

Alaska Airlines

A full-page advertisement for Alaska Airlines. The background is a photograph of a natural rock archway made of rugged, light-colored limestone. The arch frames a view of a bright blue sky and a turquoise ocean. Two people in kayaks are visible in the water, passing through the arch. The Alaska Airlines logo is at the top in a white script font. Text in the upper right corner indicates the date 'DECEMBER 2011'. In the center-left, the words 'Tropical Treasures' are written in a bold yellow font, with 'Sunshine adventures in Mexico' in a smaller white font below it.

DECEMBER 2011

Tropical Treasures

Sunshine adventures
in Mexico



Sun, Sand and Sea

A relaxing getaway on the southern Baja Peninsula

By Becky Youman

*F*rom our patio looking out at the ocean, the world seems to be on hold. There are no soccer games to rush off to, no spelling words to practice, no meetings to attend—just an endless blue sea against an endless blue sky. This is our Cabo weekend.

My husband, Bryan, and I have visited Los Cabos a number of times, and we appreciate the area as a blank canvas for creating different types of vacations. When we were younger, we would hop between bars and nightclubs until dawn, and then spend all day on the beach. More recently, we have played golf with friends at championship courses and been pampered at top-notch spas. Our last visit, with family, was a non-stop adventure featuring zip lining and

swimming with dolphins. On this trip, we are satisfying the craving for a relaxing, unscheduled getaway—just the two of us.

Los Cabos, which means “The Capes,” is located at the southern tip of Mexico’s Baja California Peninsula and actually encompasses three areas: the lively tourist center of Cabo San Lucas; the more traditional and laid-back town of San José del Cabo; and the 20 miles of white-sand, hotel-studded coastline, known as “The Corridor,” that con-



sects the two towns.

Los Cabos is a different sort of Mexican resort destination. Instead of being tucked into lush jungle terrain, as many of the mainland resort destinations are, it is positioned on the flank of a mountainous desert that features dramatic cliffs beside a dazzling blue sea. Sculptural rock formations jut out of the water, markers of the peninsula running its course.

El Arco—"The Arch"—is the most famous of these natural structures. This iconic formation, also called "Land's End," represents the extreme tip of Baja. We can see the arch and much of Cabo San Lucas

Bay from the patio of our room at the Pueblo Bonito Rosé Resort & Spa, where we sit sipping coffee on our first morning here.

We have chosen the Pueblo Bonito Rosé, an all-suite hotel, not only for its splendid views, but also because of its convenient location within walking distance of the heart of Cabo San Lucas. The kitchensettes, attractive palm-shaded pool and outstanding spa are bonuses.

After spending the morning leisurely eating breakfast, lounging poolside and taking an unhurried walk along the golden stretch of Médano Beach in front of the hotel, we are ready to go on our one outing of the day. Having taken glass-bottom boats around the bay a number of times in the past, today we have chosen to explore our surroundings from the unique underwater perspective of a submarine.

We take a five-minute cab ride to the Cabo Marina, a bustling waterfront area of shops and restaurants, as well as the take-off spot for boat tours. It's hard to miss our bright-yellow vessel, the Cabo Submarine. Technically not a true submarine, the 60-foot semisubmersible has both a railed topside deck area and an underwater



Opposite: The dramatic, towering rock formations of Land's End form the tip of the Baja Peninsula near Cabo San Lucas. Above: Snorkelers view abundant marine life in the calm waters of the Sea of Cortés.

observation hull. We hop on board with 12 other passengers, bypassing the two shaded seating sections on the top deck in order to check out the underwater level. The air-conditioned submerged portion of the boat has a central aisle and a row of about 15 seats on each side. Large picture windows afford clear underwater views.

We head topside as the boat begins to motor out of the marina, and break into an exuberant rendition of The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*, a song I'm sure the crew has heard many times before. The plan is to spend just under an hour exploring the bay and taking in the sights.

As we near an underwater formation known as Pelican Rock, the crew recommends that everybody go downstairs. Re-entering the submerged area, it's almost as if we are scuba diving, but without all the gear. Hundreds of colorful fish dart in front of the windows—like a natural kaleidoscope of citron, neon blue, orange and gray in the shimmering shafts of sunlight penetrating the water. We see yellowtail surgeonfish, orange clown angelfish and a variety of parrot fish in the mix. The kids in the group squeal with delight at the

parade of undersea creatures at our noses.

Continuing along, we are summoned back upstairs to view Lovers' Beach. This idyllic stretch of sand wedged between two rocky cliffs is a favorite destination in the bay. The captain steers our attention to a colony of sea lions perched on the rocks. These portly creatures lazily glance our way and then get back to the serious business of lying inert and sunning themselves. Our last stop is near the Arch, where the rough Pacific and the more tranquil Sea of Cortés come together. I can't see a physical demarcation of the two seas, but it's neat to know that we are bobbing at that exact spot.

We decide to walk back to our hotel from the marina, along the beach route. As we amble along the shoreline, we come upon one of our favorite happy-hour spots, The Office on the Beach, and spontaneously decide to stop for a drink. Taking a seat at one of the wrought-iron tables



Glassblowing demonstrations at The Glass Factory illustrate how traditional blue-rimmed glassware and other handicrafts are created.

placed right on the sand, we order a couple of Coronas and enjoy uninterrupted conversation in the shade of a blue umbrella. This is our kind of office.

Our plan for dinner is to feast on seafood at Las Mariscadas. Located near the Cabo San Lucas town square, this informal, open-air restaurant is immediately appealing with its thatched roof and

cobalt-blue walls decorated with a colorful fish mural. Things only get better. The margaritas are cold and tart, the ahi and shrimp tostados flavorful, and the main course—a shared seafood platter for two—is worthy of a sonnet. Brimming with crab, coconut shrimp, sautéed octopus and fish fillets, along with sautéed vegetables and rice, the platter showcases the full bounty of the sea. For dessert, we enjoy a thick, sweet homemade flan that neither of us really needs but both of us devour.

The next morning, we elect to do the day's lounging and underwater viewing at Chileno Beach. Located about halfway along The Corridor between Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo, Chileno is one of the few areas with calm waters and easy snorkeling on this stretch of coast.

It takes about 15 minutes to arrive by cab. Along the way we pass numerous large, luxury resorts as well as the Tom Weiskopf- and Jack Nicklaus-designed golf courses at the Cabo del Sol golf-ort community. Chileno Beach is a wide, flat crescent of beach buttressed by rocky outcrops on each end. We plant ourselves under a thatched umbrella palapa, pulling out towels, snorkeling gear and sunscreen.

As soon as our masks hit the water, we are transfixed by the array of fish. We can hear the rhythmic chomping of parrot fish, munching away on their algae lunch, and we spot a puffer fish in its deflated state. Eagle-eye Bryan even spies a small mooney eel hiding in a rocky crevice.

We alternate between snorkeling, lounging and exploring tide pools packed with sea life for the next few hours, until we are famished.

Exploring Los Cabos

For more information about visiting Los Cabos, go to the Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Bureau's website at <http://visitoscabos.travel>.

LODGING

Barceló Los Cabos Palace Deluxe: Paseo del Malecón 1-3 D, San José del Cabo; 800-232-2396; www.barceloloscabos.com.

Dreams Los Cabos: Carretera Transpeninsular CSL-SJC Km 18.5, Los Cabos; 866-232-3267; www.dreamsresorts.com.

Pueblo Bonito Reef Resort & Spa: Playa El Médano, Cabo San Lucas; 800-990-8296; www.pueblobonito.com.

Wells Resorts Shena Del Mar: Carretera Transpeninsular CSL-SJC Km 4.5, Cabo San Lucas; 877-607-5541; www.wellsresorts.com.

DINING

Las Mariscadas: One block north of Lazaro Cardenas, Cabo San Lucas; 52-624-105-1565.

The Office on the Beach: Médano Beach, Cabo San Lucas; 52-624-143-4993; [www.theofficeonthebeach.com](http://theofficeonthebeach.com).

Las Tres Galaxias: 20 de Noviembre, between Leona Vicario and Morelos, Cabo San Lucas; reservations accepted; 52-624-154-5869.

ACTIVITIES

Cabo Submarine: Tours depart daily on the half hour between 9:30 A.M. and 5:30 P.M.; night tours and private charters also available; adults \$45, children ages 4-12 \$35; 52-624-143-8788; www.cabosubmarine.com.

Chileno Beach: Kilometer 14 on The Corridor; public restrooms and showers, and kayak and snorkeling equipment rental available at the beach.

The Glass Factory: Lazaro Cardenas 5/H, Edificio Posada Local 6-A, Cabo San Lucas; 52-624-143-0055; www.glassfactory.com.mx.

San José del Cabo: Don't miss a visit to this quieter Mexican town with more traditional appeal. San José is gaining popularity for its gallery and cafe scene. The Thursday evening art walks are especially recommended; www.loscaboguide.com/artdistrictcabo.

Todos Santos: A noteworthy day trip is to the town of Todos Santos, about an hour northwest of Cabo San Lucas. This "Pueblo Mágico" is an artists enclave, surfer town (be mindful of the strong undertow at some of the area's beaches) and surprisingly sophisticated dining spot; www.todosantos.co.cr. —B.Y.

We ask our cabbie to take us directly to Los Tres Gallos in Cabo San Lucas for a late lunch. Having lived in Mexico City for five years in the 1990s, Bryan and I love authentic Mexican flavors. The concierge at Pueblo Bonito Rosé has assured us that we won't be disappointed by the cuisine at Los Tres Gallos. The restaurant's bright and exterior grabs our attention, but gives way inside to more muted earth tones and rustic wooden furniture.

The menu—which includes rich dishes with a variety of mole sauces, warm posole stew and Mexican finger foods such as quesadillas and sopes—makes deciding what to order difficult. We choose a tableful of flavorful cuisine: a pork dish that is so tender it almost falls apart on the fork, quesadillas replete with the fragrant Mexican herb epazote and homemade tortillas so fresh and soft, they are like a desert. We finish the meal with fragrant café de olla, a delicious cinnamon-spiced coffee.

The next morning we again enjoy a relaxed start to our day before embarking

on our last excursion. We have a late flight out, so are easily able to fit in a trip to The Glass Factory on the edge of town. The art of glassblowing has been popular in the Mexican handicrafts tradition for hundreds of years. I have always been intrigued by blown glass and look forward to seeing the masters in action.

Upon arriving at the factory, we are invited to watch the bustling activity taking place at the various ovens, which roar at temperatures between 752 and 2,372 degrees Fahrenheit. We watch in admiration as one man blows a couple of orbs and then shapes them into the traditional blue-rimmed glassware we see all over Mexico. At other stations, workers fashion vases, bowls and dishes. At another oven, we are fascinated by the duet between the main shaper and his assistant as they create glass sea turtles and starfish in front of our eyes. The main shaper starts with a simple blob of molten glass and—through a process of pulling, cutting, reheating and molding—ends up with translucent works

of art. We watch for an hour until the heat inspires us to head into the factory store.

My choice souvenir is a small glass fish with brilliant blue fins. It reminds me not only of the fish we saw while in the submersible and snorkeling, but also of the blue umbrellas at The Office on the Beach, the blue walls at Las Mariocadas, and the endless blue ocean we looked upon from our balcony. I can already see myself sitting in my real office on hectic days, feeling the smooth memento in the palm of my hand, and coming back—if only in my mind—to this ocean-side paradise. ▲

Becky Youman writes from Scottsdale, Arizona.

GETTING THERE



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