

## BAJA NEWS

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

## **U.S. Consular in Los Cabos Reopens**



The U.S. Consular in Los Cabos, which has been closed since Hurricane Odile, reopened on March 2. For current services offered and the new hours, please see the link below:

http://tijuana.usconsulate.gov/consularagencyloscabos.html

## Discover Baja Now Has Auto Insurance for Mexican-Registered Vehicles

For our members who have imported your vehicle and have Mexican registrations, we are working with our insurance company HDI, to provide domestic insurance policies. If you have, or are going to have, a Mexican registered vehicle, give us a call and we can work with you to get a Mexican insurance policy. 800-727-2252



## From the DBTC Office

Spring is here! If you're headed down to Baja for spring break, be sure to get your insurance and FMM tourist permits ahead of time. Please remember to give us two weeks notice for prepaid FMM tourist permits.

We're happy to announce that we're partnering with Baja fishing expert Gary Graham to bring you reports of the best fishing on the peninsula each month. Check out page 5 for this month's Baja Fishing Report.

We'll be closing early on Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:30 in observance of Good Friday. We will be open on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> for normal business hours (10am-1pm).

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









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

PESO EXCHANGE RATE: \$14.9 to \$1 U.S. dollar

PEMEX PRICES: Northern Baja: Magna: \$3.50/gal, Premium: \$3.72/gal, Diesel: \$3.75/gal

Southern Baja: Magna: \$3.49/gal, Premium: \$3.59/gal, Diesel: \$3.65/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. 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 fee for DBTC to process. Service for DBTC members only.

www.discoverbaja.com/go/nautical-sportfishing-fmm/

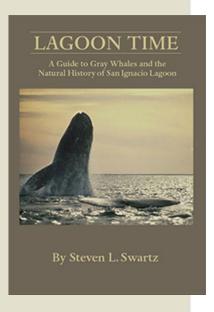
MEXICAN AUTO INSURANCE: www.discoverbajaonline.com

## Baja Book Shop Item of the Month

#### **LAGOON TIME**

"A Guide to Gray Whales and the Natural History of San Ignacio Lagoon" By Steven L. Swartz

If you can't make it down to pet the gray whales this year, this book is the next best thing. It will definitely motivate you to plan your trip for next year! Steven Swartz and Mary Lou Jones spent six whale seasons between 1977-1982 on the shores of San Ignacio Lagoon documenting the breeding, calving and behaviors of the gray whales. The resulting book, *Lagoon Time*, provides background about what led to their study and information on how they conducted their research. There's also a summary of the lagoon's natural history and a guide section that illustrates native flora and fauna as well as whale behavior. There are over 250 color photographs, maps, graphs and grayscale illustrations in the book. This is an enjoyable must-read for anyone who has ever visited, or dreams of visiting, San Ignacio Lagoon and the gray whales. *Softcover*, 6"x 9", 200 pp., \$29.10. https://squareup.com/market/discover-baja/lagoon-time





It may feel too early to start thinking about late summer when spring hasn't even arrived yet, but it's never too early to make your hotel reservation for the Valle de Guadalupe Vendimia Wine Harvest Festival. The dates for this year's Vendimia are August 7-23, 2015.

While the full schedule has yet to be released, August 7th will be the *muestra del vino* (wine tasting) event in Ensenada to kick off the festival and August 23rd will be the *Concurso de Paella* which is the grand event full of wine and paella that closes the festival.

This year will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Fiestas de la Vendimia. We'll be bringing you much more information as we get closer, but if you know you want to attend this year, now is the time to make a hotel reservation. Here are some of our favorites in the valley:

La Villa del Valle – www.lavilladelvalle.com Adobe Guadalupe – www.adobeguadalupe.com Encuentro Guadalupe – www.encuentroguadalupe.com Terra del Valle – www.terradelvalle.com Meson del Vino – www.hotelmesondelvino.com

If the hotels in the valley are booked or prices are too high, airbnb.com has some great options for house rentals in the area, and don't forget that Ensenada is only 30 minutes away with lots of great hotel options.

# ON OUR RADAR FOR MARCH

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

# MARCH 8 Daylight Savings Begins in Baja California



Baja California Norte and most of the U.S. go onto daylight savings today. Baja California Sur does not switch over to daylight savings until April 5.

### MARCH 12-22 Todos Santos Film Festival



Full-length films, shorts and documentaries will be shown at the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Todos Santos Film Festival.

www.todossantoscine.org

### MARCH 16 Birthday of Benito Juarez



Benito Juarez was a five-time president of Mexico, remembered as a progressive reformer who was dedicated to democracy. Schools and government offices in Mexico will be closed.

## MARCH 17 St. Patrick's Day



Ok, it's technically an Irish thing, but we're always looking for any excuse to get down to Baja and celebrate. Erin go braugh!

## MARCH 20 First Day of Spring



Celebrate springtime with a trip to Baja to pet the gray whales, a family camping trip, a fishing trip with the guys, or just to get out and explore!

## MARCH 21 Ensenada Beer Fest



The Ensenada beer fest will feature over 60 types of Baja craft beers. It's a fun-filled (and beer-filled) day for all.

www.facebook.com/ Ensenadabeerfest

### MARCH 27-28 San Felipe Blues & Arts Fiesta



The 9<sup>th</sup> annual San Feilpe Blues & Arts Fiesta will feature blues music and art creations at this fun-filled festival.

www.bluesandartsfestival.sa nfelipebclionsclub.com

# MARCH 29 East Cape Arts Festival



The 21st Annual Festival de Artes will be a showcase for local artists to display and sell their original art. www.eastcapearts.com/festival.html

## MARCH 29-APRIL 5 Semana Santa



Semana Santa (Holy Week) beings with Palm Sunday on March 29 and ends with Easter on April 5. Many Mexican families take vacation during this time so expect crowds at popular spots.

## NORRA Mexican 1000 April 25-29

The NORRA Mexican 1000, a fun-themed rally known affectionately as "The Happiest Race on Earth," is scheduled to take place from Saturday, April 25 through Wednesday, April 29, 2015. The rally will run the length of the Baja peninsula from Ensenada to San Jose del Cabo.

The 6th annual Mexican 1000 rally will once again separate cars and motorcycles with enough time and distance between two and four-wheel entries to insure participant enjoyment and safety. As has been NORRA tradition, the routes will be kept secret until just prior to the rally's start, with no pre-event course reconnaissance (pre-running) allowed.



"As a group, NORRA wants to insure that our expanding family of racers has a clear understanding of where the Mexican 1000 is going," explained organization President Mike Pearlman. "We spoke to many of our customers, and it was clear the Mexican 1000 has reached an important crossroad. Creating the most enjoyable event possible while staying true to the vintage off-road movement we are responsible for igniting are our first priorities."

A diverse field of over 200 trucks, sedans, buggies and motorcycles are expected to take on a 1,300-plus mile, four-day on and off-road rally in 2015.

Beginning in 2010, the National Off Road Racing Association (NORRA) began promoting a rebirth of the NORRA Mexican 1000 rally. The unique off-road rally was co-created by promoter Mike Pearlman to consist of special stages (unlimited speed timed stages in the dirt) linked together by controlled speed liaison / transit sections (highway). The one-of-a-kind, once-a-year, four-day rally includes vintage off-road vehicles and motorcycles, rally cars, a limited group of modern desert racecars and classes for prerunner trucks and buggies.

Pearlman's late father Ed, and others, established the first running of the NORRA Mexican 1000 off-road rally in November of 1967, which eventually became internationally recognized and evolved into the Baja 1000 in the mid-1970s, www.norra.com





## SCORE Baja Sur 500 April 16-19



The inaugural Bud Light SCORE Baja Sur 500 will take place from April 16-19, 2015. The 2015 Baja Sur 500 marks the first time a SCORE Baja race will be held entirely in Baja California Sur. It will be a point-to-point race starting in Cabo San Lucas on the southern tip of Baja and finishing in Loreto on the east side of the peninsula along the Sea of Cortez. For more information: www.score-international.com

# BAJA FISHING REPORT with Gary Graham

We're pleased to welcome Gary Graham, veteran fishing expert and Baja buff, to the Discover Baja team. Gary will be bringing us the Baja Fishing Report each month to stay afloat of the best fishing on the peninsula. You can read more about Gary on the next page.



Captain Wes Price with one of the 13 yellows landed.

By any vardstick you choose as a measuring device, the first two months of 2015 in Northern Baja fishing has been remarkable. As an example, the Coronado Islands have been producing good catches of both yellowtail and bottom fish for both trailer and sport boats. Of course, the larger sport boats have more bait capacity and, in most cases, sonar, and are outscoring the yachts and smaller boats by far as the yellowtail are on the move and not holding tight to any one spot.

Specifically, the yellows can be found outside of Pukey Point in the Rockfish area, down the weather side of North Island to the southern end, the Middle Grounds, South Kelp and SKR (South Kelp Ridge) along with the Flats and in to the east. They are biting on both the yoyo iron and the dropper loop sardine/mackerel. When they are feeding on the surface, birds will usually mark the spot. Surface iron or a fly-lined sardine will produce the best results then.

Recent red crab invasions seem to sporadically shut down the bite when the yellows gorge on the easy pickings. Experts say the crabs - about 1- to 3-inches long are seldom seen in the area this time of year and add that the warm water lingering near 60degrees has attracted them.

Captain Peter Groesbeck observed recently, "All you have to do is look at the SST's (sea surface temperatures) where the California current is still racing to Point Conception like it normally would in the fall."

The entire west coast to San Martin Island outside of San Quintin is producing similar results.

The "Reel Adventure" found yellowtail at Todos Santos and Banda Bank, producing near-limits of yellows up to 30 pounds on 6X Salas and Tadys A-4 blue and chrome in the red-crab-filled water. Owner Wes Price grinned, "Whale watching and yellowtail catching is just awesome! Pretty much any lure that looks like a mackerel or sardine will land you a fish!"

The few local boats taking advantage of the unusual winter fishing reported similar catches.



White sea bass, La Bocana

#### Continued from previous page

Other hot spots were Colonet, where San Diego sport boats along with a few yachts have been scoring limits of yellowtail and bottom fish on most trips; San Quintin; and even farther down along the Viscaino coast in Baja Sur from Turtle Bay to Abreojos where there have been impressive scores of white sea bass.

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The remainder of the Baja Sur action in the Sea of Cortez is more typical for this time of year with intermittent north winds.

The launch ramp is under repair in Loreto, but should be completed in a few weeks. Meanwhile, yellows and bottom fish are biting consistently on calm days.

La Paz and East Cape are in winter mode with some welcomed rain. The few anglers fishing in those areas are not disappointed with predictable catches of cabrilla and bonito up to 5 pounds, along with schools of tough jack crevalle up to 10 pounds. Catches have

also included pargo ... some larger that have been busted off in the rocks ... plus sierra along the beaches.

Down at San Jose, the panga fleet is buzzing with the news of the unusual (early or late?) whack of football-sized yellowfin tuna with a handful of larger tuna from 75 to 100 pounds, along with black skipjack, white tuna and Eastern Pacific bonito.

At the tip, dorado dominated the catch while billfish teased/tormented anglers showing themselves leaping and cavorting on the surface, ignoring most of the bait and lures offered.

For Baja Norte in the upcoming month there doesn't seem to be an end in sight for the ongoing yellowtail and white seabass snap, unless the water begins to cool. Then the fishing might return to less exotic and more traditional bottom fish.

Farther south, as March settles in, the area will begin to shed its "winter coat"...wink, wink! (Temps in the high 70s must sound like a heat wave to most of those living in the U.S.) Expect more sierra and yellowtail; the dorado should continue and the billfish lockjaw should begin to fade.

Lastly, everyone who reads this report might not recognize the fishing terms used. Following is a brief explanation:

dropper loop and animation http://www.animatedknots.com/ dropperloop/



Tady iron lures



#### Salas iron lures



Questions or comments are welcome, garyg@garycgraham.com

## More about Gary Graham...



With more than five decades of fishing experience – from light tackle and fly to offshore billfish – Gary Graham has experienced all aspects of fishing in the Southern California and Baja waters. His observations of species behavior, tackle and techniques are always from his unique perspective, earning him the respect of his peers as well as anglers who eagerly follow his Baja reports and features.

Gary maintained a home at East Cape in Baja Sur for more than 18 years and still spends nearly half of each year exploring the entire peninsula in his self-contained Roadtrek van. He observes everything Baja, from the mysteries of a tide pool on a deserted Baja beach filled with tiny sea creatures to the largest billfish in the sea. Contact Gary at garyg@garycgraham.com



In case you needed more proof that Baja's culinary scene is on the brink of explosion, Baja's department of tourism recently appointed a Baja "Foodie Ambassador" to help spread the word to gringos who haven't yet received the memo about the bourgeoning food scene in northern Baja. Sam Zien, of Sam the Cooking Guy, is the newly appointed ambassador who will be helping to make that bridge.

Sam recently took his first trip down as the official Foodie Ambassador to check out Tijuana, Valle de Guadalupe and Ensenada for a few days in order to "look with open eyes." He went to a number of popular foodie spots like Food Garden, Telefonica Gastro Park, Boules, Ophelia, Monte Xanic and La Cocina de Doña Esthela. While this trip was just about exploring and eating, later trips will involve filming for shows about Baja which will eventually run later this year.

Sam hadn't been down to Baja in

a few years and found himself pleasantly surprised. "I was not expecting the casually elegant food - in terms of preparation, plating and flavors." It was this combination of great food in an unpretentious environment that seemed to really catch his attention.

"In Tijuana, I could swing a cat over my head and let it go in any direction and there's no way it could not hit good food." He says. "Not that I would ever swing a cat over my head..."

If you aren't already familiar with Sam through his TV show on the Discover Health Channel, his livecast internet show or any of his three cooking books, it's this warm humor and casual approachability that has made him so popular. "I'm a regular guy who likes to cook," he says about himself. Well, a regular guy who also happens to have 14 Emmys. He also has a raw and relatable genuineness to him, which has been pivotal to his popularity and success.

It's this same genuineness that Sam's going to bring to his new role as Foodie Ambassador. People easily relate to him. He's a regular guy, who doesn't speak Spanish and is just getting into the culinary scene in Mexico. He's going to make Baja accessible to everyone. He'll help people understand that Mexico isn't scary and that there's also really good food. If Sam can spend the day exploring the pasajes of Tijuana and navigating the dirt roads of the Valle de Guadalupe, anyone can do it.

When Sam talks about the food scene in northern Baja, he uses terms like "casual sophistication," "relaxed but elevated environment," "European casualness," and "really good, honest combinations of flavors." It's very clear that he's genuinely taken with the quality of the food and the easy elegance of the restaurants in northern Baja. "You can go from Mision 19 to La Cocina de Doña Esthela to Boules and everything runs the gamut."

#### Continued from previous page

What most impressed him about his recent Baja trip was how inviting and different it is to eat in a restaurant in Mexico rather then a restaurant in the U.S. U.S. restaurants seem to be concerned with getting customers in and out in a fairly quick manner so that they can have more customers over the course of an evening and make more money. That's opposed to the Mexican way of lingering over a long and wonderful meal with friends and family, without ever feeling rushed by the restaurant. Sam picked up on this distinct difference rather quickly "It's like they're welcoming people to their homes - they want them to have great food and a great experience." That's more important to Mexican restaurant owners than making more money.

He talks of a particular experience with Esthela, the proprietor and namesake from La Cocina de Doña Esthela in Valle de Guadalupe, where she didn't charge for the meal once she learned who Sam was. Sam insisted on trying to give her money, but Esthela was even more insistent, saying that the meal was "from her heart."

Sam is hoping that his shows will help convince those who still need convincing to get back down to Baja again. He's optimistic that people will view his shows about Baja and see the amazing food, the welcoming people and warm culture and will say "let's go look again."

Sam's shows on Baja will be airing later this year. We'll be sure to keep you posted. For more information: www.thecookingguy.com





Sam with students at the Culinary Art School in Tijuana



Sam with Esthela from La Cocina de Doña Esthela in the Valle de Guadalupe



Dr. Hans Backhoff, Sam, and Israel Zenteno of Monte Xanic g

Searching out Exotic Margaritas



#### By Ann Hazard

In 2006 I discovered an unlikely place called Art & Beer on the far end of Cerritos Beach, about 20 minutes south of Todos Santos. I say unlikely because I was expecting a hippie art gallery serving beer. I got the art gallery right. I got the hippie part right. I was charmed by the rustic décor and all the living, breathing art and sculptures. It was magical. But the surprise was their signature—and my first-Exotic Margarita. It was called a Citrus Margarita. Served in a frosty beer mug, it was made of fresh—as in squeezed in front of my eyes— orange, grapefruit, tangerine and limon juices, tequila, Controy, an array of garnishes and a paper umbrella. It was incredible. I came back to Buena Vista after that trip and made them for all my friends.

On recent trips to Todos Santos I began noticing a trend. Every restaurant has at least one signature, exotic Margarita. I talked (it didn't take much talking) my friends Colleen and Deb into doing a three day Margarita Crawl —including Cerritos, Pescadero and Todos Santos. I'm certain there are fancy Margaritas all over Los Cabos, but I wanted to search out the cool, slightly offbeat places. We took three days and we visited six restaurants. We weren't just there for the drinking. We were there for the ambience. and as always on Baja's South Pacific Coast, the amazing food.

Thursday: Our first stop of the day was Tequila Sunrise, across the street from Hotel California in Todos Santos. It is always our favorite stop for lunch when we roll into town. Deb always orders the Shrimp Chile Rellenos. I never order anything but the Beef Chimichangas. The food is organic, beautifully prepared and ridiculously addicting. Owner Manuel Valdez (brother of Chuy who owns Hotel Buena Vista here) is charming. He welcomes every guest at every table. His traditional Margaritas are spectacular and he will show you how they're made when you visit. But we fell in love with the Mango version. Garnished with a slice of limon and sprig of mint, these are the best we've found. The recipes for both versions are on the wall, so bring a camera or cell phone.

Colleen met up with us at our second stop, the Hotel California. Deb and I fell in love with the Jamaica-Jalapeno Margarita a few months ago. Juan, the bartender showed me how it was made this time and I took notes. (I have all the recipes, actually.) I love the spicy edginess of the jalapeno, complementing the tang of the Jamaica. Colleen hadn't ever tried one before, and her eyes lit up as she took her first sip. Another winner.

Next door, Chef Dany Lamote, Hotel California's executive chef. has a boutique restaurant called Santo Vino. His most divine, decadent Margarita is a White Chocolate Margarita, made with Mezcal. As a dessert drink it's unbeatable.

**Friday**: It rained early on, so we got a late start, stopping in for lunch at Hierbabuena Hortaliza, a farm to table restaurant I frequent every single time I'm on the west coast. Located in Pescadero just down the road by the Pemex Station, the dining area is an open air pavilion in the middle of an organic farm. To the east are the towering Sierra de la Laguna. To the west is the Pacific. Sitting there, we were surrounded by fields, palm groves and the farm.

#### Continued from previous page

I am always in awe when I go there. The food, again, was phenomenal. Owner/Chef Marcos made us a trio of exotic Margaritas. I chose the Pomegranate Margarita, made with mescal and fresh pomegranate juice from the garden. Deb had a Mango Margarita and Colleen had a Baja Sunrise, with house made Jamaica liqueur, lime, fresh orange juice and tequila. Craving Italian food, I had Eggplant Parmesan for lunch. The others shared hummus and fresh veggies along with Roasted Squash Soup. To-die-for.

We had planned to visit Rancho Pescadero, a world class boutique resort closer to the beach, but it was closed for a private event. I've been there before and I will attest that their Pineapple-Cilantro Margarita is excellent, as is there chilerimmed Mango Margarita.

Saturday: Our first stop was Art & Beer, the place that started it all for me nine years ago. Instead of just one Exotic Margarita, there was now an entire chalk board filled with them. Deb ordered a Kiwi Margarita. Colleen ordered a Mixed Berry Margarita and I went with my old favorite, the Citrus Margarita. While we were waiting for them to be made, we wandered around the property and took photos. There was far more art and sculptures than on

my previous visit, and the backdrop of Cerritos Beach and the Pacific was beautiful. All three Margaritas were delicious and beautifully garnished. As we drank them, we discussed but decided against having another round. Instead we put the paper umbrellas behind our ears and headed north to our next destination.

Hacienda Cerritos is a spectacular Mexican Hacienda perched dramatically on the cliffs at the north end of Cerritos Beach. Its oceanfront bar is open to the public, and a must see for all visitors. Their signature drink is the Basil Margarita. Deb and Colleen had theirs on the rocks and I had mine blended. We agreed mine was better. I am a huge fan of basil, and this drink rocks my world. The view isn't bad either and we spotted plenty of whales in the short time we were there.

Because we could, we made out last stop Hierbabuena Hortaliza again. This time, Marcos made Deb his version of the Basil Margarita with muddled basil from his garden, white tequila, limon and Controy. It was shaken like and served with a salted rim. Colleen tried his Watermelon Margarita and I had a Pineapple-Cilantro Margarita. Every one delicious.

So ... is anyone up for an Exotic Margarita Party? Ole!



The Margarita Board at Art & Beer



Margaritas at Hierbabuena Hortilaza

## A Few Great Reasons to get down to Baja right now:

- The toll road from Rosarito to Ensenada is reopened so it's now smooth sailing to get to Ensenada and beyond!
- ◆ The dollar is strong against the peso. At almost 15 to 1, your dollar now goes even farther in Baja.
- Since opening the new lanes at San Ysidro in September 2014, the border wait has been significantly shorter, making it easier and worthwhile to cross for even a day trip to Baja.
- It's springtime! It's not too hot in Baja Sur, not too crowded in northern Baja, the whales are friendly and the peninsula is in bloom. Let's Baja!

# Baja Photo Essay

By David Kramer

Early 2015 saw Poseidon send a number of solid swells toward the peninsula. For the surfer and naturalist, there is no better time to wander and relish the desert coast. For information on conservation efforts in the region, visit WILDCOAST.COM



Wavy turban (Megastaea undosa) shells litter the beaches.



Waves wrapping around the points of Baja California afford the enthusiast long rides.



"Harfordia macroptera," or Rabbit's Purse, is found nowhere else on Earth.



Puesta del sol panorama, horizon-to-horizon. 11



Offshore winds met waves coming onshore for a number of memorable days.



Cholla (Opuntia sp.) close-up.



Agave shawii used to serve as a year-round source of food for the indigenous peoples. Today, locals still harvest the flowering stalks for cattle feed.



Ospreys (Pandion haliaetus) are primarily piscivorous raptors that nest in picturesque places such as this sea stack.

## Hasta la Proxima



## DISCOVER BAJA MEMBERS, WELCOME TO DON EDDIE'S Hotel, Restaurant, Bar, Sportsfishing, Kayaking, RV Park, Camping

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#### 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 fediocomiso (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 asequias (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.

