

January 2016 Newsletter



BAJA NEWS

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

Pemex Gas Prices Drop in Baja

Pemex gas prices dropped 3% on January 1, 2016, in the next step toward deregulating Mexico's gasoline market. Monthly fluctuations in the price of gas are now to be expected (unlike previous rates which remained fairly fixed). Smartphone users can download the **Guia Pemex** app for station locations and current pricing.



FMM Tourist Permit Prices Increased for 2016

On January 1, 2016, FMM tourist permit prices increased to \$390 pesos. Discover Baja members can get prepaid FMMs saving time and hassle at the border for \$37 US. For more information, please see www.discoverbaja.com/go/fmm-tourist-permits/



From the DBTC Office

During 2016, Discover Baja celebrates its silver anniversary—25 years of being in business. Thanks to all of you, our wonderful members, we are thriving. This year we will strive to bring you new services, exciting trips, presentations, and Baja information. Stay tuned for an anniversary fiesta later in the year. Meanwhile, stay warm and safe.

We wish you all a very happy new year full of new discoveries and exciting adventures.

*Let's Baja!
 Hugh, Carol, Jen, Maythé & Monica*

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

PESO EXCHANGE RATE: \$17.4 to \$1 U.S. dollar

PEMEX PRICES: Northern Baja: Magna: \$2.65/gal, Premium: \$2.89/gal, Diesel: \$3.06/gal

Southern Baja: Magna: \$2.93/gal, Premium: \$3.11/gal, Diesel: \$3.06/gal

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

PREPAID FMMs: \$37 DBTC members only. Please allow two weeks for processing.
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 JANUARY

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

JANUARY 6-10 La Ventana Classic



Kiteboard and windsurf races, stand up paddleboarding races, and parties in between fill the event schedule for the La Ventana Classic.

www.laventanaclassic.com/

JANUARY 13-17 Lord of the Wind 2016



This annual kiteboarding event takes place in Los Barriles featuring professionals from all over the world.

www.lordofthewindbaja.com

JANUARY 14-23 Todos Santos Music Festival



Peter Buck from REM has put together another exciting line-up for the Todos Santos music festival this year, hosted at the Hotel California.

todossantosmusicfestival.com

A huge thank you to those of you who donated needed items, money, and gifts for the children at Pequeños Hermanos orphanage in Ensenada. We delivered gifts and supplies the week of Christmas and these kids stole our hearts. Those of you who donated helped to make a big difference in making the holidays bright for these children. ¡Gracias!



Connecting San Diego and Tijuana's Rodriguez Airport: The Cross Border Xpress Skywalk Bridge

The Cross Border Xpress (CBX) airport skywalk bridge, connecting San Diego directly to Tijuana's Rodriguez airport, opened at the beginning of December 2015. Ticketed passengers can now walk from San Diego across a bridge to get directly to the Tijuana airport. This makes it easier to fly directly to destinations such as La Paz, Loreto, Los Cabos, and other cities in mainland Mexico.

GETTING THERE

You can drive or take a bus or shuttle to get to the CBX on the San Diego side. The CBX website (www.crossborderxpress.com) has more information on specific shuttle and bus services that are available. Short-term and long-term parking are available. Long-term parking is \$10 US a day in a fully fenced lot with security lights and 24/7 patrolling.

CBX is located at 2745 Otay Pacific Drive. To get to CBX from the 805 or 5, take the 905 East. Exit at Britannia Blvd (Exit 6). Turn right onto Britannia Blvd. Turn left onto Siempre Viva Rd. Turn right on Otay Pacific Drive to arrive at the CBX facilities.

TICKETS AND REQUIRED PAPERWORK

Tickets are available for purchase in advance on the CBX website (www.crossborderxpress.com) or can be purchased on site. Tickets are \$12 one-way (\$24 roundtrip). You can pay with cash or credit card on site.

You'll need your passport, a printed boarding pass, and your CBX ticket in order to use the skywalk bridge. Airline boarding passes must be valid for flights departing Tijuana within 24 hours or having arrived within four hours of your border crossing time. You can print your boarding pass at the kiosks inside the CBX terminal on the San Diego side for departing flights. For arriving flights, there are printing kiosks in the Tijuana terminal near the CBX bridge.



SOUTHBOUND CROSSING

When you arrive at CBX you can go up to the counter where you can purchase a ticket for the bridge. You will need to show your passport and boarding pass. There are also kiosks that can be used for CBX ticket purchase or for printing your boarding pass if needed. You will walk about a half kilometer across the skywalk bridge to cross into Mexico. There's a fair amount of walking with no moving sidewalks or luggage carts, so bring suitcases with wheels and be prepared to trek with your luggage.

After you cross the skywalk bridge, still within the CBX area, they will have a station where you can handle getting your FMM (\$390 pesos as of January 1, 2016). Just past this, the CBX area will let you out into the Tijuana airport. When you get to the airport, walk past all of the vendors and then to the left. You do not need to wait in the

immigration lines. From here you will find your airline to check in for your flight and then through airport security to get to your gate.

Most of the CBX employees speak English so ask if you are not sure where to go or what to do. CBX recommends that you arrive at least three hours before your flight (four hours for flights to destinations outside of Mexico).

NORTHBOUND CROSSING

Passengers arriving in the Tijuana airport and heading north across the border to the US can find the CBX skywalk in the baggage claim area of the airport terminal. Shuttles and shared-car services are located on the San Diego side of the CBX terminal for transportation. Car rental locations at CBX are coming soon.

For more information, see www.crossborderxpress.com

BAJA FISHING REPORT

with Gary Graham



Striped marlin in Los Cabos

As this fledgling New Year begins in Baja, "Have a cool one!" has nothing to do with drinking.

A check with a couple of locals at Baja's tip confirmed temperatures are in the low 50s and "Mexico News Daily" reports "The snow has been flying in the sierra of Sonora and Baja California, delivering a white Christmas to areas of both."

All of which hasn't seemed to cool off the fishing at Baja's tip

according to Tracy Ehrenberg in Los Cabos who is reporting steady catches of both striped marlin and dorado with an occasional wahoo.

Even more exciting is the continued dorado bite from shore. Mark Feaster and his wife hooked 12 fish in two days using 13' Century 144L rods with Daiwa Saltist 6500 reels and 40-pound PowerPro and using 3-ounce Cabo Killers in Blue/White. They were fishing at Sunset Beach by the Old Lighthouse on the Pacific

side near Cabo San Lucas. Beaching only four, the largest one is featured in the photo below.

Spoiler alert! Beaches in the area are very steep and when the surf is up they can be dangerous. BE CAREFUL!

Typical for this time of year, the North Wind influences the fishing in the Sea of Cortez -- at Puerto Los Cabos and at San Jose. The Gordo Banks offshore are still holding black marlin and larger grade of yellowfin tuna. Some locals have been packing 20+ pounds of squid slabs and heading out for this late afternoon action. Tuna to 140 pounds were landed; many other even larger yellowfin were lost -- sea lions were a pesky problem on these grounds as well. This action should last into January. Same for wahoo -- not many being landed, but they are in the area.

Farther up at East Cape most of the hotels and charter operations have either pulled their boats or moved them down to Puerto Los Cabos. Leaving the waters to the many wind-surfers who have arrived to frolic and compete in the strong breezes.

Most of the fishing there is limited to inshore early morning for sierra and maybe a dorado or two before the winds arrives.



LEFT: Fishing on the East Cape. TOP RIGHT: Dorado caught in Cabo San Lucas. BOTTOM RIGHT: Fishing in the Sea of Cortez is being influenced by the North Wind.

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Los Arenas and La Paz are also picking their fishing days around the North Wind with inshore stuff being the best deal. Working the rocks and shallow areas, there's some decent cabrilla with barred pargo around. As well, there's some sierra and bonito. There had been yellowtail biting at the drop off at Las Arenas but with the wind, it is difficult to reach those areas. Offshore, there's a few dorado breezing through and still a wahoo or two.

For Loreto it's yellowtail with the incidental catch of various snappers and bass that are the target. Seems like larger yellowtail in the 15- to 25-pound range may be moving in as reflected by the increasing number of break-offs on the rocky strewn bottom.

In spite of the wind, Mulege is producing a few early or late yellowtail on the smallish side according to Mike Reichner

Wind kept Craig Cove, Temecula, CA on the beach at Punta Chivato on his recent trip. Not to be denied he managed to catch halibut, snapper and cabrilla on artificials. Farther up into the Sea of Cortez, all the way to San Felipe, the action was similar as the wind ebbed and flowed.

Back on the Pacific side at Lopez Mateos, Bob Hoyt is calling this the best "wahoo year" since he's lived there.

Moving up the coast, David J. Lee, Fair Oaks California found good leopard grouper action at Estero Coyote.

La Bocana is still reporting good fishing in the Estero (release only) while offshore grouper fishing improved. The exotics -- wahoo and dorado -- have begun to dwindle as the sea temps plummet along the Vizcaino Coast all the way to Ascension Bay.

Recent storm fronts moving down the coast from the border to Cedros Island have hampered boats from going out every day.

However, in-between the storms yellowtail, bonito and log barracuda, along with rockfish and ling cod, fill anglers' limits at San Quintin and Ensenada. Up at the Coronado Islands few boats have bothered to check them out with the continued yellowfin tuna action offshore.

January appears to show promise for anglers who are willing to adapt and target the species available when the weather allows.

Good Luck and Tight Lines...

Questions or comments are welcome.
garyg@garycgraham.com



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Yellowtail caught in Loreto; Craig Cove in Punta Chivato; David J. Lee with leopard grouper at Estero Coyote; Wahoo at Lopez Mateos; fishing along San Quintin and Ensenada



Gray Whale Watching in Baja

One of the most incredible natural wonders on the Baja peninsula is visiting with the gray whales that come to the warm lagoons of Baja California Sur to breed and give birth every winter. Every October, the gray whales of the Pacific begin a two-to-three-month migration from the cold Alaskan seas to the warm waters of Baja California. At nearly 14,000 miles round-trip, it is the longest annual migration of any mammal. The gray whales travel to the warm lagoons of Baja California to mate and give birth to their calves.

From January to April, tourists travel from all over the world to visit Baja and see the gray whales. There are three locations in Baja that the gray whales migrate to each year – Ojo de Liebre (formerly Scammon's Lagoon) in Guerrero Negro, Laguna San Ignacio, and Bahía Magdalena. The shallow and protected waters of these bays provide an ideal spot for birthing and nursing calves.

Weighing up to 40 tons and measuring nearly 50 feet long, the gray whales are gentle giants of the ocean. Seeing them in Baja is not your typical whale watching experience. In addition to putting on a show for humans by spy hopping, breaching and spouting, the gray whales of Baja actually seek out human contact and will come right up to the whale watching boats.

Whale watching in this region is highly regulated and controlled. Whale watchers are taken out in small groups of 6-8 people on pangas (small fishing boats) and are able to get up-close and personal with the whales. The whales are so friendly that they will come right up and surface alongside the small boats in the lagoon so that people can pet and touch them. Often mother whales will push their young calves right up to the boats so that people can pet, hug and kiss the baby whales. It's a uniquely thrilling and unforgettable experience.

Here, we bring you a thorough guide to whale watching in Baja. Where to go, who to go with, how to do it. If you're looking for a unique whale watching trip, check out the Baja Custom Tours trips (all-inclusive from San Diego) on pages 10 and 11.

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Laguna San Ignacio

Of the three locations in Baja California where the gray whales make an appearance each year, Laguna San Ignacio is often regarded as being the best location where the whales are friendlier and encounters are more likely. It's never guaranteed that travelers will get to pet a gray whale, but the odds are pretty good at Laguna San Ignacio.



There's not much of anything out at the lagoon other than a number of *pangueros* and some basic eco whale camps. Some of the tour companies will arrange to take you out to the lagoon and some will have you drive directly to the lagoon yourself. Reservations for whale watching must be made in advance.

The lagoon is 53 kilometers out of town. Nearly the entire road is now paved (the last 10 kilometers or so are still unpaved), but ask about conditions in town before taking the road. There are signs that are easy to follow to the lagoon from the center of town.

Whale Camps

The **Kuyima** (on the plaza across from the mission, tel. 615/154-0070, www.kuyima.com) office in San Ignacio can arrange for you to see the whales for a day or overnight trip. Accommodations at the lagoon consist of primitive eco camps. You should make arrangements in advance (especially if you want to stay overnight).

Pachico's Eco Tours (pachicosecotours@hotmail.com, www.pachicosecotours.com) has rates starting at \$230 per night. They recommend staying at the lagoon for at least 3-4 days in order to have the best chance for encounters with the whales. They have cabañas for rent and can also provide a camping area for you to bring your own tent or camper if you make arrangements in advance.

With sixteen solar-powered cabins, another eco lodge option is **Baja Eco Tours** (tel. US toll free 877/506-0557, www.bajaecotours.com). They also offer all-inclusive tours (starting at \$1,550) with flight or bus transportation from San Diego included. They can accommodate travelers arriving at the lagoon on their own during non-peak dates.

Both **Baja Expeditions** (www.bajaex.com) and **Baja Discovery** (www.bajadiscovery.com) offer all-inclusive tours to Laguna San Ignacio that originate in San Diego and include transportation, eco-lodging at the lagoon, meals and drinks, activities, and whale watching.

Laguna Ojo de Liebre (Guerrero Negro)



Charles Melville Scammon first encountered Laguna Ojo de Liebre (formerly known as Scammon's lagoon) in 1857 and hunted the gray whales for oil. Over the next 18 years, whalers nearly extinguished the gray whale population in the region, but luckily the whales were able to rebound and today visiting with these friendly creatures is one of the most unique attractions on the peninsula. The gray whales come to breed and give birth every winter and have been known to engage in extremely friendly behavior with humans – coming up to boats where people can pet and kiss the whales. Because waters are calmer in the mornings, whale watching is generally a morning activity.

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Tour Operators

There are two ways to go whale watching at Ojo de Liebre. The first option is to go through a tour operator. **Malarrimo Eco-Tours** (Blvd. Emiliano Zapata, tel. 615/157-0100, www.malarrimo.com, US\$38 per adult, US \$30 for children) offers four-hour tours (three hours on the water with the whales) with a bilingual guide. Reservations must be made at least one day in advance. A boxed lunch is included. The whale watching tours through **Mario's Tours** (Km 217.3 Mexico 1, tel. 615/157-1940, www.mariostours.com, mariostours@hotmail.com) begin in their giant palapa where they explain about the whales and their behaviors. Boats go into a northern lagoon where most other boats do not have access. They spend three hours on the water and provide a boxed lunch. Reservations must be made in advance by calling or emailing.

For all-inclusive gray whales trips starting in San Diego, **Baja Custom Tours** (www.bajacustomtours.com) offers clients a unique experience whale watching and also includes other interesting Baja attractions on the trip down and up the peninsula. See pages 10 and 11 for information on 2016 trips.

Day Trips

The second option for whale watching in Laguna Ojo de Liebre is to go directly to the lagoon and go out with a local *panguero*. The southern part of the lagoon is controlled by the **Ejido Benito Juarez** (tel. 615/157-0025, benitojuarez08@hotmail.com, US\$45) and they run *pangas* out to see the whales. Boats leave about every half hour from 9a.m.-3p.m. and spend an hour and a half on the water whale watching. From Guerrero Negro, head south on Mexico 1 to kilometer 207.5 and turn west onto the dirt road, following signs for Ojo de Liebre to out to the lagoon. You'll pass a guard who will take your information, and then you will eventually get to a large dirt parking lot and a beige adobe building. Around the back of the building, you will find the kiosk and dock for whale watching. There's a new long jetty so that whale watchers don't have to wade out in the water to the *pangas* during low tide anymore. The ejido has also improved nearby camping palapas and rents them for US\$10 a night.

Bahía Magdalena

The third and southern-most point for friendly gray whale encounters on the peninsula is Bahía Magdalena. There are a string of barrier islands here that protect a series of shallow bays and provide a safe area for whale breeding. There are two port cities here on the bay that whale watching tours depart from, Puerto San Carlos and Puerto López Mateos.



Whale Camps

For over 18 years, family business **Mag Bay Tours** (tel. US 202/642-6386, www.magbaytours.com) has been leading whale watching experiences. You can select from a day tour (\$450 US for a boat for five hours of whale watching) or multi-day excursions that start at \$495 per person for three-day, two-night experience with whale watching, camp accommodations and meals included.

Magdalena Bay Whales (tel. US toll-free 855/594-2537, www.magdalenabaywhales.com) is a whale camp where visitors can stay on the property and go out for whale excursions and enjoy other activities during the day. The property has a campsite with tents on platforms, a restaurant and main palapa. Prices start at \$495 per person for a two-day, one-night whale experience. Meals, accommodations, whale watching and other activities are included.

Day Trips

If you want to go whale watching for the day without an organized tour group, head to the port at López Mateos. Here you'll find a number of businesses that are authorized to take tourists out whale watching. Expect to pay about \$65 per person for a few hours of whale watching. If you're looking for fewer crowds, avoid weekends and plan to go whale watching during the week.

**NEW
DATES!**



Baja California Missions Trip

Come explore Baja's missions, architecture, historical sites, rock art, nature and more!

April 19-28, 2016



Join famous Baja author and Baja Missions expert, David Kier, on this Discover Baja and Baja Custom Tours special trip to see many of the famous Baja Spanish Missions, other historical sites, and loads of natural/eco sites! This 10-day/9-night, all-inclusive trip will feature the best of Baja from Tecate to Loreto, highlighting many of the missions, ghost towns, rock art sites, museums and beautiful natural environment along the way!

This is a once-in-a-lifetime trip that will fill quickly, so call Discover Baja at 800-727-2252 or email ask@discoverbaja.com to book your spot today!

For full itinerary and more information: www.discoverbaja.com/2015/08/13/missions-trip

\$2,095 all-inclusive per person, based on double occupancy



**Visit the Gray Whales in
San Ignacio and
Guerrero Negro on the
“Dos Lagoons Tour”
11 Days / 10 Nights
With Baja Author Graham
Mackintosh!**



Join MexMike Essary with Baja Custom Tours and Baja author Graham Mackintosh for a 11 day/10 night all-inclusive trip to see the friendly gray whales of Baja California.

January 31 – February 10, 2016

****Includes:** Recently paved San Felipe and Bahia Gonzaga route, Cataviña stay, Mission San Ignacio, Laguna San Ignacio at Antonio's Camp on the Lagoon with 3 whale tours, Guerrero Negro with inner and outer lagoon tours, Baja Berrendo Reserve visit, Bahia de Los Angeles with Island boat tour, Rancho Meling in the San Pedro Martir, Observatory tour, highest point in ALL of Baja, horseback riding, wine tasting in Valle de Guadalupe!

****All meals-drinks-transportation-lodgings-tours are included.** You'll need to get a Mexican FMM tourist Permit. Tips and personal purchases are not included. Transportation is a 4x4 Ford E350 Van.

\$2,495 per person, double occupancy

Email ask@discoverbaja.com or call 800-727-2252 for more information.

Only NINE seats available! Book Now!



More Gray Whale Trips for 2016

8 days, 7 nights

\$1,695 all-inclusive, double occupancy

Dates for Trips:

February 18 – February 25, 2016

March 3 – March 10, 2016



Come join famous Baja author Graham Mackintosh on this Baja Custom Tours trip with MexMike Essary to see whales, the Sea of Cortez, and the mountains of San Pedro Mártir. Share close encounters with the Gray Whales in Scammon's Lagoon, stories and locations in Graham's Baja books, and a great time with friends in this all-inclusive, 8-day/7-night tour. Must provide your own Mexican FMM tourist permit.

Personal purchases/tips not included.

Itineraries:

Day 1 - Departure from San Diego 7am, El Marmol onyx quarry, lunch at Desert Inn Cataviña, free time, dinner Cataviña

Day 2 - 7am breakfast in Cataviña, depart 8am for local cave paintings, drive to Guerrero Negro, stop at Baja berrendo (prong horn antelope) sanctuary, check in at motel, lunch, free time, dinner at Mario's Palapa

Day 3 – 7am breakfast, drive to Ojo de Liebre lagoon for two-hour whale tour – inner lagoon, lunch at Tony's Tacos, break, visit old town Guerrero Negro – old lighthouse - wetlands, special dinner at Mario's

Day 4 – Check out of rooms, 7am breakfast, bus tour to outer lagoon with Mario's through salt plant, 3 hour whale tour outer lagoon with sack lunch, drive to Bahia de Los Angeles, check in Costa del Sol motel, free time, Seafood extravaganza dinner!

Day 5 - 8am breakfast, boat tour of bay and islands, lunch on a beach, visit Bahia Natural History Museo, dinner at Casa Essary

Day 6 – Depart Bahía de Los Angeles at 8am after breakfast, tacos in Vincente Guerrero, drive to Meling Ranch, free time (hiking or horseback riding), family style dinner

Day 7 – 8am breakfast, drive to Observatory for tour, picnic lunch at San Pedro Martir museum, return to Rancho Meling, free time, Special BBQ dinner with fireside S'mores

Day 8 – Depart Meling Ranch at 8am after breakfast, torta lunch in El Sauzal, wine tasting in Valle de Guadalupe (Monte Xanic), cross border in Tecate.

Email ask@discoverbaja.com or call 800-727-2252 for more information.



RIVERFRONT HOUSE IN NORTHERN BAJA \$10,000 USD

Located in the quiet confines of Rancho Mil, this 1900sq.ft. 2 bed, 2 bath, 2 story, adobe brick house is the perfect getaway "casa". Just a one hour drive from the US border, Rancho Mil extends for 1 km along the tranquil waters of the Rio Hardy and is surrounded by thousands of acres of open desert. Repairs are needed, and can be completed by on site experienced labor (your chance to personalize it!). Several other homes are available at similar prices. Contact Don, 949-466-2069us, D1000@sbcglobal.net, and Rancho Mil website: www.RanchoMil.com.



SAN JOSE DEL CABO EAST CAPE RENTAL

This contemporary Mexican-style home in a gated community features a spacious interior with two bedrooms and two baths, and an expansive outdoor patio.

<http://www.vrbo.com/199458>



PARADISE FOR SALE IN MULEGE!

Paradise is for sale by owner located in Mulege on the Sea of Cortez at the mouth of Conception Bay, 8 miles south of Mulege. Approximately 1/3 of acre with a fedicomiso (ownership). Dwelling for camping, 3500 gallon pils for water, extra large propane tank, solar. Asking US \$185,000 or best offer. Contact 760-889-4888 or sherylkaonis@sbcglobal.net or slgordinier@sbcglobal.net

PROPERTY FOR SALE IN SAN MIGUEL DE COMONDÚ:

A lot with a producing avocado orchard, equipped with aseguías (irrigation channels), approximately 1700 square meters in size. San Miguel de Comondú is located two hours on paved road from the port of Loreto. It is a quiet little town for vacationing and relaxing. The listing price is \$65,000 U.S., the first payment being \$30,000 U.S. and the remainder in two payments. Call or text Alberto Cota Murillo, 011-52-613-114-7751.

