártir (tel. 011-52-646-172-3000, sanpedromartir@baja.gob.mx) is home to the highest peak in Baja, Pichaco del Diablo, (Devil's Peak) at 10,154 feet. The park is full of pine and fir trees, snow-capped peaks, and 142 plant species, making this one of the most prestigious natural protected areas in all of Mexico.

The park entrance is at Km. 84 on the paved road from San Telmo. All people entering the park must stop at the park entrance to go into the ranger station (open 7am-8pm daily) to register and pay the park entrance fee to get a wristband. The entrance fee is 62 pesos per person per day. Camping fees are included in that price. There are a number of campsites throughout the park where overnight camping and campfires are permitted. There are fire pits and porter potties, but not much else in terms of services. There are also day sites where campfires are not allowed.

Continued on next page 14

At the park entrance near the ranger station are four cabins that are run by the national park. The two larger two-story cabins (\$1,700 pesos a night) sleep eight people, and the two smaller cabins (\$700 pesos a night) sleep four people. There are bunk beds (visitors need to bring their own sheets or sleeping bags), running water in the bathrooms, 24/7 electricity, and a stove (you'll need to bring your own propane), but no refrigeration. Grills and fire pits are available outside the cabins and they provide you with a portion of wood for your stay. You have to reserve the cabins in advance by calling the following number between 8am-3pm: 646-172-3000 ext 3229.

There's a Cultural Center in the park that's open Fri.-Sun. 10am-3pm. The small but nice museum features information about the history and science of the area, and information about the Kiliwa people, who were native to the region. Signs and information are in Spanish.

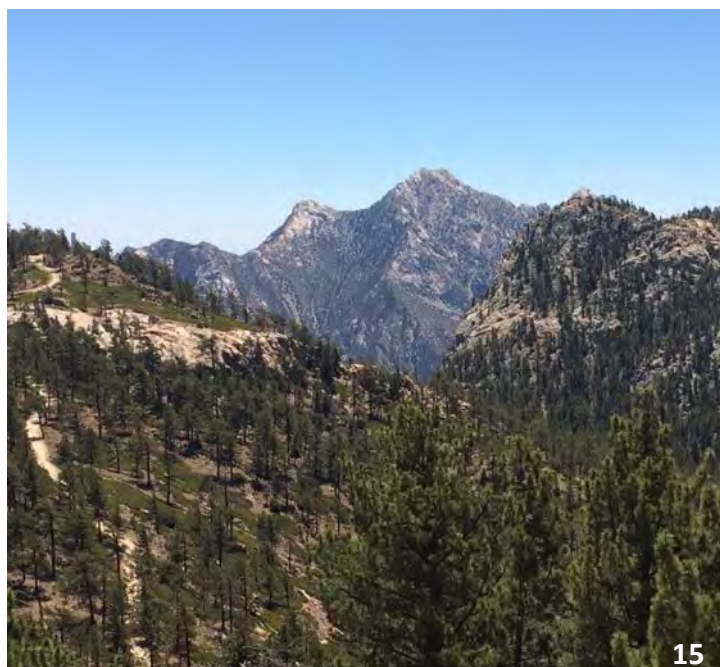


HIKING

There are a number of marked trails throughout the park that are well maintained. Several depart from the camping area and from park roads. Hiking off-trail is also permitted in the park, but make sure to have GPS and topography maps. There are a number of beautiful ridges and vistas to enjoy throughout the park. Take enough water and be aware of the high altitude. One popular route is the six-mile round-trip hike to El Altar. The trek features views of Picacho del Diablo, the desert of San Felipe, the Sea of Cortez, and even the coast of Sonora on a clear day.

Experienced backpackers may want to summit Picacho del Diablo. The mountain is normally approached from the eastern side on a multi-day trip. For an experienced guide, contact Sophia Bautista at 011-52-664-272-5312.

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THE OBSERVATIO ASTRONOMICO NACIONAL

Located inside the national park at Km. 100 at the end of the paved road is the Observatorio Astronómico Nacional (tel. 011-52-646-174-4580, www.astrossp.unam.mx, jefatura@astrosen.unam.mx, 10am-1pm and 2pm-3pm Mon.-Fri.). The observatory is home to the second-largest telescope in Latin America. With clean air and very little light pollution, the San Pedro Mártir provides ideal atmospheric conditions for astronomy and the observatory is regarded as one of the best places on earth to observe the planets and stars.

There are actually three high-powered, deep-space telescopes at the observatory. The first was introduced in 1974, the second in 1975, and the last (and largest, with a 2.12 meter optical) in 1979. The U.S., China, and Mexico are currently working together to add three more telescopes that will be controlled remotely digitally.

To take a free tour of the observatory and the largest telescope, you can inquire at the gate of the observatory during visiting hours. You'll need to use the intercom at the gate to let them know you'd like to visit the observatory. Because this is a working observatory, you may need to wait for a while before they will come down to let you through the gate and accompany you by car up to the observatory.

Once up at the observatory, they may or may not be able to allow you in to see the telescope, depending on what they are working on that day. Either way, don't miss the sweeping views you get from walking around behind the observatory. From here, you'll be able to see Picacho del Diablo, the Sea of Cortez to the east, and the Pacific to the west.

CALIFORNIA CONDORS

In August 2002, five condors were transferred to Sierra San Pedro Mártir as a program to reintroduce the species to the wild. The San Diego Zoo manages the recovery program, working with Mexico's National Commission for Natural Protected Areas and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As of 2015, there were 28 condors living in the San Pedro Mártir and 410 worldwide.

It's possible to see condors throughout the park, so keep an eye out. Just before the entrance to the National Park is a lookout where California condors congregate. You'll find some of the endangered birds perched on top of granite rocks and can watch as they soar over the valley. This is a unique chance to see the birds in their natural habitat. The condors living in the San Pedro Mártir have become used to humans and are therefore easy to observe and photograph.



DBTC INSIDER TIPS

-For those who want to stay right in or near the national park, tent camping or the cabins at the park entrance are the only option. For a stay in the foothills of the San Pedro Mártir, **Baja Dark Skies** and **Rancho Meling** (along with their sister property **Rancho El Coyote**) provide peace and tranquility, along with easy access to the national park.

-The road for the national park turns off from Mexico 1 at San Telmo and is one road that is paved all the way to the National Observatory at Km. 100. The National Park entrance is at Km. 84. Turn offs for Rancho Meling (Km. 50) and Baja Dark Skies (Km. 67) are along the way before reaching the park entrance. It takes about two hours to reach the observatory from Mexico 1.

-There is no where to get gas, water, food, or any other provisions once you make the turn off from Mexico 1. Fuel up and buy any provisions in San Telmo before heading to the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir. Rancho Meling is the only place in the area to get a meal, but arrangements must be made with them in advance.

-You should make a reservation in advance to stay at the cabins at the national park or at any of the surrounding ranches in this area. There's no cell service or wifi service in this area.

-Because of the elevation, this area stays refreshingly cool in the summer and can get very cold in the winters (average temperature below freezing) with a decent amount of snow. Even in summers, temperatures can dip below freezing at night, so be prepared if camping.



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