BAJA TIMES

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June 1-15, 2019 — E-mail: bajatimes@yahoo.com — WWW.BAJATIMES.COM

LOCAL & WORLD NEWS

CNN Re-Exposes Baja Real Estate Scam...Erin Burnett, in her news segment this past week, talked with members of a California family that lost $400,000 in the failed Trump Baja venture. In her report, Burnett talked with a woman named Sandra Sapol, who in 2006 bought a condo at what was supposed to be a new Trump-branded property called the Trump Ocean Resort Baja Mexico. Sapol said that a woman selling condos at the resort met with her and showed her brochures of what the resort would look like — and they came complete with an endorsement from Trump himself that guaranteed people would have "the time of their lives" at his new resort. "Whatever Donald Trump touches turns fantastically gold," Sapol said in explaining her reason for buying the condo. But the resort was never built and Sapol lost all the money she invested. On the site of where the hotel was supposed to be constructed is a giant hole in the ground — and nothing more. "There's my hole!" Sapol said while choking back tears. "That's what I bought, my hole!" Burnett went on to explain how the people selling the condos were using Trump's brand under a licensing deal under which they misled buyers into believing they were buying property directly from Trump himself. "In the brochure, it says, 'Developed by one of the most respected names in real estate, Donald J. Trump,'" Burnett explained. "In fact, here's a letter from the developer and Donald Trump's name is at the bottom!" "This looks deliberately misleading because the president's signature is right on the bottom of the letter!" commented CNN host Jim Sciutto.

Juniper & Ivy ranked among best restaurants in the US ...a San Diego restaurant has been named among the best restaurants in the US according to Open Table Magazine Juniper & Ivy boasts a one-of-a-kind destination for guests and uses only fresh, locally-sourced ingredients and a menu from Executive Chef Anthony Wells. Located in what used to be an abandoned warehouse in the northern corner of Little Italy, the fine-dining restaurant draws its inspiration from the "left coast cookery" and uses flavors from Baja to Vancouver .Juniper & Ivy has a constantly-rotating menu and features hand-selected local ingredients. Several of the restaurant's signature dishes include the smoking biscuit, whole roasted duck and the yodel. If wine is more your flavor, Juniper & Ivy also has an award-winning wine lost and servers who know their stuff.

Your Next Mexico Trip is Just a Drive Across The Border

Written by Megan Spurrell for Conde Nast

See page 10

"The diversity of what you'll see, do, and dine upon is mind boggling. It includes the inspirational views at El Mirador, just north of Ensenada (L) and the just-caught panoply of seafood at Popotla, a tiny fishing village just south of Rosarito (R) .

Still Snowing in Baja!!!

"The cold temperatures should've ended on March 21st"

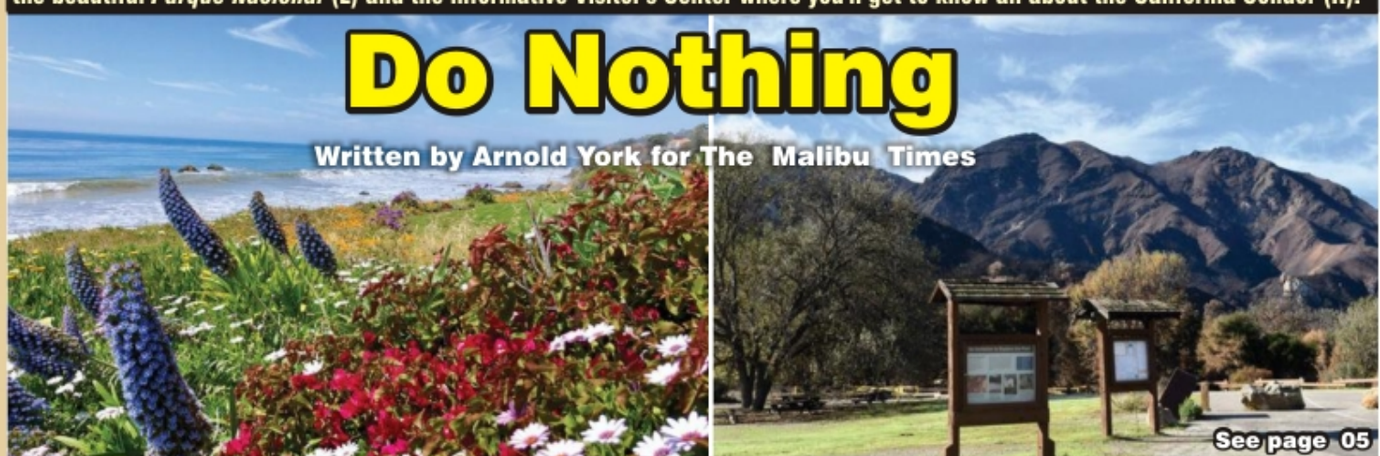
Written by Mike Madriaga For The San Diego Reader

See page 09

The scenic drive to the mountains of the *San Pedro Martir* range, towering above 11,000 feet, includes the entrance to the beautiful *Parque Nacional* (L) and the informative Visitor's Center where you'll get to know all about the California Condor (R).

Do Nothing

Written by Arnold York for The Malibu Times



See page 05

Malibu, although only a few miles from LA's urban sprawl, is a unique location for all who get to experience its scenic wonders...from its gorgeous Lechuza Beach,"where the flowers meet the sea", (L) to its "nestled-in-the-mountains" Leo Carrillo State Park campgrounds (R).

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We're #4: Our Planet's 5 Best Healthcare Providers

Written by Casey Dowd

Healthcare bills for retirees in the US is one of the biggest expenses incurred in your "golden years". A recently released fidelity study estimates that a healthy, 65-year-old couple will need $275,000 to cover their healthcare costs in retirement—and that doesn't include the cost of over-the-counter medications, dental care, or long-term care.

But according to a recent survey, there are places overseas where retirees can enjoy excellent-quality healthcare—as good if not better than what they expect in the US for pennies on the dollar. International Living.com recently compared and contrasted the benefits of life in the top 24 countries around the world they recommend for an overseas retirement.

"In addition to a survey of specific prices for a range of treatments, medications, and insurance, we also take into account the ease with which expats can access care. In the communities we recommend in all the nations that top our list, expats can find excellent healthcare at prices as low as 50% or less of what they'd expect to pay at home in the United States," says International Living's Executive Editor, Jennifer Stevens.

Stevens discussed the top 5 countries International Living recommends for retirees when it comes to healthcare overseas – and why:

COSTA RICA: In Costa Rica, modern, state-of-the-art healthcare is available almost everywhere. The United Nations has ranked Costa Rica's public health system within the top 20 worldwide and the number one in Latin America. The country provides universal healthcare to its citizens and all legal residents—that means you, if you're an expat. International Living's correspondent in the Central Valley, John Michael Arthur, reports that he and his partner pay $82 a month as a couple to access the country's universal system—after that, all their care is covered and free.In addition, there's a private system in which prices are about one-third of what they'd be in the U.S. As a result, many expats use the public system as a failsafe—and then pay out of pocket to physicians in the private system for regular visits, second-opinion consultations, dental work, and so on.

MALAYSIA:In Malaysia, the doctors typically speak English and most were trained in the UK, U.S., or Australia so they are familiar with Western standards of care. Many of the hospitals in Kuala Lumpur and Penang are Joint Commission Internationally accredited, meaning that they are considered to meet the global gold standard in healthcare. Costs are much lower than what we're used to in the U.S. If you're paying out-of-pocket, a first-time doctor or specialist visit usually costs between $15 and $65 and follow-up visits are typically $11 to $28. An overnight hospital stay will cost somewhere between $55 and $200 per night for a private room.

COLOMBIA: The World Health Organization (WHO) ranks Colombia's healthcare system as 22 out of the 191 countries they review. (That is better than Canada at 30 and the U.S. at 37.) The care is top notch and the price is a small fraction of what it would add up to in the U.S. Co-pays for the public health plan are based on a three-tiered system—the mid-range price is about $3—and apply to laboratory tests, x-rays, and prescription medications. Private health insurance is an option for people under the age of 60 as a supplemental plan to the EPS public coverage. But many expats simply choose to pay for care out-of-pocket. Prices for procedures, office visits, and medications are much lower than in the U.S. For example, a one-hour consultation with a specialist costs about $50.

MEXICO: In Mexico, every medium to large city has at least one first-rate hospital. Most doctors and dentists in Mexico received at least part of their training in the U.S., so they're familiar with the care expats expect and they speak English. International Living's Mexico Editor, Glynna Prentice, says, "In Mexico, I have access to two affordable healthcare systems: public and private. In Mexico's private healthcare system, costs—pretty much across the board—run 25% to 50% of U.S. costs for comparable services. And as a legal resident in Mexico, I also have access to Mexico's public healthcare system, which runs most people around $300 to $400 or so a year—or less," says Prentice, one of an estimated 1 million Americans now living in Mexico. Most common name-brand prescription drugs are available in Mexico—at 25% to 50% less than what they cost north of the border and generics are available for many off-patent drugs as well. Many doctors routinely make house-calls and phone you to inquire about your health, after treatment. In fact, many pharmacy chains provide a free physician whose office is attached to the pharmacy. Simply walk in and pay nothing for a consultation. And most medications do not require a prescription.

PANAMA: Panama provides good quality, affordable healthcare with clinics and hospitals tactically located in hubs across the country. Major facilities in Panama City are all affiliated with sister facilities in the U.S., from the likes of Miami Children's Hospital (now Nicklaus Children's) to Johns Hopkins International. And since the country is so small, it's unlikely retirees will be more than an hour from a modern facility. "I've been in Panama for over ten years now and sometimes I forget just how good we have it until I go back to the States and see some of the prices," says Jessica Ramesch, International Living Panama Editor."Though of course costs go up over time—everywhere—I am still spending around 50% less on doctor's consults and dental appointments than my friends back in the States.

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Round-trip Weekend Shuttle From The U.S. To The Rosarito Beach Hotel Inaugurated

Written By Ron Raposa

ROSARITO BEACH, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO---The first round-trip weekend shuttle from the U.S. to the iconic Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa was inaugurated in a ceremony Thursday (May 23) attended by dignitaries from both sides of the border.

For many, the scenic 14-mile coastal drive from the U.S. to Baja's largest beachfront resort is a highlight of the trip. But for others, the shuttle can provide a faster and easier way to cross the border between the U.S. and Mexico.

"For those who prefer to let someone else drive, the shuttle is a comfortable and convenient alternative," said Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa owner Hugo Torres.

An announcement ceremony in the resort's Casa Blanca room attended by 50 people preceded a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the shuttle service.

Offered by San Diego-TJ Passport service, the shuttle makes several trips on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between the hotel and the San Ysidro Border Crossing, where passengers are processed through the U.S. Port of Entry before re-boarding their shuttle bus.

One-way cost is $20 or $35 for a round trip, while children less than 9 years old ride for free.

All departure times and more information are on the hotel's website, www.rosaritobeachhotel.com, under the section Shuttle Service. Further details also can be found there, or by calling the shuttle service at 619-428-0011 (from the U.S.) or 664-683-1495 (from Mexico).

The shuttle service provides a convenient travel alternative as the busy summer season approaches. Many other specials and gala events are featured now and beyond at Baja's largest and most popular beachfront resort. All are listed on the resort's website.

The Rosarito Beach Hotel, which opened in May of 1924, is celebrating its 95th anniversary as it counts down to its centennial in 2024. A section on the resort website, titled Since 1924, features an historic overview and photos.

With 500 rooms and suites, the Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa is a totally self-enclosed resort, yet near major attractions including the city's downtown tourist zone, Puerto Nuevo Lobster Village and the Guadalupe Wine Valley.

Photo Caption (from left) Juan Carlos Moran, representative of Mexico's federal police; Conrado Acevedo, economic development and tourism; Dinora Soto, president of Rosarito Convention & Visitors Bureau; Oscar Escobedo, Baja Secretary of Tourism; Mirna Rincon, Rosarito mayor; Carlos Diaz, CEO San Diego-TJ Passport; Hugo Torres, owner Rosarito Beach Hotel; Jennifer Goudeau, president San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce.

-MEDIA CONTACT: Ron Raposa
ronraposa@rosaritobeachhotel.com

From Front Page...

Do Nothing

Sometimes it's difficult to tell how tense you've become until you get out of town and do nothing for a few days. There is so much happening in my world, from Washington D.C. to Malibu, Calif., that I've found myself tied up in knots, never quite able to unwind and barely aware of how tense I'd become. Five days of doing nothing more significant than deciding what we should order for lunch—or if I should take a nap before lunch or after lunch—has finally worked its magic.

Some people come here and sign up for golf, fishing in the Sea of Cortez or driving a four-wheeler in the desert, but not me. My idea of doing nothing is just that, doing absolutely nothing. Sitting in a pool with a *margarita* is my definition of heaven. My wife, Karen, is out on a fishing boat catching tonight's dinner while I work up the energy to eat dinner. My advice to *americanos* is to get out of town for a few days. Don't worry about your problems; they'll still be there when you get back.

One of the things you do notice about Baja is that in the five years or so we've been coming down here it's gotten more prosperous. Buildings have been repainted and holes in the sidewalks patched up; the town feels more optimistic, and in no small measure it's tourism dollars and rising wages that have done it. Businesses have to compete to hang onto their trained English-speaking help when there are other jobs available. It's understandable why more *mexicanos* are leaving the USA to return to their homeland. People generally don't originally leave their home country until things get pretty bad. The refugees we're seeing now are from Central America, primarily Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. They are coming from failing states, filled with violence, poverty and gangs, and with agriculture being slowly destroyed by climate change. Desperate people are coming to try and save themselves and their children and no wall is going to be high enough to keep them out.

Culturally, Mexicans relate to each other differently than most Americans. When we pass strangers in the street, we look through them or look down. Baja Mexicans look at strangers eye to eye, smile and say, "good morning," in Spanish of course. I kind of think we lost something in this forced anonymity. It doesn't have to be. I remember when Karen and I were first married, I took her back to New York City and took her for her first ride on the subway. Karen, being born in the Midwest, immediately struck up a conversation with a woman sitting next to us. I was aghast. As a born and bred New Yorker, I knew with absolute certainty that you never talk to anyone on the subway. Still, the woman was only too happy to talk and then a third rider chimed in and the ice was broken. People were smiling and talking. It was a momentary break in an anonymous city and then we all went our separate ways.

I'm going to have to cut this column short. I'm already late for my nap before lunch. *Adios*. See you all mañana.

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LOCAL & WORLD NEWS

Toyota Motor Corp claims: 'Our investments are not welcomed in the U.S"...President Trump criticized Toyota Motor Corp. specifically and in general all foreign automakers as threats to national security while announcing a delay in imposing tariffs on imported cars and trucks last Friday. He has previously criticized other automakers such as Ford and General Motors in the past, but this was his first attack on a specific foreign automaker."Toyota Motor will build a new plant in Baja, Mexico, to build Corolla cars for U.S. NO WAY! Build plant in U.S. or pay big border tax," Trump tweeted late last week.The two statements sparked a surprisingly sharp rebuke from Toyota, as well as political and industrial leaders in Japan.

Last week's proclamation sends a message to Toyota that our investments are not welcomed, and the contributions from each of our employees across America are not valued," Toyota states it has 10 manufacturing plants, e 1,500-strong dealer network, en extensive supply chain and other operations, employing 475,000 in the U.S. and have invested over $60 billion, including over $1 billion in philanthropic and community-outreach efforts. Since 2017, Toyota has invested $1.3 billion in Georgetown's Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) plant, and recently announced two new vehicle models to be built here. Overall, Toyota states it has invested over $60 billion in the United States.TMMK employs between 7,500 and 8,000.Last Friday, Trump said a study by the U.S. Commerce Department had found the military needed research and development advancements from the American-based automobile industry and increased popularity of automobiles from foreign-based automakers was a threat to national security. Toyota disputed that."We have been a leader in research and development through open-sourcing patents in critical technologies such as fuel cells, hybrid electrification and continue to be transparent and collaborative in our innovations," Toyota states. "Our goal is to develop technologies that help society and contribute to sustaining the economy and jobs in the U.S. We continue to innovate in areas of artificial intelligence. autonomous and robotics technologies that will further contribute and improve our American society."The Japanese government jumped to Toyota's defense calling the automaker, "an important corporate citizen."

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'Instant regret': Golden Gate Bridge Jump Survivor a Shining Beacon of Hope

Written by Mark Saunokonoko

Trigger warning: The following article discusses suicide | On a late summer day in September 2000, in a deeply troubled and perilous state of mind, Kevin Hines made his way to the Golden Gate Bridge. Hines had only just turned 19, but life already felt insurmountably stacked up against him.In the 40 minutes Hines spent on bridge, crying and pacing back and forth, dozens of tourists passed him by. Around 27,000 people visit the bridge every day, yet Hines had never felt so alone. Battling severe untreated Bipolar Disorder, destructive and compelling voices in Hines' head were telling him to end it all, to jump and stop the pain.So that's exactly what he did.

The 1.2km long Golden Gate Bridge sits 75 meters above a strait of water which connects San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Less than two percent of people who have jumped from it have survived the 25-story drop. Incredibly, Hines is one of the few. "I instantly regretted leaving the rail," Hines told us.."All I wanted to do was reach back. It was both the single worst day of my entire life, and the greatest, because I got to live."Among the group of 36 people who have jumped from the Golden Gate Bridge and lived, Hines says 19 of the survivors have come forward and expressed that same sensation of "immediate regret". Hines calls it a "miracle" that he is here to tell his story.

Several of Hines' vertebrae were shattered and splintered like glass. Today, Hines is walking and fully mobile.His rehabilitation from those devastating physical injuries was grueling and took many years.. Hines' mental recovery is ongoing and far more complex. He has a daily program to counter the inevitable ups and downs, and to manage his symptoms of mania, psychosis and depression.There are still dark days, Hines says, where he feels like killing himself. "The most important part of my story is how I found recovery and am still in recovery 20 years later, and how even with chronic suicidal thoughts I will never again try to take my life," Hines says.

Since the attempt, Hines has found himself on a mission to raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention. He has been interviewed by CNN legend Larry King, and spoken at The White House. Hines also appeared in the 2006 documentary The Bridge, which mournfully documented the lives of people who had died jumping from the Golden Gate. "I want to help people understand that their thoughts don't have to lead to an attempt, that their thoughts don't have to become their actions when they are suicidal. I wish I knew that the day I stood on the bridge ready to die. I wish I knew that just because I thought it, it didn't mean I had to act upon it," Hines says. The media's fascination with his story has given Hines a powerful platform and he has a strong social media following. Hines finds that reporters will often just want to focus on "the jump"." They tend to go 'what happened with the hit and the fall and when you resurfaced and what did it feel like.' That's not important - as much as I have to talk about it - it's not," Hines says.

Hines' story of hope and recovery has been detailed in Suicide: The Ripple Effect, a documentary which is currently screening in select locations in Australia. The Ripple Effect film cites research that 115 people are affected by a single suicide.

Latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show there were 3027 deaths by suicide in 2015. On average, eight Australians die every day through suicide.Hines says the message of his movie is simple, that you don't have to die. He promotes a mantra of "be here tomorrow". Born to drug-addicted parents, Hines was bounced into the foster system at an early age.Hines' struggles with then undiagnosed Bipolar Disorder began while he was at high school. On that life-changing day in September 2000, Kevin skipped his schedule of classes at City College of San Francisco. Tormented, he jumped on a bus and sat in the back row of seats. Earlier that year, Hines had lost one of his favorite old high school teachers to suicide. While he and his dad were driving to the teacher's funeral, Hines' father had turned and implored him to never take his own life. "At the time I was like 'Dad I would never do something like this... I would never attempt to take my own life it's not in me'."

Yet just a little later that same year, Hines was on the bus and headed for the Golden Gate Bridge.As the bus cut its way through San Francisco's traffic, Hines wept openly on the back seats.No one approached Hines while he was on the bus or the bridge.A recent University of Melbourne survey of 3000 Australians found around 40 percent of people believed trying to help someone they thought at risk of suicide could make the situation worse. Hines says that kind of thinking is misguided and dangerous, and he urges people to "wake up"."One thing I rarely talk about is the length of time I stood on the bridge crying like a baby. It was 40 minutes walking back and forth but there was a really good period of that time where I was just leaning over the rail ready to go."

From year four Australian schools should be openly teaching children about mental health, says Hines. Young Aussie kids need to know how to take care of their mental health, and if they don't they could hit a world of trouble in their teenage and adult lives, he says.

One of The Ripple Effect's most poignant scenes shows Hines traveling on a boat through thick fog underneath the Golden Gate Bridge.Next to Hines on the boat's deck, rocking on the dark seas, a San Francisco Bay coast guard talks about the heavy emotional impact the bridge's "jumpers" have had on him.The coast guard reveals he has pulled 57 dead bodies and just one survivor from the water. That survivor was Hines.If suicide has a ripple effect, then the same can be said of hope, Hines says. "I'm not going to ever die by suicide even though I think of it all the time. "If I can help impart wisdom on how to stay alive with a suicidal crisis happening on a regular basis with as many human beings as possible then I can rest easy at night knowing I tried my best to help someone stay here."

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From Front Page...

Still snowing in Baja!!!

"The cold temperatures should've ended on March 21"

Some of the Baja 500 and San Pedro Martir Hillclimb racers are concerned about the "weird" weather being reported in Baja. Just a few days ago (on May 23), the Mexico Secretary of Environmental Protection reported 1" snowfall at the San Pedro Mártir National Park south of Ensenada."It was the 59th cold front of 2019 that generated maximum temperature of 10 degrees and minimum of -3 degrees," reported Gonzalo de León Girón, the national park coordinator.

The national park is about "a four hour drive from the San Ysidro port of entry," says Pedro Vargas-Valdez of Tijuana."Is your race still on?" I asked Vargas-Valdez on May 25; "Yes, Mike, the race is still on," he replied.

Vargas-Valdez is an architect and founder of the San Pedro Mártir Hillclimb race: a 30-kilometer and 150-turn road course that ascends to the National Astronomical Observatory that's about 9,200 feet above sea level.

"It's almost summer and it's still snowing up there, it doesn't make sense," said Jerry, a BMW tuner from San Diego who is interested in entering Vargas-Valdez's next hill climb race on September 20.

"It's not common to get snow up here in late May — it'll be gone by September, for sure," Vargas-Valdez reassured us.

Roman, a racefan who has lived in Ensenada for 40 years, agrees. "The cold temperatures should've ended on March 21," he said. "I don't know if it's [due to] climate change. The rainfall last night (May 27) was weird as well, and the snowing up there last Thursday — now that's incredible."

Many of the Baja 500 racers pre-ran their vehicles on Memorial Day, including Chapo's Racing from Arizona. "I'm wishing I brought my snowcoat because of how cold it is and my hands are frozen," said Chapo.

"It is the end of May [and] normally it's very very hot," said Chapo's teammate. "It's sprinkling right now .... it's kinda like Seattle."

The two were transmitting via Facebook at *Valle de Trinidad*, which is 65 miles north of the observatory where it snowed days earlier; on the video they wore beanies, a hoodie sweater and a jacket.

"[It's] definitely not what we're expecting," said Chapo's teammate, "but that's Baja, the motto is: "Expect the unexpected.""The Baja 500 racers launch from Estero Beach on June 1, where the temperatures are predicted to be at: a low of 55 degrees and a high of 69 — and the skies "partly cloudy."

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From Front Page...

Your Next Big Mexico Trip is Just a Drive Across The Border

Written by Megan Spurrell for Conde Nast

Last-meal-worthy fish tacos and biodynamic wineries are much closer than you think.

Mexico for the food? You've heard, we know. But you don't need to fly to Mexico City to get your fix. Just south of the border, you'll now find nitro cold brew alongside streetside taco carts in Tijuana; no-frills regional seafood in Rosarito and Ensenada that makes you wonder why you're paying triple up north; plus two of Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants, and over 50 wineries (mostly biodynamic) in the *Valle de Guadalupe,* less than two hours from the border. The best part is that you only need a few days to see all of the above—though you could easily fill a week.

Southern Californians have been following this route for years, and if you're local, it may already be your go-to for long weekends. But for out-of-towners, it's best tacked on to a San Diego or Los Angeles visit.

The trip: Three days, 100 miles

This route kicks off from the San Ysidro border crossing, which is the port of entry for those coming from Los Angeles, San Diego, or the San Diego airport. You'll be following the 1D toll road toward Ensenada (this is the scenic route; don't let your GPS put you on the inland 1). Make sure you have a few dollars or the equivalent in *pesos* on hand to pay tolls along the way.

What to drive

Most U.S. car insurance doesn't cover you in Mexico. Rental car companies in San Diego will usually offer insurance for travelers crossing the border—and we'd recommend opting in. If you're coming from further or driving your own car, buy a policy from MexPro, the weekend warrior provider of choice.

Crossing the border

The drive into Mexico is breezy, but prepare for a wait on the way home. If you're planning your trips months in advance, consider applying for expedited re-entry through the government's Sentri program (it's like Global Entry, but for land borders—plus, it's free for travelers who already have Global Entry). Otherwise, just treat it like any international border: bring your passport and remember to toss any fresh fruit before reaching customs.

When to go

This northern section of Baja California is temperate all year long, with only a few rainy days per year. In the dead of winter (January), daily temps usually hover around 70 degrees—and they only get higher (80s) in the summer—meaning this itinerary holds up year-round, but spring or summer is best for getting in beach time. Regardless of when you visit, bring a decent jacket for the evenings.

Day 1

Highway 5 takes you across the border and will spit you out on a speedway in the heart of Tijuana. Follow the chaos to *Mercado Hidalgo*, a 10-minute drive in, for a taste of old school TJ just as you'd picture it—packed with *piñatas,* Mexican candies sold by the pound, and determined hawkers who know how to close a sale. Start with fresh fruit doused in chili and lime, or a coconut hacked open right in front of you. Then hop back in the car for a taste of next-gen Tijuana: Pick up breakfast and coffee from the food trucks at *Telefonica Gastro Park*, then pop into *Object boutique,* a design shop that pulls together furniture, clothing, and homegoods from artisans across the country. Before you get back to the border, make a pit stop at the touristy but evolving *Avenida Revolucion*, then pick up the 1D Highway to take you to the coast. Let your soundtrack set the scene, and turn your dial to 860AM (local station *La Poderosa*) for tropical salsa and cumbia tracks.

Cruise down to *Popotla*, a blink-and-you-could-miss-it fishing village a world away from the *Papas & Beer* side of Rosarito. Park in the lot at the top, then walk down toward the water: charcoal grills are set on the sand, mere feet away from where fishermen pull lobsters, red snapper, oysters, and clams the size of your palm out of the water. Plop down in a plastic chair at whichever grill looks busiest and order up (if your Spanish is rusty or non-existent, pointing will do the trick). You can't go wrong with anything grilled, nor the raw shellfish; the dark-shelled *pata de mula* clams (on the half shell, squeeze of lime) are a prized local favorite. To finish strong, grab a corn *tamale* on your way out, made with freshly ground *maize*.

For an aperitivo, drive a few minutes down the 1D to *Pulquerito El Pulquerita* 1 "*El Original*" (not to be confused with any imposters). The man behind this informal stand makes his own *pulque* (an ancient drink fermented from *maguey* sap) in half a dozen flavors, and you can sample as many as you'd like. The drink has a small amount of alcohol in it—buy a jug to enjoy at your final destination, this two-bedroom Airbnb in surf-haven *Campo Lopez.*

Day 2

Kick start your morning with coffee at the house, or drive a few minutes down the road to the Original *La Fonda* restaurant. This place is a relic, with '70s tourist vibes, old-school Mexican inn decor, and a cliffside patio with palm fronds. Hit the road for an hour of driving with spectacular ocean views—just keep your eyes on the road, because those curves are no joke. Detour at KM 84 for the *Mirador* observation deck, then continue on to downtown Ensenada. This port city is a major cruise stop, but you'll also find some of Mexico's best seafood here.

A dish at *Corazon de Tierra* in *Valle de Guadalupe*; the tree-shrouded exterior of *Corazon de Tierra*.

For a DIY food crawl, order seafood tostadas at the Bourdain-approved *La Guerrerense* cart, a fish taco (or two) at *El Chopipo*, and whatever you have room for at *Tacos Marco Antonio* (Marco Antonio makes over 17 different fillings each day). Break up your journey with a peek inside *Riviera de Ensenada*: the once-luxury hotel has now been turned into a cultural center. Wash it all down with a marg at the sawdust-covered floor of Hussong's, which claims to have invented the drink in 1941, and has been serving them to surfers, visiting cowboys, and Ensenada residents ever since.

When you're ready for a breather, drive back up the 1D, then take the 3 inland toward the *Valle de Guadalupe,* Mexico's wine country. Tonight you'll stay at *Encuentro de Guadalupe*, a modern retreat dropped into the middle of the desert. Feeling flush? Spring for one of the hillside villas. For dinner, try a tasting menu of reimagined traditional Mexican dishes at *Corazon de Tierra,* or farm-to-table *Laja*. Or, if luck strikes and your dates line up, join an Animalon pop-up dinner, hosted by the region's star chef Javier Plascencia under a 200-year-old oak tree.

Day 3

Savor your breakfast at *Encuentro* (Best. *Chilaquiles.* Ever.), then get ready for a taste of the valley's best vineyards. The arid region is known for reds, but you can find a few other varietals if you know where to look. First, a word on the car and wine combo: Today's itinerary involves nearly two hours of driving, with three or four stops depending on how quickly you move, and how much you want to pack in. If you have a designated driver, great—the valley's food and views rival the wine and you can always ask for a spit bucket. If not, you'll want to hire a taxi for the day, which your hotel can arrange in advance.

Head first to the family-owned *Adobe de Guadalupe*, 15 minutes away, for a tasting of their killer reds, and don't leave without walking the grounds. If you're looking for a souvenir that isn't a bottle of wine, pick up a liter of their olive oil. Next, you'll head 25 minutes down the road to *Conchas de Piedra,* an *al fresco* champagne and oyster bar on the *Mogor Badan* vineyards. The setting is unfussy, but the dishes are superb—chef Drew Deckman, who has worked at Michelin-starred restaurants, is the man behind it all. Order a mix of small plates, including the grilled oysters, to compliment your bubbles.

If you still have steam, drive 30 minutes toward the coast to *CuatroCuatros*, a shrine to white wine in a valley focused on red. Make a reservation to visit their viewpoint around sunset, and sip on crisp *Sauvignon Blanc* with a view over the Pacific. It's hard to believe you're just 60 miles from the border. Circle back into the valley for dinner at whichever spot you missed last night, and remember—road trips are super easy to extend.

Baja's Gift to Arizona

Magdalena Alvarez isn't going to give up the recipe for her special — and it is indeed special — *al pastor*."I won't do it. That recipe was too hard to get," she said .Magdalena grew up in the rapidly growing city of Ensenada, Baja del Norte, Mexico, and ate tacos her whole life. As a teen in Baja, she fell in love with one particular recipe.

"There was this *taquero* who made [*al pastor*] so well. I asked him how to do it. He wouldn't tell me. [*Taqueros*] never tell. No one ever tells," she nodded. "It took me six months of asking, begging. He finally gave it to me."*Al pastor* is a pork dish brought to Southern Mexico by Lebanese immigrants. It's like a *shwarma*, roasted on a spit and marinated in a red sauce spiked with pineapple.

A WOMAN- AND FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS Magdalena, her daughter Sharon Alvarez, and partner Catalina Gallego opened their woman- and family-owned endeavor, Ensenada Street Food, in the first days of November 2018. Now they're serving that coveted recipe — along with many fun and tasty dishes of their own invention — in a completely different desert. Even though Ensenada is home to a diverse population of half a million expats, immigrants, locals, and indigenous folks, blending international cuisines isn't Magdalena's jam. She wanted to bring her personal heritage and food memories to Tucson.

ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT CLIMATES But attempting to craft her childhood Ensenada food in the Sonoran desert has revealed challenges that have led Magdalena to forge some rendition of fusion, she said, wincing a bit.

Magdalena's mother has helped her clamber over one of those hurdles: a lack of certain ingredient availability.

THE AL PASTOR

Magdalena said that her mother has to bring special elements to make the *al pastor* perfect, including a specific pepper and some spices (she won't get more detailed than that!), from Baja to make the bright red marinade.

The dish is dotted with pineapple and rendered not *picante* so much as jammy and complex. In the end, shaved, tender pork has soaked up a marmalade-esque sauce, and post-heat caramelization has created an almost crackly crust on the meat. The balanced marriage of sugar, mild heat, and salt is certainly a happy one.

Another challenge the business has learned to overcome involves city restrictions. Laws prevent the open-flame cooking technique that is inherent in traditional *al pastor*. So, Magdalena broils and grills her meats instead. It comes out simultaneously tender and chewy, like a soft jerky.

Birria, a stew originally from the Mexican state of Jalisco, is traditionally made of goat or mutton, but Magdalena makes her *Michoacana* mother's version using beef, saturated in another bright red chile-based sauce."It soaks the *tortilla* red" when it's served as a *taco* on the ladies' homemade double-thick white corn *tortillas,* "or the bread" when in *torta* form, daughter Sharon noted.

FLUFFY, BATTERED SEAFOOD IS A MUST

The dishes made with shrimp or fish are something to behold. Unlike the grilled seafood so prevalent in Sonoran-style cooking, the ladies thickly batter and fry what might be the largest prawns served in a *taco* this side of the border.

Even the batter is special. They use baking soda to make it fluffy. (Sharon recounted a story when too much baking soda was mixed into the batter and formed a fluffy volcano. "That won't happen again," she said.)

The batter also has a touch of … something, which after trying to detect and decipher the mystery flavor, Sharon conceded was mustard powder. The giant shrimp and moist white fish (also battered) are served with a Baja-style *chipotle mayo*, *pico de gallo*, and cabbage.

ACCOMMODATING THE PEOPLE

Perhaps the most important lesson Magdalena said that the ladies have learned is that "people have different tastes." And so, the ladies will make any dish using (extraordinarily tender) *asada, pastor, birria, camarones,* or *pescado.*

Facade at Ensenada Street Food

Another alternative is vegetarian. The veggie combo, comprised of *calabacitas*, black beans, and zucchini, can be subbed in for any meat on any dish, and they do a vegan *taco* sans cheese. "Accommodation" is one of their keywords.

TOP CHOICES FROM THE MENU

Specials of the house are truly innovative, at least among Sonoran-style competition.

For example, the caramelo-like *El Sicodelico* has no mushrooms, as one might expect, given the name. Instead, the giant stuffed concoction features crisped cheese on the outside of the top and bottom *tortillas*, and therefore it must be eaten with a fork. It might be best to avoid *al pastor* as *El Sicodelico's* stuffing because as Magdalena says, cheese somewhat obscures the meat's flavor.

The *El Sicodelico* goes well alongside the Cheesy *Taco*, which uses no *tortilla* to envelop the ingredients, but rather cheese, "for the Keto people like me," Magdalena said.

The chefs recommend the *al pastor taco* (without cheese, though they will put it on upon request); the Keto-friendly cheesy *taco*, the *birria,* and the shrimp *tacos,* and their house specialties like the Gracocito *taco* or torta, with flavorful shredded beef, cilantro and onion, and Mexican white cheese.

The *salsa* bar is limited, but that's just fine because the meats and vegetables are already so flavorful. There's an avocado *crema* and a mild *salsa* with cucumbers. The hot red *salsa* is something like a 7 out of 10 on the subjective Sonoran *picante* scale, and the *tomatillo* green is probably more like a 5.

KEEPING THINGS SPOTLESS

Another lesson the ladies have learned is that of the frequent mandatory inspection. Because the business is a cart, they have to cook in a commissary. Because they also have an enclosed brick-and-mortar six-table seating area, the health department must inspect the actual facility from which they serve. Let's just say, the place is immaculate.

It's a cool place, too. The ladies got together and painted an old appliance sales yard bright turquoise, decorating it with *calaveras* and quotes like "All You Need is *Tacos"* and "Yesterday I Really Needed *Tacos.* Now I'm Eating Tacos. Follow Your Dreams."Per Magdalena, "People think a *taco* place has to be ugly to be authentic. But it can look cute and still be good."

HOURS AND LOCATION

Ensenada Street Food, located at 1602 S. Park Ave., is open from 5 – 10:30 p.m. from Tuesday – Friday and 5 – 11:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

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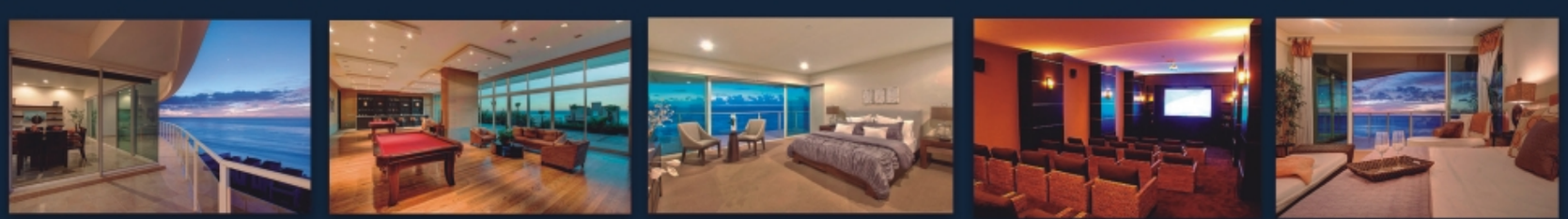

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