



Baja Bits & Bytes

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM DISCOVER BAJA TRAVEL CLUB

JULY 2012

BAJA BITS AND BYTES A HIT WITH MEMBERS

When we asked for member reaction and feedback about our new *Baja Bits & Bytes*, we weren't expecting anything like the flood of positive comments and "thumbs-up"s that we received. Thanks to all of our Discover Baja members who took the time to let us know how much you enjoyed our new venture and format.

READY LANES Pilot Program in Tecate

For Sundays in July and August, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will launch a pilot Ready Lane program at the Tecate Port of Entry for travelers entering the U.S. in vehicles from 12 p.m. until 8 p.m.

Travelers are eligible to use the Ready Lane if they have a travel document enabled with Radio Frequency Identification, or RFID, technology. These include the U.S. Passport Card; the Enhanced Driver's License (EDL); the Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC); Trusted Traveler Cards (NEXUS, SENTRI, Global Entry and FAST cards); the new Enhanced Permanent Resident Card (PRC) or new Border Crossing Card (BCC). All travelers in the vehicle over the age of 16 must have an RFID-enabled card to use the Ready



Lane. Children 15 years old and younger may travel in the Ready Lane with adult travelers if all adults in the vehicle have an RFID-enabled travel card.

When approaching the Tecate border crossing in Mexico following typical travel patterns, travelers will see signs for Ready Lane access about a third of a mile from the port of entry, and should have their RFID-enabled travel documents available in order to

enter the Ready Lane approach lanes in Mexico. Use the left lane (third from right--see photo) as you approach the border crossing for Ready Lane traffic.

Mexico's New President



The election of Enrique Peña Nieto has been met with mixed reactions in Mexico and in the states. His PRI party has had a reputation for cutting deals with drug cartels and allowing narcotics to move north, as long as crime mafias avoid public violence and attacks against civilians.

It's been reported that his priorities will be reducing drug-related violence instead of arresting drug lords, pulling the military off the streets in favor of a new, civilian-led paramilitary police force, and concentrating his efforts on the hardest-hit areas.

He has given some the impression that as president he will make peace with the cartels, not wage a hopeless war against them.

It will be interesting to see what happens in Mexico after he takes office on December 1, 2012.

Forgot Your Membership Number?

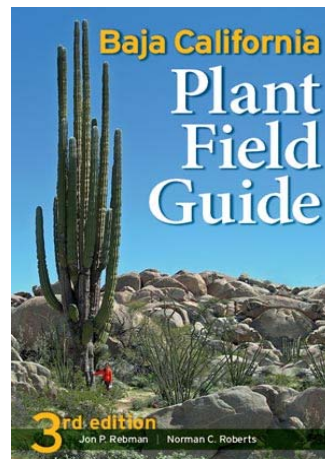
As most of you know, Discover Baja members can access their accounts online at www.discoverbaja.com, allowing you to review and renew you membership or insurance. To do so, however, you are asked for your name (no prob) and your DBTC membership number (like a password).

This can be frustrating if you can't remember your membership number and the office is closed so you can't call us for it. Now we've added a "forgot member number?" utility to the website so that your number will be emailed to you. Hope this helps. Please make sure we have your correct email address.

Newly Revised Baja Plant Field Guide Now Available

The new Third Edition of the *Baja California Plant Field Guide* is now available at Discover Baja. This classic is an essential manual to native and naturalized plants of the Baja California peninsula.

Over 715 different plants in 111 plant families are identified (most in both English and Spanish), with both scientific and common names and detailed descriptions. Many species are illustrated with color photographs.



Descriptions entail plant habit and height; stem, leaf, flower, and fruit morphology; range; elevation; pollination biology; ethnobotanical uses; and discriminating comparisons with close relatives.

Intended for everyone from the interested novice to the professional botanist, this amazing book is available by calling Discover Baja at 800 727-2252. \$34.95 plus tax. Members get a 10% discount.

Reflections of a Changing World Exhibit Opens July 14

Art Expressions Gallery presents *Reflections of a Changing World*, an exhibition by San Diego Photographers Steve McClelland and Michael Orenich, from July 14 through August 25, featuring more than 25 recent photographs of life in Myanmar and Cuba.

A special opening reception will be held July 14, 2012 from 6 to 9pm, with refreshments served, and a special drawing for custom archival framing. Discover Baja members have enjoyed a number of exhibits and lectures at Art Expressions Gallery, located at 2645 Financial Court, Suite C in San Diego, just off Morena Boulevard.



RSVP: 858 270-7577

Bahía Asunción B&B Welcomes Members

When Jean Cockelreas and Ed Epifani sold their home and business in Oregon back in 2006, they built a home in the community of Costa Cardonal, in Punta Chivato on the Sea of Cortez. In recent years they discovered beautiful Bahia Asunción on the Pacific and have now opened an inviting B&B.



Newly constructed casitas with adjoining courtyards and a shared patio are now available, and a separate rental house is coming this summer. Delicious breakfasts are provided daily, and desert and fishing trips can be arranged. And, by the way, pets can be accommodated.

Jean and Ed operate Bahía Asunción B&B from July to December when they return to their Sea of Cortez home. They offer DBTC members a 10% discount.

Check out their website at www.bahiaasuncionbb.com

Trip to Mata Ortiz October 17 – 22, 2012

Join **DISCOVER BAJA** and **BAJA CUSTOM TOURS** for an unforgettable trip to the charming village of Mata Ortiz in Chihuahua, Mexico. The village is home to Juan Quezada the famed potter who rediscovered the art of making pots or “ollas” in the ancient Mesoamerican pottery tradition. Do some holiday shopping or start your own collection of these one-of-a kind pieces of art. We’ll visit homes of gifted potters, whose crafts have appeared in museums worldwide, and have the opportunity to purchase their magnificent art.



This 6-day 5-night trip will include a night in Bisbee, Arizona with an optional tour of the Lavender copper mine. Once in Mexico we’ll tour Paquime, the site of magnificent ruins dating back to the 1200s. We’ll stay in Mata Ortiz for three nights with plenty of shopping as well as excursions to petroglyphs and local sights.



Back into Arizona, our last day we’ll explore Kartchner Caverns State Park the dramatic caves which were opened to the public in the last 13 years. We will travel in a comfortable 15-passenger van. Substantial room will be needed to carry our precious pots so seating space is limited. Price is \$850.00 for DB members and \$900.00 for non-members. There is a \$220 supplement for single occupancy. This price includes all transportation, lodging, meals and tours. All the planning and work is handled for you. Don’t miss the fun and adventure. For more information or an

application packet, please call Carol at **DISCOVER BAJA** 800 727-2252

Missing Ship ERIK Found

The missing fishing vessel “Erik”, the 105-foot fishing vessel that left San Felipe on a six-day fishing excursion July 3, 2011 and went down amid 20- and 40-foot swells was finally located last month on a fourth expedition by dive crews.

One body was found after the accident and



seven others, from among the 27 Northern California fishermen who chartered the Erik, are still missing. The wreckage was found 75 miles south of San Felipe.

The discovery, of course, raises another set of issues regarding recovery of the bodies of the lost fishermen or leaving the wreckage “as is” as a memorial.

Sustainable Seafood Guide Available

The *Seafood Watch* public awareness program of the Monterey Bay Aquarium has been working to create and maintain healthy, abundant oceans for everyone. Sea life is



fragile, and many populations of the large fish we enjoy eating are over fished. Sustainability of various types of seafood is critical. To assist consumers with wise choices when shopping for seafood or ordering in a restaurant, the Monterey Bay Aquarium has published a valuable guide.

Copies of their *West Coast Sustainable Seafood Pocket Guide* are available at the Discover Baja office, or can be printed from the following site:

http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/content/media/MBA_SeafoodWatch_WestCoastGuide.pdf

Rosarito Sur PEMEX Accepts Credit Cards



Some travelers in Baja learn the hard way that few PEMEX stations accept credit cards. The PEMEX near the Rosarito Sur exit from the toll road and before the second toll plaza does accept credit cards, although they do not promote this option. You will have to go to the cashier's window, which displays a credit card decal.

For a long trip into Baja, you might want to forego filling up on the US side of the border to take advantage of the much lower prices for gas or diesel. There is a Seven–Eleven convenience store at this PEMEX for a coffee, soft drink or snacks.

Gas Prices In Baja

As of 7/5/12 PEMEX prices in at the Rosarito Beach Sur PEMEX station were: Magna (regular) \$2.89; Premium \$3.06 and Diesel \$2.93.

Peso Exchange

As of 7/9/12, the Mexican Peso is exchanging at 13.46 to the US dollar.

FROM OUR MEMBERS:

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

New Shelter For Orphans In San Felipe

Discover Baja member Barbara Anderson, shares this news.

"I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you about the new orphanage, or possibly I should say shelter for children, in San Felipe. It is called "Sonshine Hacienda" and has just recently opened. I think at this time they have around 12 children who have been abandoned by one or both parents. They are in desperate need of clothes, food and just about everything you can think of.

"Sonshine Hacienda is on Facebook and for more information, you can contact Sharon Monroe at gramsharn@yahoo.com."

Editor's note: You are probably aware that taking second-hand clothing and goods across the border can sometimes create a significant hassle and expense. Many of our members have had to pay unnecessary taxes on goods for orphanages that they were taking, out of the goodness of their hearts, to children in Baja.

We would suggest that if members take clothing, food, toys, etc. to Sonshine Hacienda or similar places, you do so as though they are your personal property--not for an orphanage.

Safety in Mexico Article Misleading?

DBTC member Larry Ferderber, who says that "while I travel to Baja and feel safe", felt that our June article "Safe to Travel in Mexico" was misleading.

"It compares the death rate 'per visit' to death rates in cities where people are living there all year. If you read the original article and the comments you will see that several readers raised this issue - and it could raise the death per visit rate by a factor of 50 if the average visit is only a week, by 25 if it is two weeks."

Editor's Note: The entire "Are Americans Safer in Mexico Than at Home?" and comments can be found at:
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/blog/2012/04/30/are-americans-safer-in-mexico-than-at-home/?affil=huffpostmod>

While Robert Reid's article recounts total numbers of murders per year in, for example, Texas and Mexico, he doesn't seem to factor in the amount of time spent in the respective locations in determining how many times safer one place is over the other. On the other hand, neither does he seem to factor in the number of Americans who live year-round in Mexico.

How Not to Get Beheaded in Mexico

Another take on the safety issue comes from DBTC Canadian members Dan and Lisa Goy, owners of Baja Amigos RV Caravan Tours, who sent us an informative, light-hearted piece by Douglas Anthony Cooper from the *Huffington Post, Canada*. It's an interesting read.

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/douglas-anthony-cooper/canada-attack-resort_b_1232486.html

Be sure to check out the Goy's *Baja Amigos* website www.bajaamigos.net for unique, small and personal RV caravan tours of Baja.

Construction Delays On Mex Hwy 5

DBTC member, Brian Smith, reports on all the construction going on Hwy 5 between Mexicali and San Felipe.

"Hwy 5, north of the west-bound exit for Hwy 3 to Ensenada has lots of rough road conditions before Mexicali. Consider taking Hwy 3 back to San Diego instead. I do not have mileage but it slowed us down to Mexicali an extra hour (we were towing our boat).

"If you use Hwy 5, expect to be traveling on dirt a lot of the way. It's been a while since I traveled this route, but I don't recall it ever being a problem. I don't know why they are tearing it all up but they are."

Produce Restrictions Going Into Baja Sur

DBTC member Bill Mattman was reminded of the restrictions on bringing certain fruits and vegetables across the 28th Parallel into Baja Sur.



"What we did not know—and it was the first time that they asked us—was that there are certain fruits and vegetables that tourists cannot bring into the state of Baja Sur, i.e. avacados, apples, limes, lemons. These were the items confiscated, but there may be others. They let us keep the onions, cucumbers and cilantro."

Editor's Note: This reminded me of a great story that legendary Baja author Graham Mackintosh told me of having his fruits and vegetables confiscated at the same point, then going into Guerrero Negro to replenish his supply at the Ballena Mercado. When he got back on

Mex 1 continuing south, he stopped to pick up a hitchhiker. It was none other than one of the inspectors going home to his family...with the bag of fruits and veggies that used to belong to Graham!

Rigged Pumps at a Rosarito PEMEX?

DBTC member Dominick Penna sends this advisory.

“Just want to warn your members about the new PEMEX / OXXO on the toll road through Rosarito--the new one right on the toll road before you get to the old one (Rosarito Sur) that used to have an AM/PM (now a 7/11). They are using rigged pumps and ripping off gas purchasers in a greedier way than I have ever personally experienced. They show all zeros on the pump, and pump the amount of pesos purchased, but the quantity is much less than specified.”



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3264 Governor Drive San Diego, CA 92122

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

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

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