



January 2014 Newsletter

**Discover
BAJA
TRAVEL CLUB**

TOLL ROAD CLOSED FOR REPAIRS FROM LA MISIÓN TO ENSENADA

After an earthquake hit south of Ensenada, a portion of the toll road near Salsipuedes collapsed on Saturday, December 28, 2013. The toll road is currently closed in both directions from La Misión to Ensenada. Traffic is being rerouted to the free road from La Fonda to the San Miguel toll booth just north of Ensenada. Although driving the free road usually takes the same amount of time as the toll road, the two-lane road is windy and steep in some areas and traffic can build up behind semi trucks. Please have patience, take your time and don't drive in the dark. There is no word right now as to how long the toll road will be closed for repairs.

For more information and updates about road conditions in Baja, please check out our Baja Road Conditions page: discoverbaja.wordpress.com/road-conditions



PEMEX PRICES: NEED

Magna: \$3.57/gal
Premium: \$3.74/gal
Diesel: \$3.61/gal

PESO EXCHANGE RATE:

\$13 to \$1 U.S. dollar



¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

It's the time of year for making resolutions and this year we're determined to make Baja travel easier and better for you. Here are a few things that we're working on improving for you:

- *More discount locations. We're working on expanding the list of restaurants, hotels, campsites and activities that are DBTC recommended and where you'll be able to get a member discount.*
- *More access to information. We're building a new website and will be introducing a Baja forum. This means we're bringing you more directions, reviews, recommendations and ways to make traveling Baja easier. As always, the DBTC blog discoverbaja.wordpress.com and our social media accounts are kept up-to-date with the latest Baja updates. Or, if you're feeling old-fashioned, stop on by our office or give us a call and we're always happy to help.*

- *More member activities. We're bringing you more dinner clubs, parties, day trips, lecture series and more. Get excited!*

As always, we'll continue to bring you the best Mexican auto insurance, prepaid FMIMs, fishing permits and excellent customer service so that you can enjoy the best of Baja!

Happy 2014!

-Hugh, Carol, Maythé, Monica & Jen

From our members...

We love to hear your feedback on things you'd like to read about, great places you've been to and comments on what we can do to better serve you. Please email us at ask@discoverbaja.com

Thanks for the directions to the San Ysidro border crossing. Very helpful. Any chance you have directions for the Otay border?

Mark

DBTC Note: After posting the Directions to the San Ysidro border (www.discoverbaja.com/pdf/San-Ysidro-directions.pdf) in last month's newsletter, we were flooded with requests for more directions. We promise to have more directions to you soon. Please stay tuned for Ready Lane and Fast Pass directions for San Ysidro as well as directions to the Otay Border crossing.

I just received your wonderful newsletter. Thank you. I just wanted you to know that my husband and I have been

traveling to Tecate on occasion this year for the purpose of going to a restaurant that I definitely think worth sharing with your members. It is called El Lugar de Nos and is about a 1/2 hour walk from the border on the main road.

www.facebook.com/LugarDeNos

Fabulous food, and casual but elegant. It is such a gem of a spot in Tecate and definitely makes a day trip there very worthwhile.

Thanks so much, Janet Bath

DBTC Note: Thank you, Janet! We can't wait to try it! We love hearing recommendations on restaurants, hotels and activities that members have tried and love. Keep 'em coming!

Increased Sales Taxes for Baja Border Towns

As of January 1, 2014, sales taxes increased from 11% to 16% in Baja. While the rest of Mexico has had a 16% sales tax for a while, border areas were previously allowed a lower sales tax rate in order to stay competitive with rates in the U.S. Baja will now experience an increase of five percentage points in the IVA, or value-added tax to bring the tax rate up to be equal with the rest of Mexico. The changes will affect fuel prices, soft drinks, junk food, banking, automotive imports and real estate transactions.

Businesses are worried that they will lose customers who will shop in the U.S. where the sales tax is cheaper. Supporters of the rate increase claim that it will bring Mexico's tax collection structure closer to those of other mid-tier countries and help stop Mexico's reliance on oil revenues.

Headed my way? New DBTC Caravan page.

We've heard from many of you that you're looking for fellow Baja travelers to caravan down to Baja with. We've started a Caravan Page on the DBTC blog – www.discoverbaja.wordpress.com/baja-caravans that we'll keep up to date with the latest postings for people headed down the peninsula looking for caravan buddies. If you have a listing to post, please email us at ask@discoverbaja.com.



ON OUR RADAR FOR JANUARY

New Year's Resolutions

•It's that time of year to make your Baja resolutions. What do you want to do this year? Pet a gray whale? Spend a week surfing at Scorpion Bay? Catch a blue marlin? Dive the coral reef at Cabo Pulmo? Or maybe just spend some time in a hammock by the ocean with a margarita in hand. Time to start planning your next Baja adventure!



JAN 2-19 Our Body Exhibition

- Tijuana, CEART
- \$135 pesos for adults, \$65 pesos for minors
- ourbodytheuniversewithin.net
- A fascinating, artful and educational exhibit consisting of actual human bodies and organs that have been preserved.



JAN 6

Día de los Reyes

- Although Christmas is over in the U.S., in Mexico the holiday continues into January
- Día de Reyes marks the Biblical adoration of baby Jesus by the three kings, also known as the Epiphany
- In addition to giving and receiving gifts, everyone eats a pastry called *rosca*. A baby Jesus figurine is hidden inside the rosca and the person who receives the figurine in their piece is considered blessed (and has to host a tamale party for friends and family on Feb2.)



JAN 16-18 and 22-25 Todos Santos Music Festival

- todossantosmusicfestival.com
- The Hotel California, Todos Santos
- Created by Peter Buck of REM, this music festival takes place over two weekends
- Proceeds benefit the Palapa Society which runs programs that benefit local children and their families



Be advised that as of January 1, 2014, the price of FMM tourist permits has increased by 11 pesos. Discover Baja will now be selling the prepaid FMMs for \$35.

As a reminder, Mexican law requires you to have a FMM if you are traveling south of the "border zone" (generally 20-30 kilometers south of the border) and/or will be in Baja for more than 72 hours. There are often checkpoints around Las Cañadas just south of Ensenada where Mexican officials are checking to make sure that tourists have a valid FMM. Don't get caught without one. FMMs are valid for 180 days, but they are not good for multiple entry. You need to get a new FMM each time you head south of Ensenada. Discover Baja is the only source in the U.S. for prepaid FMMs.

For more information on FMMs: www.discoverbaja.com/fmt.html

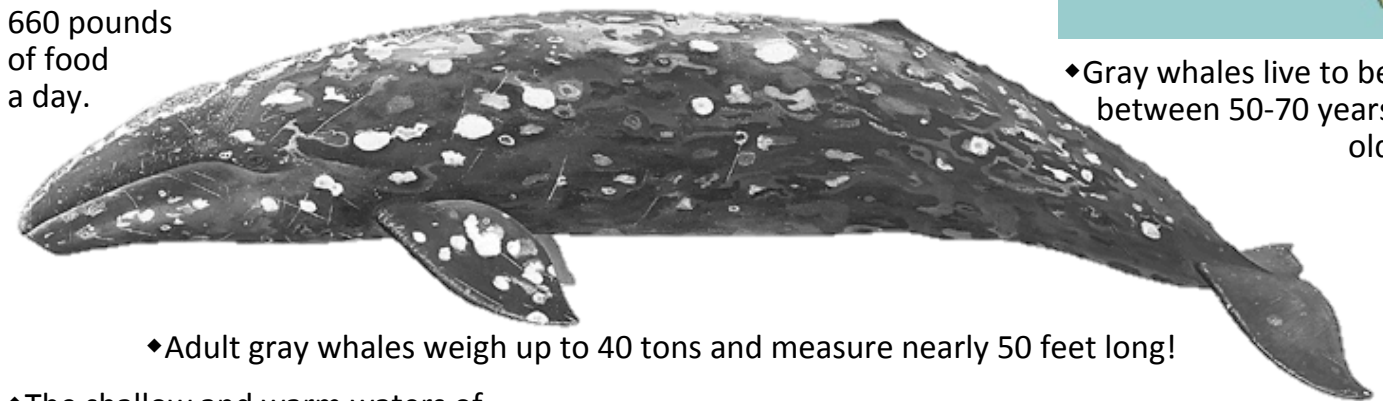
The Friendly Gray Whales of Baja California

January to April is gray whale season in Baja which means you can pet, hug and kiss gray whales in their natural habitat. Baja is the only place to experience this incredible phenomena. Get ready to get up close and personal with nature's gentle giants.



♦The gray whales begin their two to three month migration in October every year and travel from the cold Alaskan seas to the warm waters of Baja. At nearly 14,000 miles round-trip, the gray whale migration is the longest annual migration of any mammal.

♦Instead of teeth, gray whales have plates of baleen they use to filter food. They search for food such as tiny shrimp on the bottom of the ocean. An adult eats 660 pounds of food a day.



♦The best spots for gray whale watching in Baja are Scammon's Lagoon, San Ignacio Lagoon, and Magdalena Bay.



♦Gray whales live to be between 50-70 years old

♦Adult gray whales weigh up to 40 tons and measure nearly 50 feet long!

♦The shallow and warm waters of Baja provide the ideal spot for birthing and nursing calves. Mother whales will push their babies right up to the boats for people to pet.

♦Visitors go out in groups of 6-8 in pangas (small fishing boats). Whale watching is highly regulated to protect the whales.

♦The first "friendly" encounters with gray whales were reported in the 1970s.

WHALE BEHAVIOR:



Spouting



Spy-hopping



Breaching

Encounter the friendly gray whales and explore the Baja peninsula with the one and only Graham Mackintosh!

New trip added by popular demand!

March 12th – 17th 2014

6 days, 5 nights,

\$1,150 all inclusive

(extra \$150 for single occupancy)



Discover Baja invites you to join famous author Graham Mackintosh and Baja Custom Tours on a special Baja trip to see whales, the Sea of Cortez, a Spanish Mission, and the mountains of Sierra de San Pedro Martir. Share close encounters with the gray whales in Scammon's Lagoon, visit locations in Graham's Baja books while hearing stories from the author, and enjoy a great time experiencing Baja with friends in this all-inclusive tour.

Itinerary:

Wednesday, March 12 - Departure from San Diego at 5am, lunch at cave paintings near Cataviña, arrive in Guerrero Negro 4pm-5pm, check in motel, dinner

Thursday, March 13 – 7am breakfast, drive to Ojo de Liebre lagoon for two-hour panga ride – inner lagoon, lunch at Ejido facility, return to Guerrero Negro, break, tour of lighthouse and marshlands, visit Berrendo (prong horn) sanctuary, dinner

Friday, March 14 – 7am breakfast, bus tour to outer lagoon with Mario's through salt plant, 3 hour panga ride with sack lunch, check out of rooms and drive to Bahia de Los Angeles via Mision San Borja, 5pm-6pm, check in motel, Seafood dinner

Saturday, March 15- 8am breakfast, boat tour of bay and islands, lunch on an island, Bahia Natural History Museum lecture, dinner at Casa Essary

Sunday, March 16 – Depart Bahia de Los Angeles at 7am after breakfast, stop in Santa Ynez for lunch, drive to Meling Ranch, tour to top of mountains, family style dinner

Monday, March 17– Depart Meling Ranch at 8am after breakfast, wine tasting in Santo Tomas, torta lunch in El Sauzal, cross border.

Call us at 800-727-2252 or email us at ask@discoverbaja.com for more information or to find out about booking!



About Graham Mackintosh: Graham is the author of four books on Baja including "Into a Desert Place" which recounts his two-year, 3,000-mile trip walking around the coastline of the entire Baja peninsula. His other books include "Journey with a Baja Burro," "Nearer My Dog to Thee" and "Marooned with Very Little Beer" in which he explores more of Baja, Isla Angel de la Guarda and the Sierra San Pedro Mártir. Graham's sense of adventure and humor will delight you in both his writing and in person.



About Baja Custom Tours: Baja Custom Tours offers incredible small group tours to some of the most unique and still unspoiled places on the planet. Tour guide and owner, Mike Essary, is a life-long explorer of Baja California. Share Baja's diverse and unusual wildlife and flora while experiencing authentic Mexican culture: food, music, camaraderie, amidst all the special surroundings. Your tour will become an exciting venture with a group of adventurous friends!

THE SPANISH MISSIONS ON THE CALIFORNIA PENINSULA:

#7, *Nuestra Señora del Pilar de La Paz*

By David Kier

The seventh California mission was founded by two Jesuit padres: Jaime Bravo and Juan de Ugarte. The site was near the shore of La Paz Bay and locally known as Airapí. The journey to La Paz began at Loreto on the Jesuit ship 'El Triunfo de la Cruz' built in Mulegé from lumber cut in the mountains to the west. Padres Bravo and Ugarte were joined by Padre Clemente Guillén from the mission at Malibat (Ligüi), who came by land with soldiers and neophytes.

La Paz was unique as no one Indian group lived there; instead it was visited by several peninsula tribes of Guaycuras, and Pericús who came from the islands off shore. These various groups often were at war with each other. Padre Jaime Bravo would remain at La Paz until 1728, but always with 4-12 soldiers for protection. Padre Guillermo Gordon replaced Bravo for the next five years.

Visitas are visiting stations or satellites of the head mission. Most missions had several *visitas*. One such *visita* of Mission Pilar de la Paz was named Angel de la Guarda. It was established in 1721 by Padre Bravo about 20 miles south, on a mountain top oasis. At the western foot of the same mountain is a church ruin called El Novillo, it was sometimes shown on maps as a mission. In 1725, Padre Bravo established another *visita* of La Paz about 50 miles to the south and close to the Pacific coast. Bravo never recorded an Indian name for the location, but he called it Todos Santos. This *visita* was so productive that it became a separate mission in 1733 with the name Santa Rosa de las Palmas.

In October of 1734, after months of unrest, the various tribes in the cape



Todos Santos mission in 1919. Photo by J.R. Slevin

region rebelled and murdered Padre Nicolás Tamaral at San José del Cabo. Mission Santiago's Padre Lorenzo Carranco was also killed, along with his two servants. At La Paz, a soldier who was guarding the vacant mission was killed. Padre Sigismundo Taraval of the Santa Rosa mission was saved by his soldiers who dragged him away just before the natives began to attack.

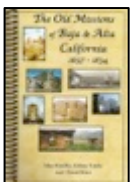
Following the rebellion were two more years of vacancy at La Paz. The Jesuit padres from both the Santa Rosa and San Luis Gonzaga missions would visit La Paz between 1737 and 1748. In 1748, the mission was moved to Todos Santos, replacing the younger Santa Rosa mission already there. Officially the mission name remained *Nuestra Señora del Pilar de la Paz*, but it was nearly always called Todos Santos after the move.

When the Franciscans replaced the Jesuits in 1768, the population of neophytes was reported to be about 90. An adobe church measuring 67 feet by 25 feet was built in 1786 by the Dominicans. The native

population had doubled to 181 in 1800. The mission remained at the same location until 1825 when it was moved a mile south, where the church is today, in the town plaza.

The original Todos Santos mission site has since become a car repair business (using some of the mission walls), along with a church built in 1970. The 1825 mission site is the downtown church, where newer construction was added to older walls and foundations. Mission functions ceased about 1840, but church services continued on for the newer population arriving from the mainland of Mexico.

No remains of the original Pilar de la Paz mission at La Paz Bay are known to exist, however a plaque on a La Paz city side street marks a possible location. The modern church in La Paz is sometimes called the mission site, but it is 3 blocks to the north and one block east from the plaque. Some local historians believe the mission was even a little further south where old sketches showed palms growing.



David Kier is co-author of 'The Old Missions of Baja & Alta California, 1697-1834'. The book is available for purchase at the DBTC offices (call 800-727-2252). You can follow along with the series to learn about the history of all of the Baja California missions on the DBTC blog and in future newsletters.

DBTC STAFF PENINSULA PICKS: BAJA HOLIDAYS

The official holiday season has ended but that doesn't mean the fun is over. Here at Discover Baja we look for excuses to celebrate all year long. Below are some of our favorite times throughout the year we look forward to spending in Baja.



One of my favorite times in Baja is Carnaval in La Paz. In 2014 it will take place Feb 27 through March 4th and I plan on being there. This family-oriented event includes, bands, booths of festive foods, rides, parades and so much more all along the beautiful malecón in La Paz. -Carol

This year I'm looking forward to whale watching season. I'll be taking my girls down for a family trip to get up-close and personal with the friendly gray whales at San Ignacio. -Monica

On Día de los Reyes on Jan. 6th, everyone gets together to eat Rosca, a traditional pastry. There's a hidden baby Jesus figurine baked into the rosca and whoever gets it in their piece has to cook tamales for everyone on Dia de la Candelaria on Feb. 2nd. -Maythé



I can't wait for the Baja Beer Fests of 2014. The craft beer community is growing in Baja almost as fast as it is in San Diego and they hold Beer Fests in various cities in northern Baja every few months to celebrate and, of course, drink. -Jen



For a late summer celebration and opportunity to sample wines and specialty foods of Baja, nothing compares to the Fiesta de la Vendimia (wine harvest festival). These fun-but-packed events are centered in the Guadalupe Valley (Baja's Napa Valley), just northeast of Ensenada. The 2014 Vendimia will be held August 2 through August 18 and many events require reservations. Make them early as the legendary Paella Competition is already sold out. (And don't forget early accommodation reservations, too.) Check out the detailed Vendimia website at: www.observaturbc.org/content/fiesta-de-la-vendimia-ensenada-2014 Nos vemos a la Vendimia. ¡Salud! -Hugh

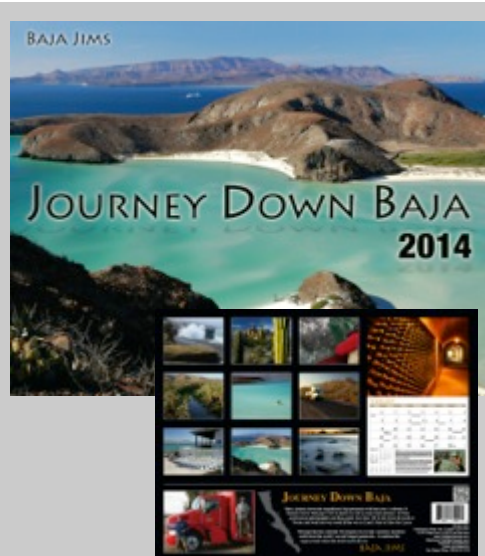


New Fee-Based Border Crossing Coming to Otay

Construction has started on State Route 11, a 2.5-mile highway that is the first step toward the opening of a future Otay Mesa East Port of Entry that will be limited to toll-paying users. The future border crossing will be the first vehicular California-Mexico border crossing open only to those who pay a fee. The border crossing, which could be open as soon as 2017, will charge users to cross in both directions and the fee will vary depending on the time of day.

TIJUANA/22000

The new book by En Ville 37, Tijuana 22000, gives an up-close and personal look at one of the most infamous border towns. The book features 37 pieces on Tijuana's residents, oddities, public places and local artists, accompanied by artistic photography and statistics presented in a unique design. Together they invite us to follow a winding road that, step by step, encapsulates the neighborhood. The book aims to explore the city in a new way, combining poetic prose, encounters with local residents, artistic photography and numbers. **\$25.00 plus tax**



JOURNEY DOWN BAJA 2014 CALENDAR!

The Baja Calendar is back and it is a treasure! The Baja Jims, Jim Hendricks and Jim Cline, have teamed up again to bring you a gorgeous, visual journey down the peninsula. Featuring twelve full page photographs and more inset photos, the calendar begins in Tecate and takes you all the way down the Baja peninsula to Land's End in Cabo. When you can't be traveling in Baja, this calendar will remind you of what you're missing. Perfect for your home or office and an absolute winner as a gift. **Softcover, 14" X 11", \$16.95**

Call 800-727-2252 to order yours today!

CASITA IN TRIPUI - Beautiful, completely-furnished, turn-key house available in Tripui, south of Loreto. Space A-19, with parking and patio in front and cactus garden in the back. Living area has two-ton air conditioner and four ceiling fans. Includes TV-VCR, Telmex telephone, landline with internet connection.

Bedroom has walk-in closet, and full bathroom with tub. Lots of storage, drawers, bookcase, leather sofa with end tables. Kitchen area has two refrigerators, chest freezer and gas stove top. Dining area has tile table with six chairs. Mexican dishes and pots and pans included. Detached brick bodega with hot water heater, washer and dryer, sink, toilet and plenty of storage space. Just \$69,000 USD. Local phone 133-0504, or US phone 619 467-5958.



This is a monthly online publication of **DISCOVER BAJA Travel Club**. 3264 Governor Drive San Diego, CA 92122
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