



June 2014 Newsletter

SAN YSIDRO READY LANE DIRECTIONS



We've put together step-by-step directions to get to the Ready Lane at San Ysidro. The ready lane is for passengers who have RFID-enabled identification such as passport cards or enhanced drivers licenses from certain states (California is currently not one of those states, but they are working on legislature to change that). Passport books are not accepted in the Ready Lane. Everyone in the car over the age of 16 must have an RFID-enabled travel document in order to use the Ready Lane (kids 15 and under can get by using their birth certificate and student ID). For downloadable directions that you can print and take with you, see: bit.ly/1jWfxaG

Discover Baja Now Processing Boat Temporary Import Permits!



We're pleased to announce that Discover Baja is now processing boat temporary import permits for our members. We're saving you the time and hassle of completing the process at the border. All boats entering Baja over 14.7 feet must now have a temporary import permit (TIP). The permits are good for ten years. Please allow at least two weeks processing time before date of entry. Cost is about \$95 which includes the fee for the permit and a processing fee. For more information, requirements and the application, please see www.discoverbaja.com/go/temporary-boat-importation

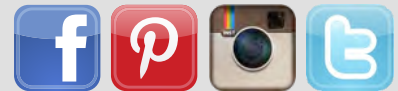
From the DBTC Office

It's sum-summer time and we're anticipating a Baja-filled season for all! Check out our Baja Summer Checklist as well as our ideas for kids activities in Baja that the whole family will enjoy. We have another one of our popular Guadalupe Valley trips coming up on July 19th and stay tuned for some summer lectures around San Diego.

The fish are biting, the waves are calling, and the margaritas and lobster are awaiting your arrival. It's time to hit Highway 1 and explore! Oh, and don't forget your Mexican auto insurance.

Let's Baja!

Hugh, Carol, Jen, Maythé & Monica



PESO EXCHANGE RATE:
\$12.91 to \$1 U.S. dollar

PEMEX PRICES

Northern Baja:

Magna: \$3.78/gal
Premium: \$3.98/gal
Diesel: \$3.93/gal

Southern Baja:

Magna: \$3.90/gal
Premium: \$3.98/gal
Diesel: \$3.93/gal

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

Hi Carol,

Thank you and your staff for all the information about San Felipe. We had a wonderful time. The El Cortez exceeded my expectations: very clean, and the beds were very comfortable. We had two different casitas and both were great. Daytime temps were tolerable and evenings were nice and cool. We also found the best BBQ chicken I think I have ever had, just a few blocks east of the malecon. Follow the whiff of aromatic smoke to a little hole-in-the-wall restaurant. Fun!

Thanks again! Que te vaya bien!

Christy Schisler

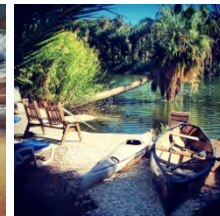
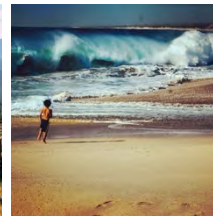
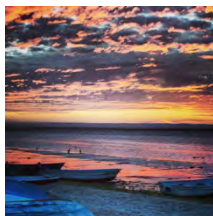
DBTC Note: Thanks, Christy! Wishing you many more wonderful trips for San Felipe. We can't wait to check out the BBQ place for ourselves. Sounds delicious!

GOT BAJA?

Be sure to check out www.gotbaja.mx for fun, free, detailed maps of a handful of Baja cities that you download and print at home. The maps do a great job pointing out tourist spots such as restaurants, hotels, shops, hospitals and services. We highly recommend their new Ruta del Vino map of the Guadalupe Valley as it has all of the new wineries and restaurants that can be hard to find!



Congratulations to longtime DBTC member, Brian Bodas, for winning teacher of the year at Torrey Pines High School. Brian teaches AP Bio & Environmental Science. ¡Felicidades!



BAJA SUMMER CHECKLIST

- ☐ While we're hopefully optimistic that they'll put a stop to development plans at **Cabo Pulmo**, you may want to take a trip down there asap to snorkel/dive in one of the world's most robust marine habitats. You know, just in case...
- ☐ The **Guadalupe Valley Vendimia Festival** takes place over a few weeks in August each year. Grapes will be harvested, wine and food will be consumed, fun will ensue. If you still haven't been to the valley and you're not quite sure where to start, join us for the next DBTC Guadalupe Valley day trip on July 19th. Details on page 4.
- ☐ If wine isn't your thing, maybe the growing craft beer movement speaks to you. **Beer Fests** are happening all over northern Baja with the Rosarito Beer Fest June 28th, the rescheduled Ensenada Beer Fest July 26th, and the Tijuana Beer Fest on August 29th and 30th.
- ☐ 'Tis the season for **surfing** in Baja. From the newly designated world surf reserve area of San Miguel/Bahia de Todos Santos, to Abreojos to Scorpion Bay, the waves are breaking all summer long. Grab a board and get out there.
- ☐ If you're looking to beat the heat this summer, check out the **Sierra de San Pedro Mártir**. The pine tree covered terrain is ripe for camping, hiking and horseback riding. Night times are perfect for star gazing due to the ideal atmospheric conditions. Don't miss the national observatory.
- ☐ From Tijuana to Cabo, Baja is filled with some of the most beautiful (and often the most empty) **beaches**. The best ones are often the ones you stumble across as a detour on a day out on the open road. Get out and explore.
- ☐ Have a girls **spa weekend**. From Las Rosas in Ensenada to Las Rocas in Rosarito, there are plenty of beachside resorts and spas for a quick weekend trip. Go ahead, treat yourself.
- ☐ Nothing says **fishing season** more than summertime in Baja. Get down to the East Cape for some Dorado or escape to Isla Cedros for some yellowtail.
- ☐ Check out the burgeoning **foodie scene** in northern Baja. All it takes is an afternoon across the border to experience what's taking place. For a great place to start, check out our article about Tijuana's Foodgarden on page 9.
- ☐ If the above all sounds like too much work, grab a margarita, an empty hammock and **relax**. That's what summertime in Baja is all about.

ON OUR RADAR FOR JUNE

To keep up on the latest Baja events, check out our online events page: www.discoverbaja.com/events



JUNE 5-8

Tecate SCORE Baja 500

- This 500-mile loop race starts and ends in Ensenada
- Race events will be centered around the Riviera del Pacifico Cultural Center
- score-international.com

JUNE 12

FIFA 2014

World Cup Begins

- For football (soccer) fans everywhere, the World Cup begins today in Brazil and lasts for the next month.
 - The U.S. will be playing in Group G and Mexico will be playing in Group A.
- Who will you cheer for?

• www.fifa.com/worldcup



**FIFA WORLD CUP
Brasil**

JUNE 15

Father's Day (U.S. and Mexico)

- It's Father's Day in both the U.S. and Mexico. Celebrate by treating Dad to that Baja fishing trip he's been wanting to go on. Or set him up with a hammock by the sea and let him while the day away.



JUNE 16-22

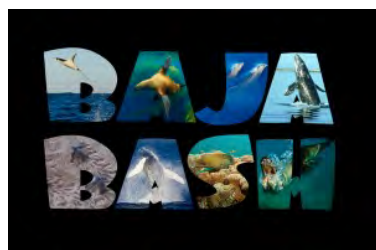
Los Cabos Open Surf

- At Zippers beach break off of Playa Costa Azul in San Jose del Cabo
- Professional surfers

from all over the world will come to compete

- For the first time, the event will feature both men's and women's categories

• www.aspworldtour.com/events/2014/wqs/673/los-cabos-open-of-surf



JUNE 28

Baja Bash

- Coronado Cays Yacht Club in San Diego
- This annual

celebration raises money for WILDCOAST, an organization dedicated to conserving coastal and marine ecosystems and wildlife

- Expect an evening of Baja cuisine, a silent auction and live entertainment
- www.wildcoast.net

JUNE 28

Rosarito Beerfest

- 2pm-2am
- Blvd. Benito Juárez in front of Hotel Festival Plaza
- The first beerfest of Rosarito will feature Baja craft beers, local food and live entertainment

• www.facebook.com/rosaritobeerfest



Saturday, July 19th

Guadalupe Valley Wine Trip

*Come spend a day experiencing Mexico's Napa Valley
with Discover Baja and Baja Custom Tours!*



Enjoy a day with us in Baja's Guadalupe Valley as we explore some of the wineries and attractions that the region has to offer. We'll provide the round-trip transportation, a tour the new Museum of Wine and Vine, tastings at two wineries, traditional Mexican lunch at a local restaurant, a behind-the-scenes winery tour and a local wine guide to help explain everything in English. Oh, and a full lobster dinner with endless margaritas in Puerto Nuevo to top it all off.

\$175 per person. For more Information:
bit.ly/1kFdo8b

Call or email today to book your spot!
ask@discoverbaja.com or
800.727.2252

Tour includes:

- Wine tasting at two wineries – L.A. Cetto and Las Nubes
- Behind-the-scenes tour at L.A. Cetto, one of the oldest and largest wineries in Baja
- Traditional homemade, sit-down lunch with wine
- Guided tour of the new Wine and Vine Museum
- Local wine expert
- Lobster dinner with margaritas in Puerto Nuevo
- Round trip transportation from Discover Baja offices in San Diego



Baja Charity Corner

Boys & Girls Club of Rosarito



Rosy Torres and volunteers with the kids of the Rosarito Boys & Girls Club

We've had a number of DBTC members ask about ways to help or donate to charities and non-profits in Baja. We love that so many of you feel the same way we do about helping out those in need, so we've put together this column to introduce you to various Baja charities and let you know how you can help.

By Jennifer Kramer

It only takes a few seconds after stepping into the Boys & Girls Club of Rosarito to feel the excitement and positive energy of the kids quietly buzzing around. I've arrived during free time and the boys and girls are playing games with volunteers, working on their homework, having a snack, playing chess, and working on art projects.

Rosy Torres, the wonderfully hands-on President of the Boys & Girls Club of Rosarito, is giving me a tour of the facility and is a magnet for the children. They run up to her to tell her about their day at school, show her their latest artwork, and shower her with hugs. It's a happy place full of children who seem to recognize how lucky they are to be there. There are 84 kids (ages 6-16) who are registered to the Boys and Girls Club of Rosarito. About 50 of them come each day to the club after school where they focus on academics, human development, arts, culture and sports. It gives the kids a productive chance to supplement their schooling and exposes them to opportunities they wouldn't normally have. All while keeping them off the streets and out of trouble.

Rosy has three goals for the club: the first is to have all of the children speaking English, the second is to develop a stellar reading program, and the third is to create future athletes. They are currently working hard toward all of these goals. The kids practice English with American volunteers, and learn with Rosetta Stone on donated computers. They partner with the local Friends of the Library to increase literacy and get the kids reading at high levels. Volunteers teach the kids sports such as soccer, baseball, track & field, tennis, basketball, and cycling all with donated equipment and borrowed fields.

In addition to those programs, the kids have workshops in areas such as nutrition, self-esteem, gardening, environmentalism, and music lessons (they have a wonderful collection of donated instruments which includes harps, guitar, cellos, trumpets and violins. Rosy has dreams of starting a children's symphony).

The Boys & Girls Club is currently in a borrowed space, but they are in the process of building a new facility for the kids on the north side of town. They've completed the first phase of construction, but

they are still working to raise the funding for the next phases. The new facility will have the capacity to help 600 children.

Before the kids line up to head off to their workshops, they pose for a photo. Smiling, laughing, waving, cheering – happy about life and the opportunities that lie ahead of them.

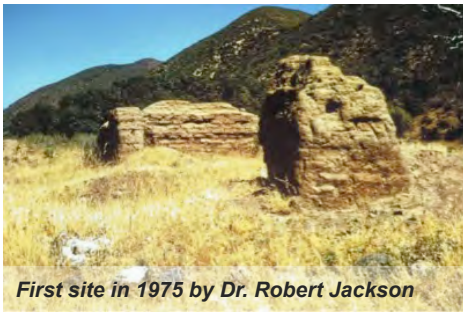
How you can help:

1. **Donate Money:** It all goes to helping the children and keeping the club going by providing food, equipment and programming. You can easily donate using paypal on their website.
2. **Construction for the new facility:** Buy a brick, buy a room, have the new gymnasium named after you. It's all in the name of helping the kids.
3. **Volunteer:** The program is run 99% by volunteers. If you're in Rosarito, you can volunteer to help with the kids at the club. You don't need to speak Spanish and they're very flexible with times and commitment levels.

For more information about helping out, please visit: www.clubrosarito.org

THE SPANISH MISSIONS ON THE CALIFORNIA PENINSULA:

#23, Santo Tomás (1791-1849)



First site in 1975 by Dr. Robert Jackson



Second site in 1949 by Marquis McDonald



The third site in 1975 by Dr. Robert Jackson

By David Kier

The future site for the fifth Dominican Baja California mission was discovered in 1769 and named San Francisco Solano, by Franciscan Padre Juan Crespi. In April, 1785, 'San Solano' was visited by Dominican Padre Luis Sales and a party of soldiers from the mission of San Vicente while searching for potential mission sites. After Mission San Miguel was founded (in 1787), the governor requested the wide gap between San Vicente and San Miguel be reduced with a mission between them. During one of Sales' expeditions to San Solano, he was attacked by the native Indians, wounded, and thrown from his horse. While "half-dead," Sales hid while the Indians chased the soldiers, who returned later to rescue the Padre.

Mission Santo Tomás de Aquino was founded on April 24, 1791 by Padre José Lorient at a place called by the natives 'Copaatl coajocuc' (crooked sycamore). This Dominican mission fulfilled their original mandate to occupy the frontier territory between Mission San Fernando de Velicatá and San Diego, along El Camino Real. The Indian neophyte population in the first year at Santo Tomás was 96.

According to a missionary's letter, sickness developed the second year at Santo Tomás and he attributed the problem to the

marsh: "... the heathen did not live where the mission is, but further up the plain, where the air is pure and there are no mosquitoes or gnats because the land is clearer."

A 1793 report described the mission church as a small adobe structure 14 feet by 34 feet with a roof of poles and mats. A dwelling for the missionaries was also constructed of the same materials. This first location chosen for the mission had been questioned by Governor Fages because it could be swept away by floods in the narrow canyon. Also, that sunlight would be blocked a third of the day by the height of the hills.

On May 31, 1794 the mission was moved a mile east and higher up the valley. This places it on the north side of the arroyo, with full sunlight. The reason given for the move was the first site being too near mosquito-infested swamps and was unhealthy. At the second location a new church building was made of adobe with a roof of poles and tules. Another building of the same materials was made for the priests.

Horse, mules, cattle, sheep and goats were all raised at the mission. Grain was planted and yields increased, yet in 1798 Padre Miguel López wrote to the governor asking that the mission be moved one more time further east, where more land could be put under cultivation.

The final move was made in 1799,

just over three miles to the east where four buildings were constructed. In 1800, work continued on the church and other buildings. The neophyte population reached the highest at 262. The church was 85 feet long and 18 feet wide with a flat, earth covered roof. A sacristy was 20 feet by 15 feet. Several other buildings were erected by 1801 that included storerooms and living quarters for single girls.

Raising crops and livestock all were successful at the third site for the mission. The valley continues to this day to grow grapes for the famous Santo Tomás brand wine. Trading with foreign sea captains at the bay of Ensenada (Ensenada de Todos Santos) was reported. This exchange was an important source of revenue during years of isolation while Mexico was fighting Spain for independence (1810-1821).

The Dominican priests who served at Santo Tomás include: José Lorient (to 1798), Miguel López (1797 to Jan. 13, 1803 when murdered by Indians), Eudaldo Surroca (to May 19, 1803 when he was murdered by four Indians), Segismundo Fontcubierta (1798), José Miguel de Pineda (1812 to 1822), and Tomás Mansilla (1825-1849). Padre Mansilla departed Baja California from La Paz in Feb, 1855 with the only other remaining Dominican on the peninsula, Fr. Gabriel Gonzalez.

Continued on next page



Ruins at the third site in 1926 by G.W. Hendry

Continued from previous page

Mission Santo Tomás de Aquino was the last California mission remaining in service. The year was 1849 and while Padre Mansilla was at San Diego he left his brother in charge at Santo Tomás. On June 10, 1849, Agustín Mansilla y Gamboa wrote to his brother Fray Tomás that people traveling north for the gold fields were robbing locals and the mission church. An Indian was reported to have stolen altar valuables and sold them to the 49ers passing through. That seemed to be the final straw!

None of the three sites for this mission have any kind of preservation. They are all on private property and INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History) has not performed any kind of protection as of this writing. The photos illustrate the vanishing of these unprotected adobe buildings.

The first (1791) site is nearly gone, with just a small section of

wall remaining and is located next to an oak tree picnic area, along a running stream. From Highway One on the north side of the Santo Tomás Valley, take the graded dirt road west (signed for La Bocana and Puerto Santo Tomás). Go 3.4 miles and take a road to the left and go ½ mile more to the clearing next to the picnic area.

The second (1794) mission site has only a small area of melted adobe and rocks and is in a planted field, a few hundred feet north of the same La Bocana road, about a mile back towards Highway One from the first site. Highway One to the second site is 2.8 miles.

The 1799 (third and final) site is on the east side of Highway One as you enter the town of Santo Tomás, by the tall palm trees, north of the El Palomar campground. The mission aqueduct is near the site and still carries water from the spring.

Some books mention only two sites for Santo Tomás. Some books have called the second site 'the first', never mentioning the extensive adobe complex once seen at the true first site. Some books have not mentioned the second site and only the first and final sites! Some have reported that road construction destroyed one site. I have found adobe remains at all three sites since these books were written.

The photos show how the unprotected adobe brick walls are susceptible to weathering. In a 1916 letter about his 1887 expedition to save Dominican artifacts, Fr. James Newall, O.P. wrote this:

"But let us say at once, we found very little to describe. Since Mexico's achievement of independence from Spain, and the expulsion of the Spanish Friars from the Peninsula -- that is, for a period of seventy years -- those missions had been utterly abandoned, and, what is worse, adventurers and interlopers from Sonora -- who constitute the present owners of the Mission lands -- after driving and killing off the Indians, dismantled the churches and monasteries, seized on and sold the valuable church furniture and works of art, and even tore the tiles from the Mission roofs for their own huts, thus exposing the walls to the dissolving action of the rains, so that there is hardly a Mission in that country of which it might not be said, Etiam ruinae perierunt! Even the ruins have perished."

The founding of all 48 California missions, in their correct order, with some history on each is included in the book 'The Old Missions of Baja & Alta California, 1697-1834' by Max Kurillo, Erlene Tuttle and David Kier (2012). Santo Tomás was the 34th California mission founded, and the 23rd mission founded on the peninsula of Baja California.

David Kier is co-author of 'The Old Missions of Baja & Alta California, 1697-1834'. The book is available for purchase at the DBTC office (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.



The Family that Bajas Together, Stays Together

School's out and that means it's the perfect time to head south for a family trip to Baja. We've put together some highlights along the peninsula that kids (and adults) of all ages will enjoy.

Las Cañadas: Just south of Ensenada, you'll find a kid's paradise in the form of a campsite complete with a huge water park, canopy tours, horseback riding and zip lines!



San Felipe: Camp right on the beach and spend some time collecting shells and fishing. Don't miss out on the giant cacti in the Valle de los Gigantes.



Cataviña: This desert spot is home to an oasis swimming hole and cave paintings that make it well worth a stop.



La Lobera: Three miles out from Hwy 1 at km 47.5 is a magnificent sea lion crater where a sea cave collapsed, creating a secret beach. There's a viewing area to watch *los lobos del mar*.



Bahia Concepción: This is one of the most beautiful spots in Baja for camping. The clear bays are great for swimming and kayaking.



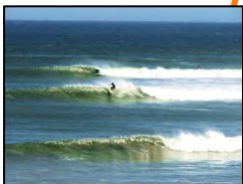
Loreto: Take a boat ride out to the Coronado islands for a day of snorkeling and swimming in crystal clear waters. Then head to the Loreto Mission, the first mission in all of California, founded in 1697.



Isla Cedros: One of the most prolific havens for wildlife and marine life, Isla Cedros is great for kids who love to fish or explore.



San Juanico: For the family that loves to surf together, you can't miss Baja's famous Scorpion Bay. This epic point break won't disappoint.



Cabo: Take a boat ride out to see the famous Land's End arch up close and personally. Parasailing, jetskiing and banana boat rides are all available for kids who love watersports.



La Paz: Get paletas and walk along the malecón. Don't forget to check out Playa Balandra with its famous rock formation.



BUEN PROVECHO: Foodgarden, Tijuana

By Jennifer Kramer
www.bajatheothercalifornia.com

Nestled into the bustling Zona Rio neighborhood of Tijuana is a delightful space where artisan street food comes together with a relaxed but refined atmosphere. Foodgarden, an urban street food garden complete with artisan food stalls and a seating area in the middle, is the first establishment of its type in Mexico. The food stalls function as mini-locations of acclaimed Tijuana restaurants that have established locations elsewhere around the city. This makes Foodgarden a great way to try a smattering of the delicious food that Tijuana has to offer all in one place. If you're just getting into the Tijuana or northern Baja food scene, this is a great place to start.

The main outdoor seating area is fresh and inviting, with wood and concrete tables and seats, bright accent colors, and beautiful tiles lining the perimeter. There's also an indoor space with tables and restrooms.

There are currently six main food stalls (in addition to a handful of temporary vendors selling desserts and crafts that rotate in and out): *Los Chilaquiles*, serving up deliciously inventive flavors of the traditional Mexican chip dish; *Veggie Smalls* with vegetarian comfort food such as burgers, fries and hot dogs; *Creperie La Luna*, with gourmet sweet and

savory crepes; *La Taqueseria*, with traditional Mexican tacos and street food; *Walter*, serving fish tacos and other seafood dishes; *Asia de Baja*, with Pad Thai and other noodle dishes that rival anything you'd find in Asia; and *Hornero* baking up artisan pizzas and salads.

You'll order at the food stall and receive a number and a receipt. Take the receipt up to the Bar/ cash register where you pay for your food and can purchase beverages like aguas frescas, thai iced tea and craft beer. Take your number, find a seat at a table and they'll bring you your food when it's ready. ¡Buen provecho!

If you go:

-There's a parking lot with a guard. Parking is \$5 pesos with purchase of something at the Foodgarden (take your parking ticket with you and present it at the cash register to have it validated).

-Free wifi, just ask for the password.

Mon - Thu: 9:00 am - 9:00 pm

Fri - Sat: 9:00 am - 11:00 pm

Sun: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

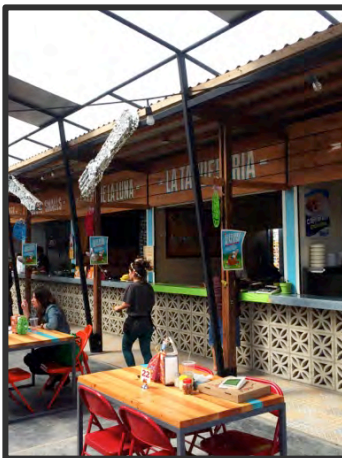
Ave Rodolfo Sanchez Taboada
10650,

Zona Rio, 22010 Tijuana, BC

GPS: 32.518505, -117.010586

011-52-664-634-3527

www.foodgarden.mx



Let's Go to the Movies!

It's summertime, which means that the blockbuster hits are rolling out in the movie theaters. Sometimes there's nothing like enjoying the air conditioning of the movie theater while watching summer's latest Hollywood flick. The only problem is the rising price of movie tickets these days.

But having a night at the movies doesn't have to require taking out a second mortgage on the house if you go to the movies in Baja where ticket prices average about \$3 per person. No, that's not a typo. Regular movie tickets in Baja are about \$2.50 a piece and 3-D movies cost a few cents over \$3 a piece.

Cinépolis, the main chain of movie theaters in Mexico, has theaters in Tijuana, Rosarito, Tecate, Mexicali, Ensenada, La Paz and San José del Cabo. The theaters are just what you would find in the U.S. – large and clean, with a friendly staff and a full concessions stand. You can purchase tickets and choose your seats ahead of time online. The concessions stand is



complete with crepes and freshly-popped popcorn that comes in different flavors (including enchilada flavor for the brave of heart!). If you're running late to your movie and don't have time to hit the concessions stand, there's a mini-concessions cart set up inside each theater where you can order anything from the regular concessions stand and they'll deliver it to you at your seat.

With the prices and service, you can't go wrong with a night at the movies. It's time to beat the heat, have a crepe and enjoy the show.



Practice your Spanish:
película = movie
cine = movie theater
boleto = ticket
palomitas = popcorn
dulces = candy

Movie Tips:

-Look for movies that have the word "sub" listed at the end of the title. This means that the movie will be in English with Spanish subtitles at the bottom (also a great way to practice your Spanish!).

-Purchase tickets and choose seats ahead of time at www.cinepolis.com.mx. They also have an app you can download for your smartphone.

-Movie release dates are different in Mexico than in the U.S. (we saw Spider-Man 3 in 3-D about two weeks before it hit theaters in the U.S.). You can't always expect that everything playing in the U.S. will be playing in Mexico, and vice versa, so keep an open mind. Likewise, movie names don't always translate directly from Spanish to English. You may need to look up the trailer online to tell which movie is which.

-There's a VIP Cinépolis in Tijuana. Tickets are more expensive (around \$10 each) but you can expect a leather reclining seat and waiters to serve you drinks and food during the movie.

-The motion picture rating system is different in Mexico than it is in the U.S., so parents may want to take note of the rating chart below:

AA: Understandable for children under 7 years.

A: For all age groups.

B: For adolescents 12 years and older.

B-15: Not recommended for children under 15.

C: For adults 18 and older.

D: Adult movies.

Q&A with Baja Joe!

You've probably heard Greg Reddick, aka "Baja Joe," on the radio promoting Baja and his website, www.bajasbacknow.com. Watch for him on an upcoming episode of PBS's "Crossing South" with Jorge Meraz!



When was your first trip to Baja? Where did you go?

My first trip to Baja (at least without parents!) was in 1973. I went down with some friends from work in a VW Bug and we camped outside of Ensenada.

What's your most memorable "Baja moment"?

It's gotta be on one of the trips to Bahia de Los Angeles about 20 years ago. Five of us jumped into a VW camper van, but before we left we installed a huge set of real Bullhorns that spanned the entire front of the van. It was a sight to see. Everyone that went by honked or waved at us - it was absolutely hilarious. The van was an older model and one of the first ones with fuel injection. Back then the gas wasn't as good as it is today and after the first tank of gas we started having engine troubles, somewhere near San Quintin. The van would run for about two hours then die.... over and over again. This is where I fell in love with the Mexican people as time and time again, they would stop and help us get moving again, usually by jump starting the car. At one point we had two flat tires and a guy pulled over and took both tires and had them fixed and then brought them back. He wouldn't even take any money from us so we fed him and kept going.

But, the most memorable moment came in a small town where our van died again. There was a little rodeo arena (by arena I mean a large dirt circle with sticks as a fence) down a small hill where our car died. Nobody came around for a little while, then a police car drove by and stopped. We told him

about our car problems, so he opened up the rodeo gate and we attached a tow strap on the back of the police car. With one of the guys driving and the other four of us overlooking this scene, the police car went in circles round and round the arena pulling our van and trying to jump start the engine. The four of us were watching our van with Bullhorns getting pulled by this small police patrol car for about 20 minutes.... To this day its has to be one of the funniest things I've ever seen in my life.

Craziest experience you've had in Baja?

This would probably involve Tequila... Well, for 21 years I put on a huge beach party and volleyball tournament on La Salina Beach called the Corona Open with 600 of my best friends! The first night was "Welcome to Margaritaville," where we would pour 100 liters of Tequila in Margaritas and dance the night away. Then Saturday with 20 kegs of Corona and volleyball on the beach all day. Everyone camped on the beach so that nobody had to drink and drive. I was lucky enough to drag down the former San Diego Padres Baseball player, singer and songwriter, Tim Flannery (3rd base coach for the SF Giants now), Gary Sieler and the Buffed Out Band. Those 21 years were all crazy. Steve Poltz singer and songwriter played one Saturday night till 4:30am in his boxers! The last Corona Open was in 2006. If tents could talk...

In your opinion, what's the best thing about Baja?

I've surfed a wave right next to a

dolphin; spear fished halibut for dinner; snorkeled and dived in the waters to Cabo and back; and golfed at Bajamar Resort right on the water, to name a few. It's too hard to pick just one!

Where is your favorite place in Baja?

This has to be La Salina Beach where I have my home, it started with a trailer on the north side of the beach at Poncho Tequila's camp, also known as Clam beach now. Then when they started to build Puerto Salina Marina on the south side of the beach about 20 years ago, I bought a lot and built my dream home. Every time I pull into that beach I feel blessed.

What's your favorite thing to do in Baja?

Going out with good friends for dinner and drinks to one of the great restaurants there like Splash or La Fonda. Or wine tasting in Valle de Guadalupe. Of course that's when I'm not in the water!

How did you come up with the idea for "Baja Joe"?

Well, I just wanted to help bring back the tourism to Baja. It's such a special place and it's in our own backyard. So my thoughts were that the typical U.S. tourist would not trust a Mexican National Government Official sharing that it's safe to come back down to Baja. So I created Baja Joe as an unofficial U.S. spokesperson for Baja. I'm in Baja 3-5 days a week and I feel safer there than many places in San Diego. I'm a true U.S. patriot, but lucky me, I have two countries I love, as many of us do.

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Tell us about your website, BajasBackNow.com. How and why did you get started?

I combined my marketing experience, the love of Baja, Baja Joe and the BajasBackNow.com website so people could reach out to me for advice and questions regarding Baja - where to go for their trip to Baja and the safety side of it all. There has been too much overhyped negative media attention on Baja for way too long. There was a small window of issues way back in 2008-2009. It's long gone, but the tourism hasn't

come back like it was. I know so many business owners that are still struggling because of the lack of tourism, that I just wanted to help bring back the Gringos. Its time, Baja's better than ever right now!

How do you describe Baja to someone who's never been there before?

The best way is to tell them to visualize Southern California about 75 years ago, before the freeways and all the people were there. Where you can see the beautiful Pacific Ocean as you drive south. It's just paradise

without all the restrictions of the U.S. Imagine stopping at any beach, parking your car, grabbing a cerveza and walking in the sand along the water. That's a simple thing to do, but you can't do it in the US.



Why We Baja: Member Travel Photos



Photo by Mark Frapwell (Mark Frapwell Photography) from a horseback and camping trip in the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir. For more information about horseback riding trips in the San Pedro Mártir, email gconsult@cox.net

Why do you Baja? Is it for the taco stand you can't get enough of? The father/son fishing trips? The encounters with nature and wildlife that you can't get at home? Or the peaceful moments before the sun goes down when the whole world is aglow? Email your "Why We Baja" photo moment to jen@discoverbaja.com and we may publish it in the next newsletter. Or, if you Instagram, follow us [@discoverbaja](https://www.instagram.com/discoverbaja) and tag your photo with #whywebaja

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