

THE DIAMOND OF CHILENO

By Matthew Dexter. Photos by Sole Caliente



Over the years our exquisite Cape Region has earned the exceptional reputation of visceral aquatic beauty. Many visitors unfamiliar with the area may question whether Los Cabos deserves this high praise. I per-



sonally and enthusiastically affirm that it most certainly does. Playa Chileno (Chileno Beach) is living proof and testament that Los Cabos is, in fact an indisputable and unprecedented treasure of sand and water.



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Chileno Beach separates itself from all others with its unique, stunning, and eclectic scenery. Diving, snorkeling, and swimming amid the warm turquoise waters is absolutely extraordinary.

Everybody who is familiar with Los Cabos and the golden shimmering shoreline between Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo simply cannot deny that there is something genuinely remarkable and special about Chileno Beach. Situated amid the ethereal epicenter of the Tourist Corridor, Chileno is easily accessible from both San José and Cabo.

Chileno is what many Cabo aficionados consider to be among the best beaches on the entire corridor, if not the most beautiful and scenic beach in all of Los Cabos. Chileno is a dream. Not just any dream, but one of those magical dreams you never want to wake from. Unless, as in this case, it comes true.

All those Los Cabos dreamers who know the intricate ins and outs of every beach, even the ones they don't put on the maps, can easily put Chileno on their top three list. Chileno separates itself from all the others with its unique, stunning, and eclectic scenery. Wide and relatively flat, Chileno is the perfect environment for running, sunning, strolling, and always-safe swimming.

An elaborate palm grove labyrinth offers a natural umbrella, providing plenty of heavenly and picturesque spaces for shade. Magnificent, rocky reefs run parallel to the beach, blossoming with orbiting galaxies of tropical fish, sea turtles, shells, moray eels, invertebrates, sea urchins, sponges, lobsters, gorgonians (sea fans), and starfish.

Diving, snorkeling, or swimming amid the warm turquoise waters of Chileno is absolutely extraordinary. You may feel like you are synchronized swimming in ecstasy with Poseidon himself. Make sure to take an underwater camera because this underwater postcard is like no other dominion in the universe, full of bright beauty and vivid colors you won't even imagine existed until you experience it first hand.

Keep in mind that Chileno does receive organized snorkel boat tours around noon most days. If you're searching for more privacy, just stroll to the left-hand side of the beach toward the reef and the palms. Here you will discover multiple secret areas where you can settle into that perfect unearthly spot to enjoy the scenic cove region and the beauty of the ocean. To reach this secluded oasis you need

LOS CABOS beaches



tance, you will be immersed in elegant serenity unlike any other paradise in Los Cabos. I shouldn't mention this because some of us wanted to keep this magnificent jewel all for ourselves. It's certainly a worthy and price-less paradise.

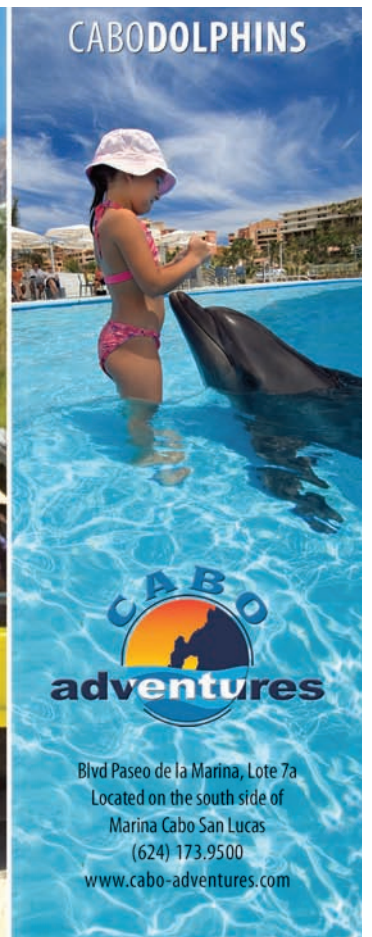
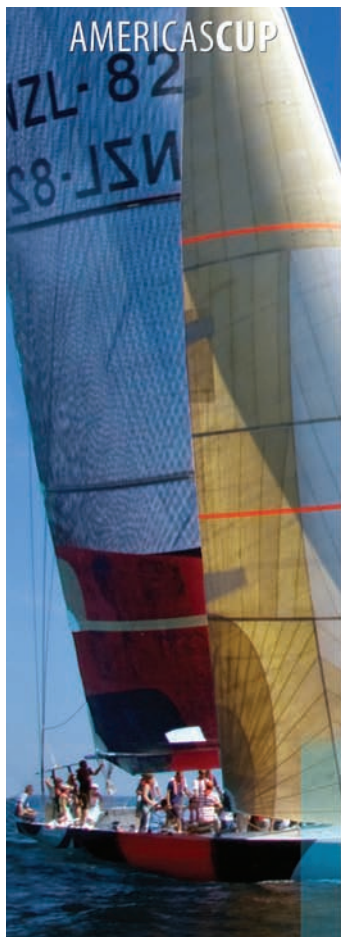
Chileno Beach is easy to find, situated on the Transpeninsular Highway between San José and San Lucas around kilometer 14.5. There's an ample parking area and a bus stop.

You won't find but occasional vendors combing Chileno Beach. Make sure to bring lots of sun block, water, snacks, drinks, bathroom tissue, and ice. Beach umbrellas, beach chairs and snorkeling gear are available for rent by the entrance to the parking lot, but bring your own music, sand toys for the children, and a hat. You will be happy to learn that Chileno is the only beach in this fabulous area with restrooms. The parking lot at Chileno is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day. Sundays are the most popular days, so the lot may be crowded.

to walk a few minutes from the central area where you'll enter. Walk past where most beachgoers are usually congregated and cross the rocks on the far left-hand side of the beach. Make sure you bring your sandals.

At Chileno you will find amazing tranquility amid shimmering picturesque brilliance. Except for the few private luxury residences embraced by palm groves in the dis-

Now it's your turn to prove that Chileno is a real diamond among the sandy shores of Los Cabos.



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Los Cabos Beaches

Cabo San Lucas

Solmar Beach (Playa Solmar) is great for sunbathing, walking and enjoying sunsets to the west. Water activities, however, should be avoided, due to frequent dangerous rogue waves, a steep drop-off and undertows. Access is via Avenida Solmar, right off Marina Boulevard, past the Galeon restaurant. No facilities.

Lover's Beach (Playa del Amor) is a must-see for anyone with an ounce of romance in them. Framed by the mighty Land's End rock formations, this beach is great for sunbathing, swimming or snorkeling. Access is via Solmar Beach, water taxi, or glass bottom boat. Caution: don't lose wallets, keys, cameras etc. when jumping into the surf as you hop out of the water taxi.

Médano Beach (Playa El Médano) has been called "party central," "spring break beach," "Disneyland by the sea" and more! Tan the day away and enjoy all the beach action from one of the hundreds of chaise lounges thoughtfully provided by the many restaurants, bars and beach clubs, while enjoying all the beach action. Swim, Jet Ski, catamaran, kayak or parasail. Parking is difficult, though some restaurants offer valet parking. Beach begins on the east side of the Cabo marina entrance and runs for almost two miles to the east.

Tourist Corridor

Widows Beach (Playa Las Viudas) offers the peace and tranquility many come to Baja to experience. No vendors, no crowds (often no one at all)—it's located on a rugged mile stretch of coast with rocks, reefs, and tidal pools. Snorkel and swim when the surf permits. Access at Km. 12.5. No facilities. Park at the beach.

Santa María Bay (Bahía Santa María) is a marine sanctuary loaded with tropical fish that love to be hand fed tortillas. Snorkeling in the early morning is best for underwater visibility. This little cove is nestled between two headlands, creating a feeling of intimacy and seclusion. Bring your own beach umbrella or rent it, along with other beach gear, at the entrance. It's about a two-block hike in from the highway to the parking lot. Located at Km 13.

Chileno Bay (Bahía Chileno) is where locals love to have their family-day-at-the-beach excursions on weekends. Snooze the day away under shading palms, or snorkel or spearfish in the bay. On the weekend, be prepared for a fiesta-like ambience, full of families and vendors selling snacks, etc. Beach gear is available for rent near the entrance by the highway. This beach has public restroom facilities (Bring your own tissue). One can take a snorkel tour boat from Cabo here or to Santa María Beach. A one-block walk to the beach from the highway. Located at Km. 14.5

Tequila Cove (Playa Bledito) has a man-made breakwater located in front of Hilton and Melia Cabo Real hotels. Here you can swim or rent watercraft for fun on the high seas. Meliá Cabo Real and

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LOS CABOS beaches

Hilton front the beach and have restaurants, bars, boutiques, delis, and other services available. Located at Km. 19.5 at the Cabo Real complex. Enter through the Meliá Cabo Real or Hilton hotels.

San José del Cabo

Palmilla Beach (Playa Palmilla) is the finest beach in San José for swimming, snorkeling, or spending a pleasant day at the beach. A serene half-mile wide cove with coral covered rocks and reefs. There's a panga and charter boat fishing fleet based here. Go big-game fishing or enjoy watching the pangas arrive late mornings with their catch of the day. Join the crowd of pelicans and watch the fishermen filet the fish. Some shade palapas, no facilities, good parking located close to the beach. Located off the arroyo, just outside the entrance to the

One&Only Palmilla Resort. Take the Palmilla exit at Km. 27, head south to the arroyo, and turn left into the parking lot past the taxi stand.

Old Man's Beach (Playa Acapulquito) has a perfect beginner's and long boarder's break located in front of the Cabo Surf Hotel. Great sunbathing and swimming (when the surf is down). Surf legend Mike Doyle's surf school is located on the beach offering surf board and beach gear rentals. Park in the public lot at Km 27.75 east of the Palmilla exit. Enter via the tunnel under the lot.

Blue Coast Beach (Playa Costa Azul) is a great place to enjoy sunbathing and swimming during the winter (surf permitting.) Famous local surf breaks here include Zippers for the pros and The Rock for intermediate level surfers. Convenience store and surf board rentals nearby. Located at Km 28. Go under the Costa Azul Bridge to the beach from both directions on the highway.

Hotel Beach (Playa Hotelera) is a broad beach running for several miles from Costa Azul to the San José Estuary. This beach area is generally unsafe for swimming due to a deep drop-off, rip tides and heavy surf with rogue waves. Great for horse riding, walking, sunbathing, volleyball, and surf fishing. Access the beach through walkways located between the Crowne Plaza and the Royal Solaris hotels, or below Plaza Garuffi (below the Mega shopping plaza).

Note: See our Tourist Corridor and city maps for beach locations. Kilometer markers run along the Transpeninsular Highway, beginning with Km. 0 in downtown Cabo San Lucas, increasing as you travel northeast to San José del Cabo. Few Los Cabos beaches have services; lifeguards are rare. Not all beaches are suitable for swimming or watersports: use caution and stay well above the tide line. Pacific Ocean beaches are known for rogue waves and undertows and are not recommended for swimming at any time.



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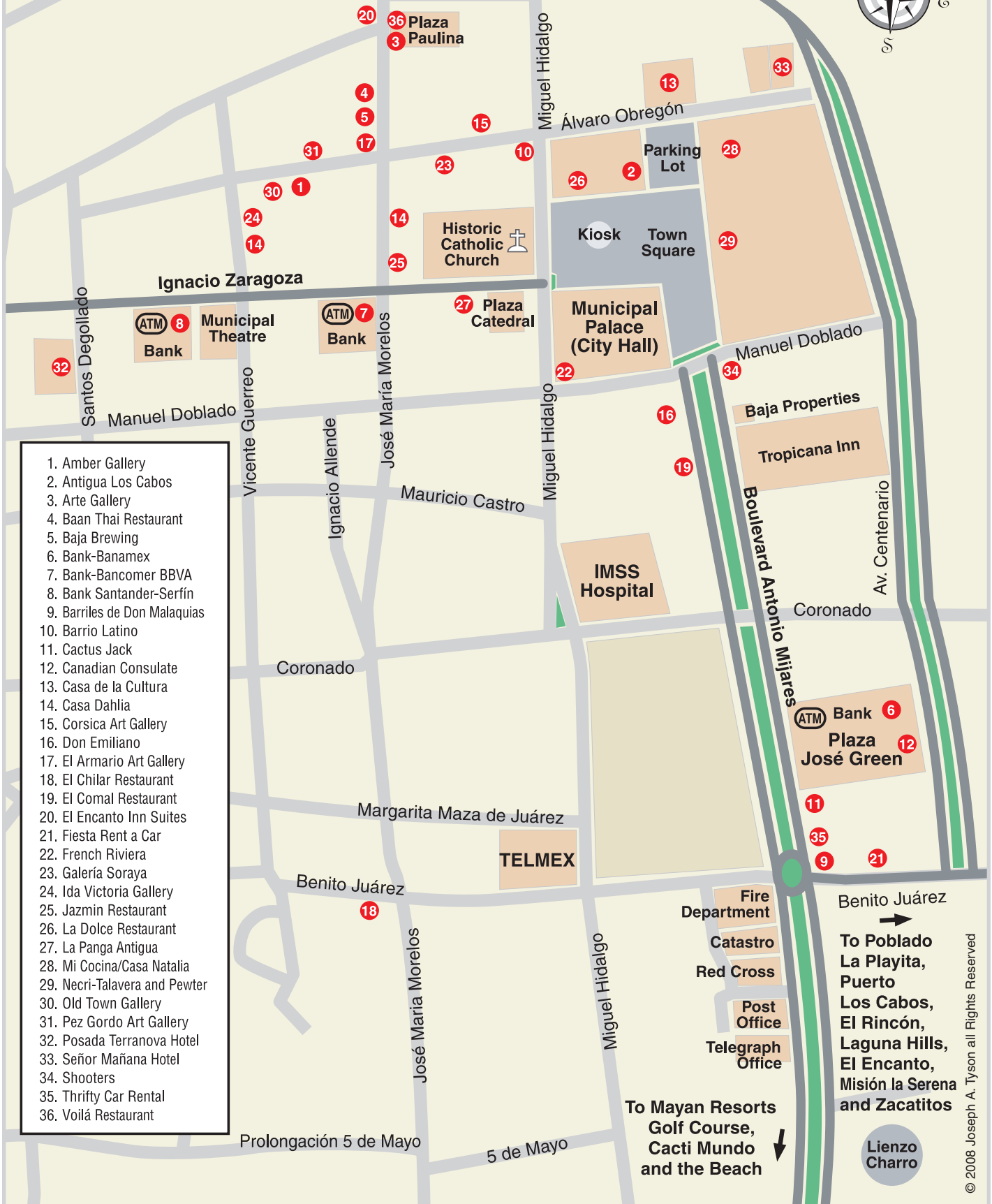
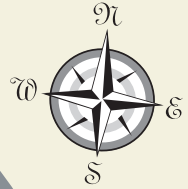


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By JoAnn Hyslop

Gentle Giants of the Deep

Now that you're down here in Los Cabos, why not plan a whale-watching trip? There's nothing like seeing these gentle giants up close and personal. Although there are several different types of whales that cruise the waters surrounding the Baja California Peninsula, the gray whale is the one most people hope to see when they are planning a whale watching trip. Although you can see grays from the shoreline in the Pacific waters off of Land's End, the most popular spots to mingle with grays from late December through early June are: Magdalena Bay (Bahía Magdalena), San Ignacio Lagoon (Laguna San Ignacio), and Scammon's Lagoon (Laguna Ojo de Liebre).

The gray whale is an air-breathing, warm-blooded mammal. Adult whales can grow from 30 to 50 feet in length and weigh from 20 to 40 tons. The average life span is 30 to 40 years, but occasionally a whale will live to 60. Calves are around 15 feet in length and weigh 1.5 tons at birth. They consume 50 gallons of milk and gain 60 to 70 pounds daily. The gray is classified as a baleen whale (Mysticeti), using their fringed "moustache" made of keratin (the same material as your fingernails) to capture and eat krill and small shrimp that live in the seawater sediments.



Aboyo Hélix AV

Pelicans and gray whales peacefully co-exist in Magdalena Bay, about 300 miles north of Los Cabos.

The grays spend the summer months feeding in the Chukchi, Bering and Beaufort seas between Siberia and Alaska. They begin heading south in October as the water starts to cool down. Courtship takes place as the gray slowly heads down the Pacific coasts of Alaska, Canada and California. Grays begin to arrive in Southern Baja's subtropical waters in late November. Although a few calves are born along the migration route, most births occur in the lagoons, where Southern Baja's warm, safe waters insure a high success rate. The migration north occurs in reverse order. The newly pregnant females and other single whales begin heading out starting in February. New mothers and their calves linger behind, occasionally as late as May and June. The total round-trip migration covers over 12,000 miles with water temperatures ranging from 41 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

The migration of the gray whale to the southern half of the Baja Peninsula is not the only long journey they have experienced. When populations of other whales hunted by European and Yankee whalers became depleted during the early years of the 19th century, whalers turned to the gray whale to fill their holds. The migration route to the Baja calving lagoons had been discovered, thus opening the door for the wholesale slaughter of the grays. By 1874, an estimated 10,000 to 11,300 gray whales had been killed. Six years later the gray whale population was so depleted that many whalers decided that hunting the gray was no longer profitable. It was abandoned in 1890, when the population had been reduced to a few thousand. In 1946, measures were finally taken to fully protect the gray from annihilation.

Grays begin to arrive in Southern Baja's subtropical waters in late November. Although a few calves are born along the migration route, most births occur in the lagoons, where Southern Baja's warm, safe waters insure a high success rate.

Although the gray whale had been near extinction, they have now recovered to the extent that they have been taken off the "endangered species" list. In 1972, the Mexican government established a natural refuge of the gray whale at Scammon's and San Ignacio lagoons and Magdalena Bay. The gray whale is off-limits to hunting and is also protected under the auspices of the International Whaling Commission. As a result, breeding has flourished. By 1991, the total population was estimated to be 21,000, a number thought to be higher than before commercial whaling activities.

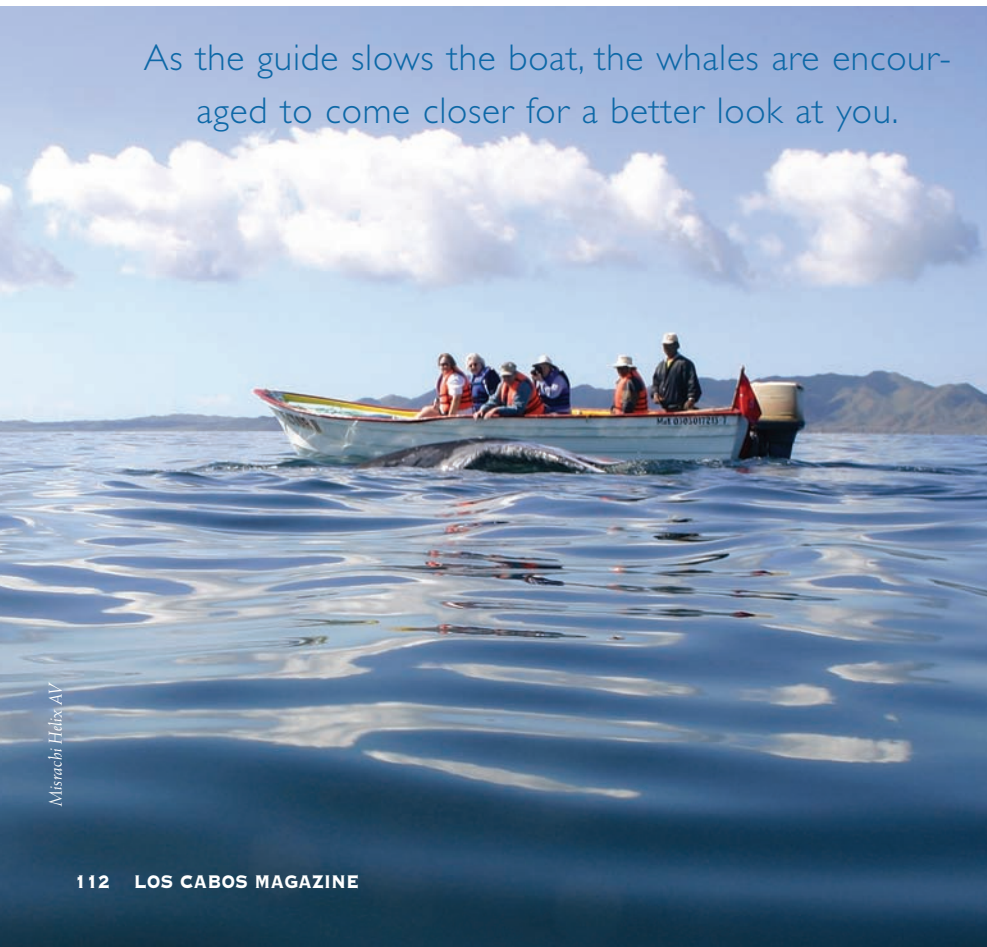
Viewing the gray whale in its natural environment is an unforgettable experience. I recently heard a story of a friend's gray whaling trip to Laguna San Ignacio last year. "The greatest thrill was when a mom and her baby swam close by! She rolled over on her back and we actually scratched her tummy. Then others came and swam right up to the boat to take a look. They were so close we could reach over the side and pet them," she told me. "We discovered later that the mothers are actually teaching



Misraichi Heix AV

Look for the whales to project their bodies eight to 10 feet straight up above the surface of the water. This is called, "skyhopping." Scientists believe the whale is simply looking around.

As the guide slows the boat, the whales are encouraged to come closer for a better look at you.



Misraichi Heix AV

their babies that they are safe with us. We also learned that the female whales are friendlier after March when the males have left to return north. With the males gone, they can relax!"

All you need now is to decide what kind of a gray whaling experience you want to have. You can simply watch from shore, or join a guided expedition on a charter boat. A popular option for many visitors is a day trip to Magdalena Bay or Puerto López Mateos, located approximately 300 miles north of Cabo San Lucas. These locations also have overnight accommodations. If you want to spend more time with the whales, and experience additional views of Baja's natural wonders, consider a trip up to one of the gray whale sanctuaries at Laguna San Ignacio or Scammon's Lagoon. There are several outfitters who specialize in these longer trips. Check with your hotel concierge for detailed information.

You're ready to go! Don't forget your binoculars and your camera! Here are some things to watch for on your trip. First, look and listen for the "blow." This means that the whale is expelling air and is ready to take another breath. As they move through the water, they show their course by leaving what will appear to be an oil slick on the surface. As your guide slows the boat to encourage the whales to come closer, look for the whales to project their bodies eight to 10 feet straight up above the surface of the water. This is called, "skyhopping." Scientists believe the whale is simply looking around. Occasionally, you may see mothers and their babies swimming together close to the surface and performing "roll-overs." Sometimes males get into a frenzy of activity and put on quite a show!

There are many tour providers who offer whale-watching expeditions locally. Pez Gato, Buccaneer Queen, Cabo Xtreme, and Cabo Sail's Yael are all great options.

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Canyon of the Fox

The Desert's Hidden Treasure



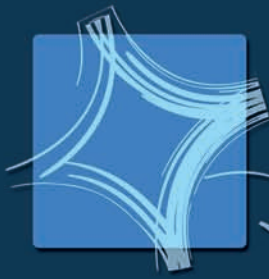
An oasis in the desert, Canyon of the Fox's 15-meter waterfall cascades into a cool welcoming pond at the end of your journey.

Los Cabos is forever shimmering with pervasive natural magnificence, which you can easily find in every direction you turn. To discover the most intricate beauty of Baja California Sur, however, you must travel northward. There you will find the charming towns of indigenous ranchers, who have existed in isolation for centuries, subsisting amid the land, rivers, mountains, and canyons. There you will discover the hidden corners of ethereal paradise.

As you travel farther away from the heart of the tourist center, beyond the glitzy luxury resorts and past the Los Cabos International Airport, you will encounter an arid and extremely hot climate, with summer temperatures

reaching up to 120° F in the shade. Only about 50 miles north from Cabo San Lucas, within the Sierra de La Laguna Biosphere Reserve, patient travelers will find unexpected treasures, such as the Canyon of the Fox or Cañon de La Zorra.

With a four-wheel drive vehicle you will be able to journey past the beaten path. You'll go along Highway 1, past the towns of Miraflores and Caduño, then east to the town of Santiago. After driving through the entrance to town, you'll turn right just before the main square at the intersection and then proceed up the hill following signs to Sol de Mayo, a small community located near the Canyon of the Fox. After reaching the



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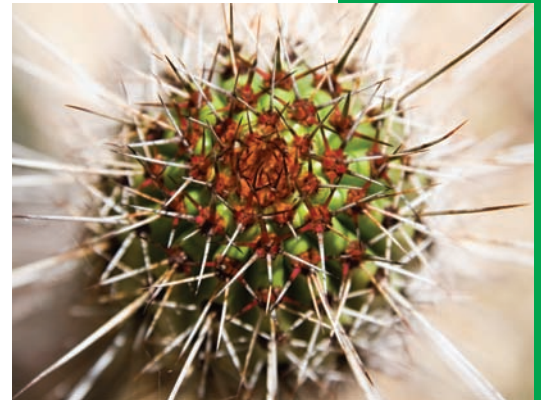
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Abundant in nature are flora and fauna at Canyon of the Fox.

parking lot, it is a twenty-minute moderately easy hike, with a slight elevation change along the way, through the canyon to the waterfall.

The hike will take you along a well-marked trail, where you'll see indigenous animals and plants against the spectacular background of the sierra mountains. Countless species of cacti and other desert jewels will amaze you with their beauty and their winning ways of survival. Only few animals are likely to cross your way, as most venture out at night. You may spot lizards, snakes, roadrunners, even tarantulas, but larger creatures, such as coyotes, are hardly ever seen by day.

Your final destination on this hike is an ethereal cascading 15-meter high waterfall that will enrapture and seduce your eyes and soul like nothing you have ever seen. Surrounded by a granite rock oasis, the shimmering fresh water falls into a small pond miraculously cooling down the burning surface of the desert. Dive in and refresh yourself, swimming with the Gods amid the greatest treasure that nature has ever dreamt.

The best time to visit the Canyon of the Fox and the surrounding areas is during the months directly following the rainy season, which usually ends in October. At this time of year, you'll be offered an incredible sight of the desert in

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LOS CABOS outdoors

bloom. Plants turn green and bloom in all possible colors, attracting insects, birds, and bats. The desert becomes a buzzing site of the fight for survival. The waterfall dries out around April. The landscape is entirely transformed by the middle of the dry season, between April and July, when the desert's cruel domain turns every drop of moisture into a life-saving blessing.

Make sure you bring appropriate shoes, preferably hiking shoes, sunscreen, a camera, a bathing suit, and plenty of water. To get the most out of this adventure, go early in the morning from October through April, after the rains and hurricanes have left their impression on this majestic environment.

You can enjoy this amazing journey into one of nature's greatest oases in your own vehicle, but you'll find it more educational, comprehensive, and safe, if



The journey to Canyon of the Fox can be made in your own vehicle, but with an experienced tour guide your visit will be enlightening.

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