

Los Cabos Travel Guide

The best things to see and do



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1. Why you should visit Los Cabos

Los Cabos, located on the southernmost tip of Mexico's Baja California Peninsula, is a very popular vacation and expat destination. People are drawn to Los Cabos for various reasons:

Beautiful scenery: From dramatic cliffs with quiet sandy beaches on the Pacific coast and the iconic Los Cabos arch (El Arco), to the serene beauty of the Sea of Cortez with excellent snorkeling spots, Los Cabos is a perfect vacation spot for nature enthusiasts, people seeking a serene experience, and party animals.

World-class resorts: Los Cabos is a vibrant vacation destination that features a wide array of accommodations, from rustic Airbnbs to all-inclusive luxurious resorts, offering exceptional amenities, impeccable service, and stunning oceanfront views.

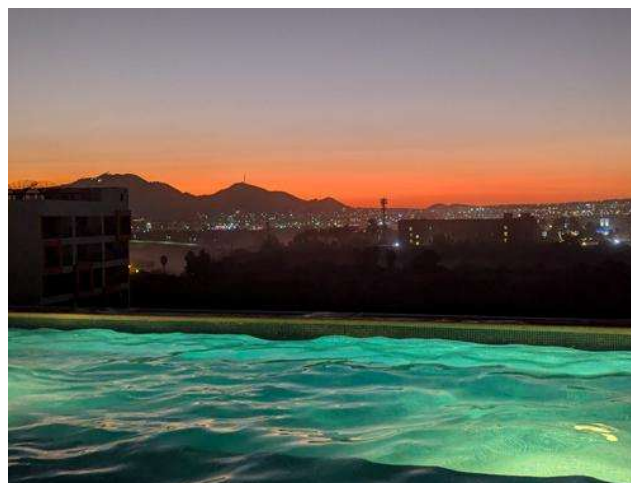
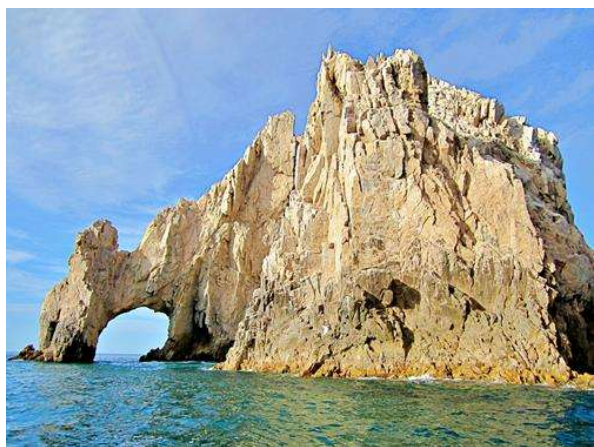
Thrilling adventures: Whether you're an avid angler seeking a deep-sea fishing adventure, a wildlife enthusiast hoping to spot whales or hike mountainous terrain, an ATV enthusiast, or an underwater explorer eager to explore the vibrant marine life, Los Cabos offers a diverse range of exciting activities and nature experiences.

Exquisite cuisine: Los Cabos is a culinary paradise, where a fusion of Mexican flavors with international influences creates a vibrant and diverse food scene. And you can learn how to cook like a Mexican by attending a cooking class, or two.

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Unwind in paradise: You can escape the everyday stress and relax on pristine beaches, immerse yourself in the gorgeous underwater world via snorkeling right off the beach or by boat, enjoy rejuvenating spa treatments, party on Medano Beach, or join the large international expat community. Los Cabos has something for everyone, making it the perfect destination for your next vacation.

Fantastic weather: Cabo San Lucas has a tropical desert climate with an average of more than 352 days without rain. And the temperature? The daily high is almost always above 77 F (25 C), and rarely exceeds 93 F (34 C). Can it get any better?



Los Cabos Travel Guide

In this Backpack and Snorkel Los Cabos Purple Travel Guide, we provide you with a six-day itinerary for Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo (Los Cabos) that focuses on the best things to see and do in one of our favorite travel destinations.

This is not an in-depth Los Cabos guide. You can buy Los Cabos guides from the big travel guide companies. Our goal is to help you Make Memorable Moments on a relaxing Los Cabos trip and help you build the perfect itinerary for your trip. For that purpose, we have added lots of photos so that you see what you will experience and make an educated decision if these places are for you.

Please also check out the other exciting destinations and travel guides on our **Backpack and Snorkel [website](#)**.

2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide we are doing our best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

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3. General Information about Los Cabos

3.1 How much time do you need to visit Los Cabos?

Los Cabos is a wonderful vacation destination. If you just want to scout the area, then 3-4 days are sufficient.

We always recommend visiting nearby [Todos Santos](#) and La Paz. If you do that, then you would need at least 7 – 10 days.

And, if you want to add some relaxation, then you should reserve 2 or more weeks for your part in this paradise.

In this [Los Cabos Purple Travel Guide](#), we present a six-day itinerary for Los Cabos that introduces you to the best places to see in Los Cabos. You can use it as is, or you can tailor it to your interests by prioritizing your favorite destinations and by visiting your favorite beach or resort for many days in a row.

You can find the itinerary in [chapter 5](#).

3.2 What is the best time to visit Los Cabos?

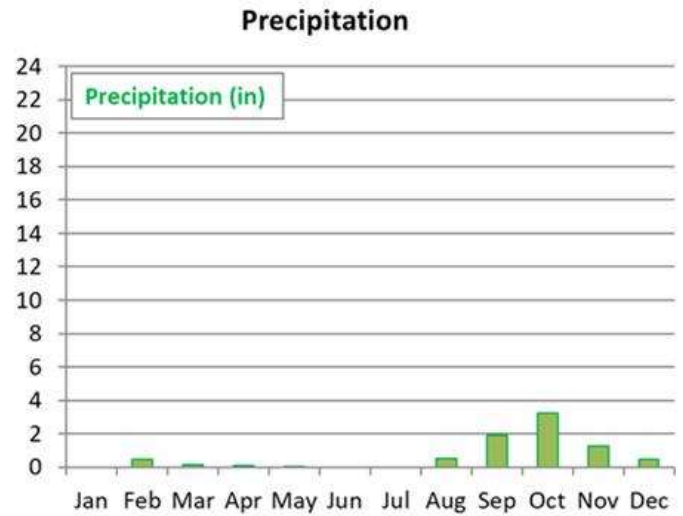
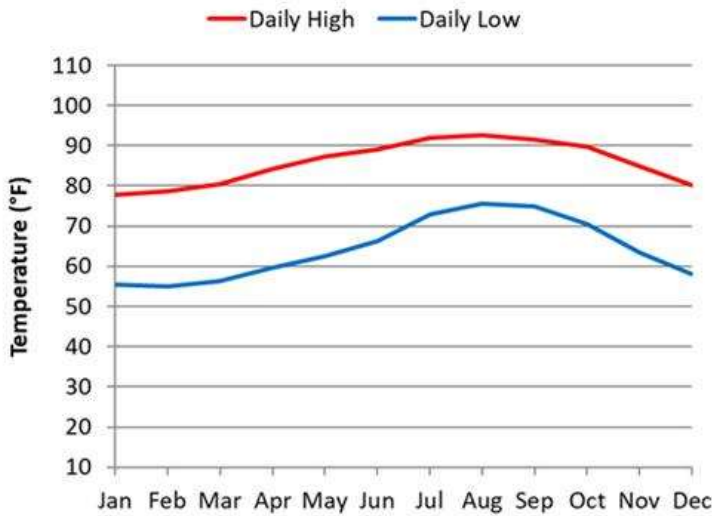
Cabo San Lucas has a tropical desert climate with an average of just below 13 days per year where any rain is registered. Its dry season from December through April is the high season. During the hurricane season from May through October, you will see some clouds and occasional rain. During that time, there is a chance of either being hit by a hurricane or being affected by nearby hurricanes, which can cause widespread flooding.

The best time to visit Los Cabos:

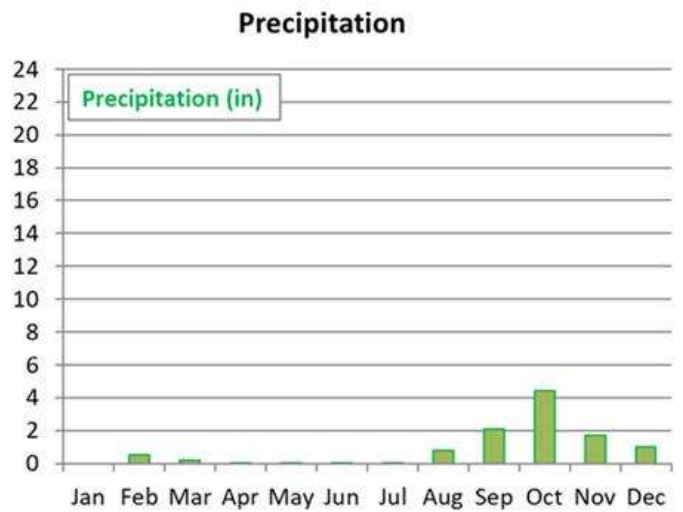
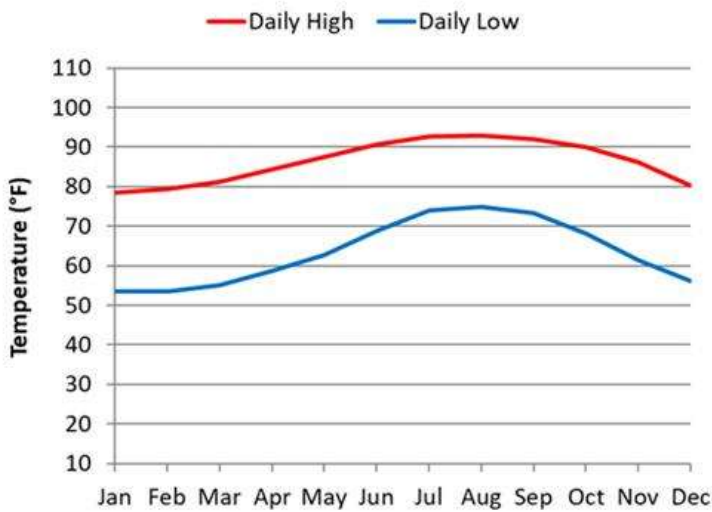
- **December – April:** This is the peak tourist season in Los Cabos – the hotel and airfares rates are at their peak. These months are generally characterized by clear skies, little to no rain, and warm temperatures. The daily maximum is between 77 F (25 C) and 84 F (29C). Ocean temperatures in December are around 75 F (24 C), which some people feel is borderline for swimming, many feel it is too cold and need wetsuits. From January through April, the ocean temperature is a chilly 70 – 72 F (21 - 22 C). High season coincides with whale watching season. You will see lots of whale watching tours being offered during that time.
- **May – June:** This is the Spring shoulder season. Hotel rates and airfares go down a bit and there are fewer tourists. The daily high temperature is 87 – 89 F (31 - 32 C), and the ocean temperature around 73 – 74 F (23 C), which is Ok for a short swim, but most people prefer wet suits for snorkeling tours or longer swims.

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Below is the climate that you can expect on your trip to Cabo San Lucas:



Below is the climate that you can expect on your trip to San Jose del Cabo:



3.6 Important Information About Beaches in Los Cabos

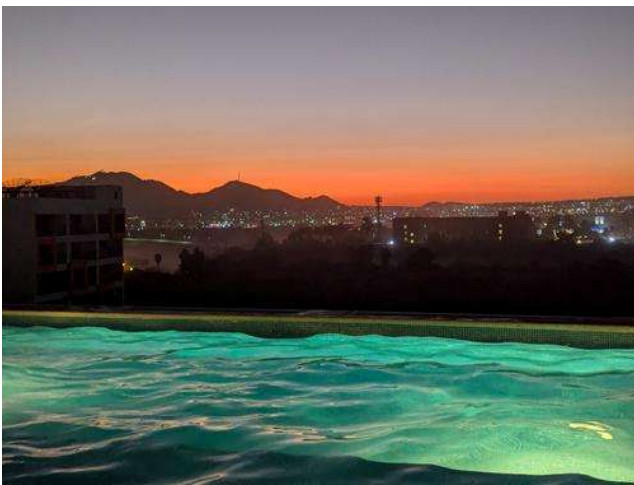
Los Cabos is located where the Pacific Ocean and the Bay of Cortez meet. As with other towns on Mexico's Pacific coast, swimming is only safe in designated swimming areas in protected bays. The Pacific Ocean often has strong currents and dangerous undercurrents that pull you out to sea, monster waves that slowly build over the ocean and, because there are no protective islands or other obstacles to deflect their power, every year they pull beachgoers out into the ocean – never to be seen again. Regardless how hot the air temperature is, the water in the deeper parts of the ocean is cold limiting the time a person is able to survive.

Therefore: Never go into the water at beaches that are not designated swimming beaches. Many beaches have flags that tell you about the danger level. If there is no flag, then there is absolutely no safe swimming.

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The condo is located in one of two a multi-story condo buildings with its own secure parking lot inside the courtyard. Elevators connect the floors and work most of the time. The condo is spacious and very well equipped. The kitchen has all pots, pans and utensils you need, and the owner even provides a beach umbrella, beach chairs, and beach towels. The unit comes with a laundry machine, all bed linens and towels you need. It is in very good condition and shows very little wear. Wifi is fast and the A/C is quiet and efficient. Once in a while there is a bit of a sewer smell, apparently from emptying the sewage cistern.

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The building has a rooftop pool from which you can see beautiful sunsets over the city.

The personnel and condo owner are very friendly and responsive.

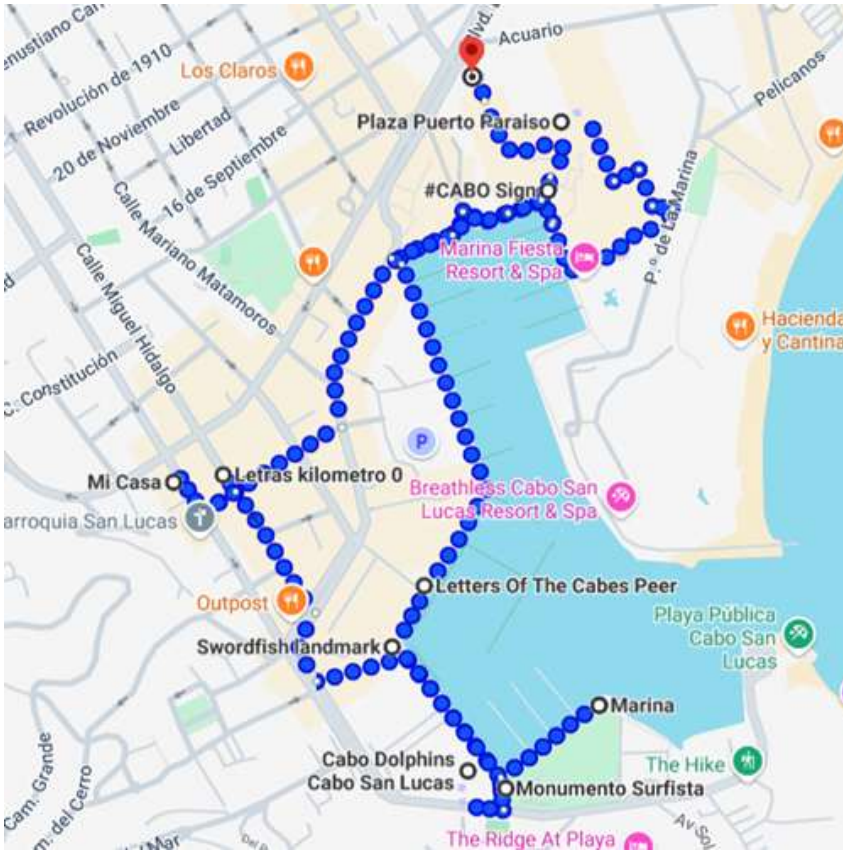
To get to the eastern side of Medano Beach, just exit the building and turn left.



After a few feet you come to the entrance gate of the RIU Palace. Enter through the pedestrian entrance and walk straight towards the main building you see. You will pass a parking lot and cross a bridge doing this. When you get to the large lawn after the tennis courts, turn left and follow the path around the lawn, pass by the swim-up suites, and go to the gate.

5.2.1 Self-guided walking tour of downtown Cabo San Lucas

Your self-guided walking tour of downtown Cabo San Lucas starts at the [Puerto Paraiso Shopping Mall](#) near the **IGY Marina Cabo San Lucas**. This is a good starting point for your tour, as the mall has a large parking garage, but parking there incurs a fee. If you are lucky, then you can find some free street parking in the area.



5.2.1.1 Puerto Paraiso Shopping Mall

([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Located in the heart of Cabo San Lucas, and right next to the beautiful **IGY Marina Cabo San Lucas**, **Puerto Paraiso Shopping Mall** is a very popular, very diverse, and large 3-story 540,000 sqft (50000 m2) shopping mall.

It has everything from luxury restaurants, and designer stores, to souvenir stores and Burger King, a 10-screen movie theater, and a 12-lane bowling alley. Due to its popularity, lots of events take place here, like concerts, art exhibitions, wine tastings, etc.



Spend some time here to browse the stores, or buy some ice cream, or souvenirs.

5.2.1.2 #Cabo Sign

([map](#))

Exit the mall at its southern end towards Marina Cabo San Lucas, and you will come to a beautiful plaza with the red **#Cabo sign**.



5.2.1.3 Cabo Sign

([map](#))

Follow the waterfront along to the west (right). Pass the Hard Rock Café, and many more restaurants until you see a restaurant with a lighthouse.



Shortly afterwards, you see the colorful **Cabo sign** – this was a 2,520 ft (770 m) walk from the #Cabo sign.



5.2.2 Medano Beach (Playa El Medano) in Cabo San Lucas ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Medano Beach is by far the most popular beach for tourists in Cabo San Lucas. Its western side is known for its lively atmosphere and beautiful scenery, while its eastern side is much more quiet and serene, and a great place to relax on the sand and enjoy the sunshine.



Medano Beach has many access points. Here are two that we have used:

- For the **western end of Medano Beach**: park at the Plaza Puerto Paraiso or try to find a free parking spot in this general area and walk down **Callejon Pescadores** ([map](#)) or **Avenida del Pescador** ([map](#)) to the Medano Beach entrances
- For the **eastern end of Medano Beach**: Park at the visitors parking lot at **Riu Palace Cabo San Lucas** ([map](#)) or on the street before you get into the premises and follow the signs to the beach

There are designated swimming zones on the western side where you can swim in calm waters. Since people sometimes feed the fish, you can do some limited snorkeling there.

For many, the biggest attraction of the western side of Medano Beach is that there are plenty of activities to keep you busy, such as jet skiing, parasailing, and paddleboarding. There are also many restaurants and bars along the beach, serving food and drinks for much for the day.

At night, the western side of Medano Beach comes alive with music and dancing, making it a great place to party.

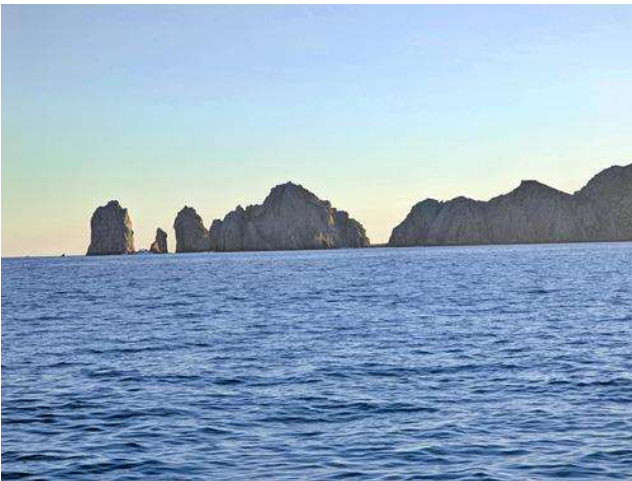
Whether you're looking for relaxation or adventure, Medano Beach has something for you, either on its eastern or western side.

Parking will likely be difficult to find nearby, so be prepared to walk a couple of blocks.

Western Part of Medano Beach:

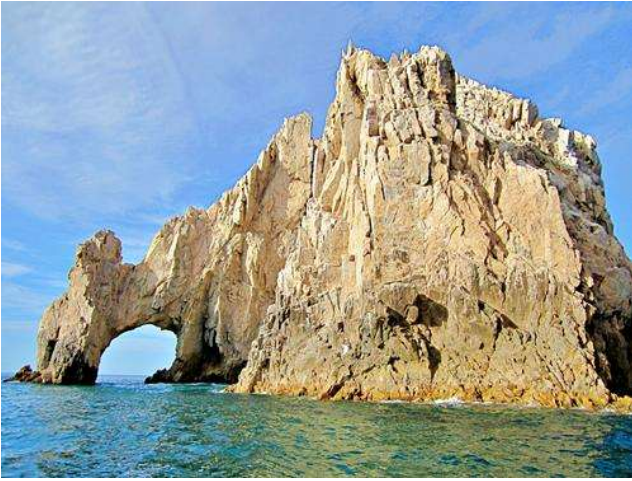


Eastern part of Medano beach:



Spend a few hours on this beach today.

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5.3.2 Lovers Beach (Playa de los Amantes) & Divorce Beach (Playa del Divorcio)

[Lovers Beach](#) ([map](#), [reviews](#))

[Divorce Beach](#) ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Unfortunately, the location of Lovers Beach on google maps is not correct. Here are the correct locations for both beaches:



There are basically three ways to get to Lovers Beach – you will then walk from Lovers Beach to Divorce Beach:

- take a water taxi from **IGY Marina Cabo San Lucas**
- take a [kayak tour](#)
- come here on an excursion

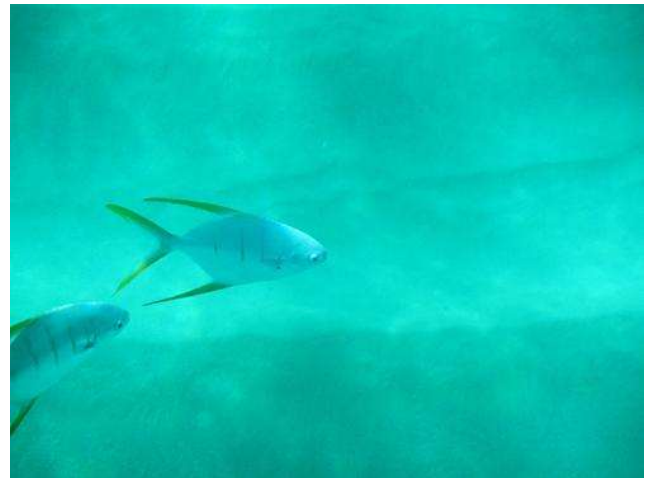
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Lovers Beach is nestled between the dramatic rock formations of Land's End. It is one of the must-visit places in Cabo San Lucas. Lovers Beach is located on the Sea of Cortez side, which has calm waters perfect for swimming. As it faces east and therefore gets full sun in the mornings, you can pack a picnic and spend some time in the morning soaking up the sun.

There is a small clearly marked swimming zone at Lovers Beach with a little bit of snorkeling. Stay inside the marked zone, as there will be lots of water taxis coming and going outside of this zone who may not see you and run you over.



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5.4.1 Chileno Beach / Playa el Chileno

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Chileno Beach is located right off Highway 1, roughly half-way between Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo.

It is one of the best beaches in Los Cabos, if not the best beach in Los Cabos.

On Highway 1, take the exit to Playa el Chileno and follow the signs to the parking lot. The parking lot has quite a few spaces, but due to the popularity of Chileno Beach, it sometimes fills up during high season. Getting there before 11am is always a good idea.

Chileno Beach is safe for swimming, as it is located in the protected Chileno Bay.

It has soft coarse sand and no water shoes are needed to walk on the sand or to get into the water. You should bring your own food, and a beach umbrella or a beach tent, as there are very limited services and shade.

The beach has public restrooms.



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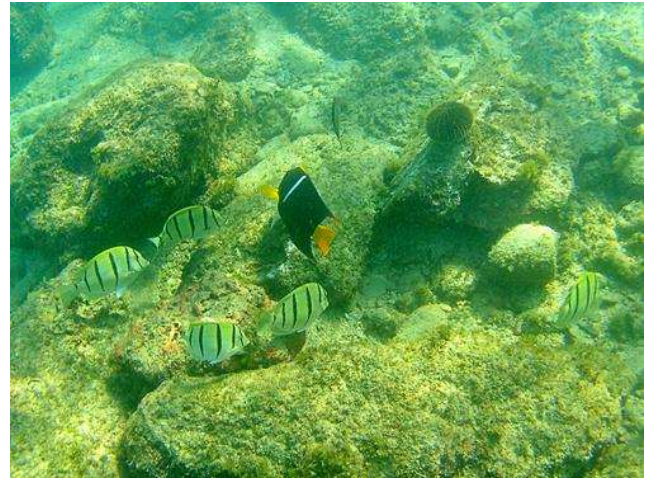
There is good snorkeling on both the northern and southern ends of the beach by the submerged rocks. When you enter the water at the southern end, you will likely be greeted by lots of fish, as visitors keep feeding the fish over there.



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5.5.2 Self-guided walking tour of downtown San Jose del Cabo

Your self-guided walking tour of downtown San Jose del Cabo Lucas starts at Plaza Mijares. This is a busy area with lots of narrow one-way roads and limited parking and chances are that you will need to park a few blocks away from the plaza.

This really is not a problem, as this entire area is really picturesque and you may discover some cute little galleries or stores along the way.



[1 = Plaza Mijares](#)

[2 = Letras San Jose del Cabo](#)

[3 = Mission of San Jose del Cabo Church](#)

[4 = Jose Maria Morelos](#)

[5 = Alvaro Obregon](#)

[6 = Blvd. Antonio Mijares](#)

5.5.2.1 Plaza Mijares / San Jose del Cabo Central Plaza ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Plaza Mijares is a fairly typical Mexican central plaza. It has a central kiosco (gazebo), a wide area for people to assemble (especially at night or during holidays), several restaurants and stores, a mission church on one side and city hall on another side. For Christmas, the plaza is beautifully decorated.

During the heat of the day, the plaza is usually nearly empty. In the evenings, however, the plaza becomes a public meeting point and live music is often played here.



5.5.2.2 Letras San Jose del Cabo / San Jose del Cabo Sign ([map](#), [reviews](#))

The San Jose del Cabo sign is located right in front of the [Mission of San Jose del Cabo Church \(Misión de San José del Cabo Anuiti\)](#).

This is a popular photo spot. Be advised that the sign is long and that it can be difficult to get the whole sign in a photo if there are cars parked on the street.



5.5.2.3 Mission of San Jose del Cabo Church / Misión de San José del Cabo Anuiti

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The San Jose del Cabo sign is located right in front of Mission of San Jose del Cabo Church (Misión de San José del Cabo Anuiti).



This church has an interesting history:

When Jesuit priest Nicolas Tamaral founded the Mission of San Jose del Cabo in 1730, it was the southernmost Jesuit mission that was established during the colonial period in Baja California. The location was different from where today's church is – it was near the ocean at **Plaza la Mision** ([map](#)).

The location was chosen to serve as a port and safe haven for ships that were going to undertake the long journey to Asia, or return from Asia.

However, armed conflicts with the local indigenous people were common and Father Tamaral was killed during the Rebellion of the Pericúes in 1734, and the mission was destroyed, but immediately rebuilt closer to the coast.

The conflicts went on until the indigenous people were mostly extinct in 1768.

After the expulsion of the Jesuits in the late 18th century, the mission was taken over by the Dominican order.

Over time, mission was moved farther inland to Santa Rosa (probably in 1753), and in 1840 to its current location. The church building that you see today dates mostly from 1918, and is a reconstruction after the original structure was severely damaged by a hurricane. The original structure and some of its walls are original.

The mosaic above the front portal of the church shows the uprising in which Father Tamaral was killed in 1734.

The interior of the church is relatively plain.

In the left transept stands an altar with three statues. The statue on the right represents Saint Charbel Makhluf, and in front of it is a rack with lots of white and colorful ribbons.



People write petitions to the saint on a colored ribbon, and tie it to the rack. To give thanks they write on a white ribbon.

Regular services are held in Spanish every day, and an English Mass is held on Sundays at noon.

5.6.1 Drive to Playa El Arbolito

If you plan to drive to Playa El Arbolito yourself: Congratulations, you are in for a beautiful, but little challenging drive.

If you plan to snorkel at Playa El Arbolito, make sure to come on a calm day as snorkeling is very limited when it is windy and the sea is rough.



Very important: You must use a GPS with the map saved locally on your GPS device (e.g. cell phone), as there are very few road signs, unmarked forks in the road, and much of the time no cell phone data signal.

Important: Some older websites tell you to take certain directions as google maps supposedly leads you to a blocked road. That block has been resolved years ago, and google maps now provides the correct directions along the coast.

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1 = Cabo San Lucas

2 = Playa El Arbolito

The first part of your drive will be all on high quality paved roads. About 26 miles (42 km) before Playa El Arbolito, at the end of the road “**Ramal A Las Playas**” ([map](#)), there is a sharp 90 degree left turn onto a compacted dirt road.

The first 11 miles (17 km) of the dirt road are the worst of your drive. You will find some soft sandy areas and lots of potholes. Most of the cars you see are high clearance vehicles that the locals own, but we have seen several regular sedans with low clearance that were able to negotiate this road – you just have to drive carefully.

Our recommendation, however, is to use a higher clearance vehicle (e.g. an SUV or truck) as it is easier to navigate the sandy areas, potholes and the one relatively steep crest/sag in this road. After 7 miles (11 km) on the dirt road, there is a 1-mile-long stretch of a paved road.

About 3 miles (5 km) later, you will find that the quality of the compacted dirt road improves significantly, allowing you to drive much faster than before.

Very important: Make sure to start with a full tank of gas. There are almost no gas stations around, and our rental cars consumed 20-30% more gasoline for the entire trip from Cabo San Lucas to Playa El Arbolito and back, compared to a road trip on paved roads.

Very important: Make sure to bring plenty of drinking water and food or snacks, as there are very few opportunities to buy any. The sun will be shining and it will be hot with very few areas of shade.

5.6.2 Playa El Arbolito

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Playa El Arbolito is the best beach to access the Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park.

Be advised that, at the time of writing, the beach is open from 9am - 5:30pm, and admission costs 50 Pesos per person. Once you park in the small parking area, a local will approach you to collect the fee.



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5.7 Add-on 2: Exploring Todos Santos and Turtle release at Playa las Tunas

Todos Santos, which lies about 1h north of Cabo San Lucas, is a popular day trip destination. It is a nice authentic Mexican town and popular with people who want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the Los Cabos area.

With a few exceptions, most of the beaches in Todos Santos are not safe for swimming, due to strong waves and dangerous undercurrents. But we will visit Playa Los Cerritos, which has a designated swimming area.

We will take a self-guided walking tour of downtown Todos Santos, then relax and eat lunch at Playa Los Cerritos and witness a turtle release at Playa las Tunas right after sunset.

Today, most of the driving will be on paved roads, except for a few miles on high-quality compacted dirt roads that are suitable for all types of cars.

If you don't want to drive back to Los Cabos in the dark, or if you plan to continue on to e.g. La Paz tomorrow, then you can stay in Todos Santos overnight.

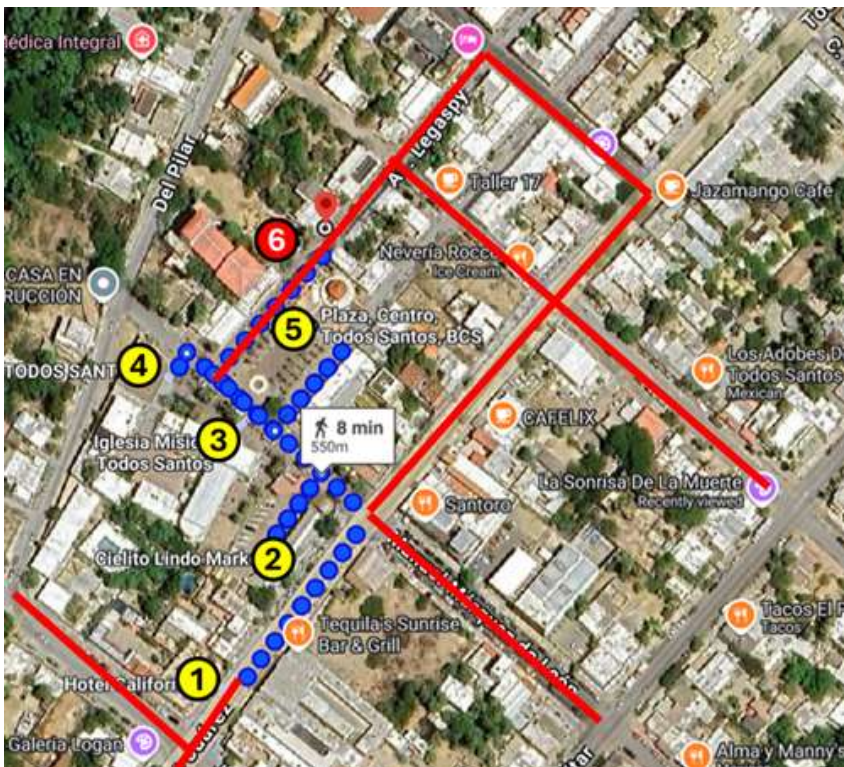
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5.7.1 Self-guided Todos Santos walking tour

The historic downtown area of Todos Santos which is of interest to tourists is comparably small.

Start your self-guided walking tour of Todos Santo at Hotel California. This is one of the busiest areas of Todos Santos and you may only find a parking spot a few blocks away. That is OK, the area is mostly flat and it will be an easy walk.



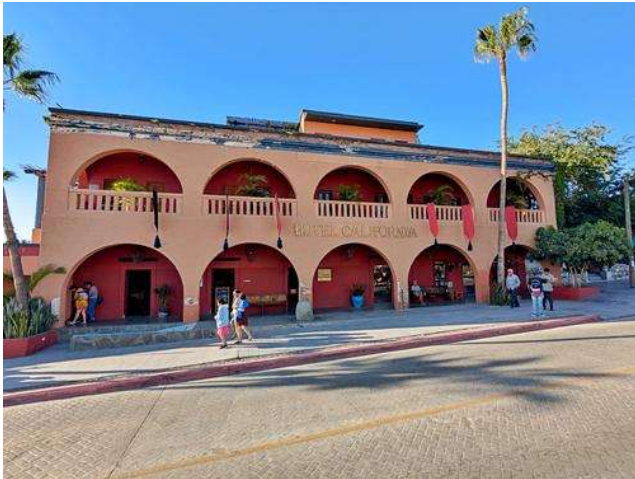
- 1 = Hotel California
- 2 = Cielito Lindo Market
- 3 = Iglesia Mision Todos Santos
- 4 = Letras Todos Santos
- 5 = Plaza Centro
- 6 = Avenida Legaspy

5.7.1.1 Hotel California ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Hotel California is the busiest tourist attraction in Todos Santos. Unfortunately, it has nothing to do with the famous 1976 Eagles song as the band's lead singer, Don Henley, has stated in the past. The hotel was even sued by the band for false association with their song.

But that has not stopped Hotel California from capitalizing on its name. The hotel sells t-shirts and other memorabilia, and their restaurant seems to constantly be crowded with tourists wanting to dine in or just having a cup of coffee at Hotel California.

And yes, the hotel has designated check-in and checkout times and you can leave the hotel! 😊



5.7.1.2 Cielito Lindo Market

([map](#), [reviews](#))

Cielito Lindo Market has two entrances: one is directly to the right (northeast) of [Hotel California](#) on Calle Benito Juarez, and the second is directly left (southwest) of [Iglesia Mision Todos Santos](#) on Manuel Marquez de Leon.

Todos Santos has lots of souvenir and handicraft stores in its downtown area - Cielito Lindo Market is a dedicated and enclosed market for souvenir and handicraft vendors.



5.7.1.3 Iglesia Mision Todos Santos

([map](#), [reviews](#))

The site where this mission was founded was selected and named “Todos Santos” (All Saints) by Father Jaime Bravo from Misión de Nuestra Señora del Pilar de La Paz Airapí in 1723 or 1724. The site was selected as a favorable place to convert the local Pericue Indians and for its beneficial climate, soil, and fresh water to support agriculture.

Corn and sugar cane were among the most important crops that were cultivated here, and over time, Todos Santos became one of the main providers of Mission of Nuestra Senora del Pilar in La Paz.

In 1733 the mission became the Mission of Santa Rosa de Todos Santos and father Segismundo Taraval was appointed the resident missionary.

The Jesuit's attempt to outlaw polygamy led to a revolt of the Pericue and some other Indian bands in southern Baja California in 1734 and 1735. Father Taraval escaped the destruction of the mission.

A large force of Spanish and Indian military from the mainland was able to mostly suppress the rebellion, and the Todos Santos mission was reestablished in 1737 under Jesuit Bernardo Zumziel.

In 1748 the hostile native non-converted Indians were mostly extinct due to diseases and military action, and the hostilities stopped.

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The diseases that the Spaniards imported kept wreaking havoc in the Spaniard-friendly converted native Indian population at the Santa Rosa mission, and in 1768, its population was too low to support its agriculture.

The Santa Rosa mission was helped by the Franciscans who sent 746 semi-nomadic native Indians, but within a year 300 of them died in an epidemic of measles, and others ran away. The population continued to dwindle and in 1825 the mission was closed.

The church was later reopened under the name Nuestra Senora del Pilar de Todos Santos.

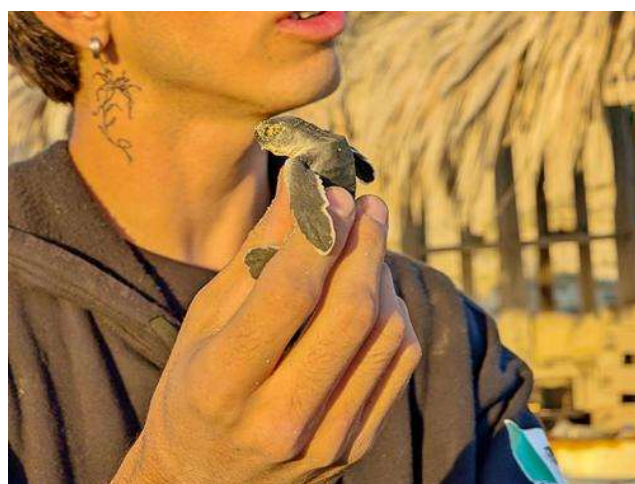
The building has undergone several renovations and expansions over the years, namely in 1786, which have altered how the original church looked like.



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When everyone lines up near the water for the baby turtle release, don't cross the line to avoid stepping on the baby turtles. It will be dark when the release is over, so be prepared to drive in the dark.

Please be advised that it is not safe to swim at Playa las Tunas. You can definitely come here hours before the baby turtle release to sunbathe, enjoy the tranquility, or to have fun in the sun, but swimming is not allowed.



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6. Closing Remarks

ABOUT RUDY FROM BACKPACK & SNORKEL

I was born in Germany and emigrated to the US in 2003. My wife and I are a truly multinational couple: I, with my German background, and she with her Chinese heritage. Both of us live in the USA.

Sadly, working in the US means we have much fewer vacation days compared to other countries like e.g. Germany and thus we cannot travel very frequently.

Through a lot of trial and error, we have found our ideal travel and vacation style. **Making Memorable Moments** by focusing on important destinations, planning time for meeting the locals and, of course, for relaxation are our priorities.

We have also learned to appreciate local foods and try to eat as many local dishes as possible. Just for fun, we try to eat at one Chinese restaurant in each country we visit. It is absolutely amazing how different Chinese food is all over the planet.



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MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS

You may take 10,000 photos during your vacation, rush from one attraction to the next, but what you will remember in your heart is how you were **Making Memorable Moments**.

For me, that was e.g. Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly (ever heard of this US National Park?). When I first saw it, I was blown away by this majestic natural obelisk and the beautiful canyon that it sits in. I have been there two more times and still feel the same.

Or think of Isla Mujeres, a small island outside Cancun, Mexico. On the surface, Playa Norte is supposedly Mexico's most beautiful beach and it is always crowded and the boats that anchor there play loud music. Below the surface, Isla Mujeres is very relaxed, quite walkable and it has friendly locals, good authentic Mexican food and good international cuisine and is often very affordable.

Isla Mujeres is our personal paradise!



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Making Memorable Moments

PACK YOUR BACKPACK & SNORKEL AND LET'S GO

Our travel style has evolved over the years. We are packing light these days when we travel and typically only need a small backpack per person - see our [Traveling Light Guide](#).

With this guide, I want to provide value to you and help you plan your own relaxing vacations with the goal of **Making Memorable Moments!**

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.