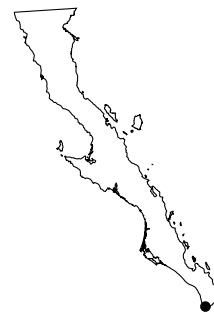


Los Cabos



Los Cabos, the unrestrained big shot of Baja California, is three distinct personalities rolled into one. San José del Cabo is a traditional yet refined Mexican town with a central plaza, historic adobe buildings, a municipal market and narrow streets to remind you that, yes indeed, this is Mexico. While San José clings – however precariously – to its Mexican past, Cabo San Lucas is bent more upon partying and its fashionable good looks than maintaining any sort of tradition or, for that matter, sensible plans for the future. Linking the two towns is Los Cabos Corridor, an 29km (18-mile) stretch of beautiful beaches, golf courses, sandy coves and Baja's most expensive resorts.

Where you stay depends on your budget and what you're here to do (see p219) for some advice on where to shack up). Because the region is fairly compact and public transportation is good, staying in Cabo San Lucas, say, and visiting San José by day is easy. A successful visit therefore comes down to making the most of *all* there is to offer. That means spending at least one night whooping it up in Cabo San Lucas; dropping at least one load of cash in one of San José's gourmet restaurants; and getting out to the beaches for snorkeling, swimming, sun bathing and – at Playa Médano – margaritas in the sun. It also means wandering off the well-trodden path and experiencing those places that are distinctly Baja: dine at *taquerías* (taco stands), drive up to the *rancho* (tiny rural settlement) of La Candelaria and, when you take that horseback ride into the hills, grill your guide about everything you can. You'll find there's a fascinating cultural side, faint as it's becoming, to this salty paradise as well.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sip margaritas with your toes in the sand at **Playa Médano** (p240), where swimming, sun and sousing are all superb
- Don your snorkel gear and boat out to Playa del Amor, **Land's End** (p240), for a visual symphony above *and* below the water
- Test your angler's luck in the legendary **big-game sportfishing** (p241) waters off Cabo San Lucas
- Drink, dance and debauch the night away in **Cabo San Lucas** (p251)
- Grab your surfboard (or rent one) and surf (or learn how to surf) the stellar breaks at **Playa Costa Azul** (p230)



■ CABO JANUARY AVERAGE HIGH: 79°F/26°C

■ WATER TEMP OFF CABO: 70-80°F/21-27°C

HISTORY

Baja's southern tip has been, in succession, a sleepy haven for indigenous Pericú, a sheltered hideaway for pirates and a string of sedate fishing communities. The Pericú inhabited the foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna to the north, never settling around the cape proper because fresh water was scarce there. The majority of them died soon after the arrival of Europeans and their deadly diseases.

When Europeans first saw the peninsula in the 16th century, water shortages made the southern cape an unappealing place for permanent settlement but its secluded anchorages offered privateers an ideal base for raiding Spain's Manila galleons.

By the early 17th century, the Spanish had lost enough gold and silver to prompt the establishment of a small presidio (military outpost) at Cabo San Lucas. Around 1730, the Jesuits established Misión San José del Cabo, which became a more permanent settlement. The presidio deterred the pirates and, eventually, both encampments became villages whose inhabitants relied on fishing and fish-canning for their livelihood. During the Mexican–American War, US troops occupied the area, as did the eccentric William Walker's forces a few years later (see also p195).

After WWII, US private pilots brought tales of the area's big game fish and magnificent beaches to listeners north of the border. As more North Americans arrived, upscale hotels and restaurants sprouted, and the federal government built an international airport near San José del Cabo. Cruise ships soon included Cabo San Lucas on their itineraries, and a ferry service (since discontinued) began to operate from the mainland city of Puerto Vallarta.

In recent years, hordes of North American tourists and retirees have frequented the area, downtown Cabo San Lucas has lost its village ambience and a string of multistorey luxury resort hotels – not to mention several golf courses – has disfigured the coastline between Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo. The giant development of Puerto Los Cabos has permanently altered the San José estuary, and the construction of more resorts along the beach at San José has no end in sight.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Los Cabos International Airport (p227) is 10.5km (6.5 miles) north of San José del Cabo. Shuttle services and taxis link the

airport with both towns and the resorts along the Corridor. For more information on transport between the airport and anywhere in Los Cabos, see San José del Cabo's Getting Around section, p228. Public buses (US\$1.50) run along the Corridor linking San José with Cabo San Lucas.

SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO

☎ 624 / pop 60,000

Despite the fact that it's crawling with tourists, historic little San José has charm. Lots of it. Everyone visiting Cabo San Lucas and the Corridor visits *at least* once to get their slice of 'real' Mexico. The spruced up central plaza draws out families (and musicians) every evening, the surrounding streets are lined with restored adobe buildings housing outstanding art galleries, restaurants have atmospheric courtyards and the boutique shopping is fab. In fact, some might say San José's a little *too* perfect. Maybe it is. But, once you're tired of the polished side, there's plenty to snap you back to reality: open-air *taquerías* with blaring TVs and fridges full of neon-orange Mexican sodas, a municipal market with cheap family-style food, a funky shopping strip (for the locals, of course), stereos blasting from knockoff shoe stores and plenty of locals going about their daily business. Really, what's so perfect about San José is that it offers a bite of whatever side of México you want – which definitely isn't the case for the rest of Cabo.

HISTORY

Before the Jesuits arrived, the indigenous Pericú people called the site of present-day San José del Cabo Añuití. Fired by the desire to evangelize the Pericú and establish a long-awaited mission at the southern tip of the cape, the Jesuits appointed Padre Nicolás Tamaral to found Misión San José del Cabo in 1730. But the mission's original sight, 4km (2.5 miles) inland, was chosen hastily. Alkaline soils, poor irrigation and swarms of mosquitoes forced Tamaral to move the site to the banks of the San José estuary at Añuití, where the present-day town of San José was born.

Tamaral set to converting the Pericú, but the Jesuit's prohibition of polygamy and the decimation of the Pericú by European diseases finally sparked a revolt in 1734. After that San

SLEEPING IN CABO

With hundreds of hotels spread among two towns and across 32km (20 miles) of dramatically varied coastline, booking a hotel in Cabo can prove extremely confusing. Where you stay can have a significant effect on the outcome of your vacation. If you're setting things up yourself, pay close attention to where your hotel is and consider the following.

Location

Downtown San José del Cabo offers Cabo's closest version of a traditional Mexican town. Here you can stay in a family-run or boutique hotel and be walking distance from a plethora of restaurants and shops. Buses run regularly (until 10pm) to the Corridor beaches and to Cabo San Lucas (for the best nightlife). San José's beach resorts are spread along the wide **Playa de California** (travel agents usually just refer to it as San José del Cabo), which is great for sunbathing, but lousy for swimming, due to the undertow.

The **Corridor** has Los Cabos' most luxurious hotels (they're all resorts) and many of its most beautiful beaches. The various locations are almost all splendid, but you have to figure out transport (taxi or bus) if you want to do anything outside the hotel.

Hotels in **central Cabo San Lucas** are mostly small places and, like similar hotels in San José, offer a more intimate experience and the convenience of being in the middle of town. In Cabo San Lucas this means shops, restaurants and countless bars and nightclubs right outside your door.

Cabo San Lucas' beach resorts are on **Playa Médano**, which, in many ways, offers the best of everything: great swimming, great sand, fun bars, luxury hotels and easy access to Cabo San Lucas' raging nightlife. Playa Médano is walking distance from central Cabo San Lucas. **Playa Solmar**, on the south side of Cabo San Lucas, has a few luxurious resorts overlooking the ocean; the beach is wide, but because it faces the Pacific, it's dangerous for swimming.

Hotel Type

Independent travelers who enjoy chatting with hotel owners and staff usually opt for the **small hotels** of downtown San José or Cabo San Lucas. If you just want a relaxed, pamper-me-I-deserve-it experience, you have to decide between **all-inclusive** (meaning all meals, snacks, booze and entertainment are included) or the so-called **European plan** (room only). For a list of the 10 or so all-inclusive hotels in Los Cabos, check out www.allinclusivescabo.com, if only to get an idea of what there is to choose from.

All-inclusives are great for families but the food is generally just mediocre. If you're opting for an all-inclusive, try to find out if there are poolside activities – classic-rock aerobics and trivia contests are red flags if you want peace and quiet. Resorts reviewed in this chapter are all-inclusive only when noted.

Getting the Best Deal

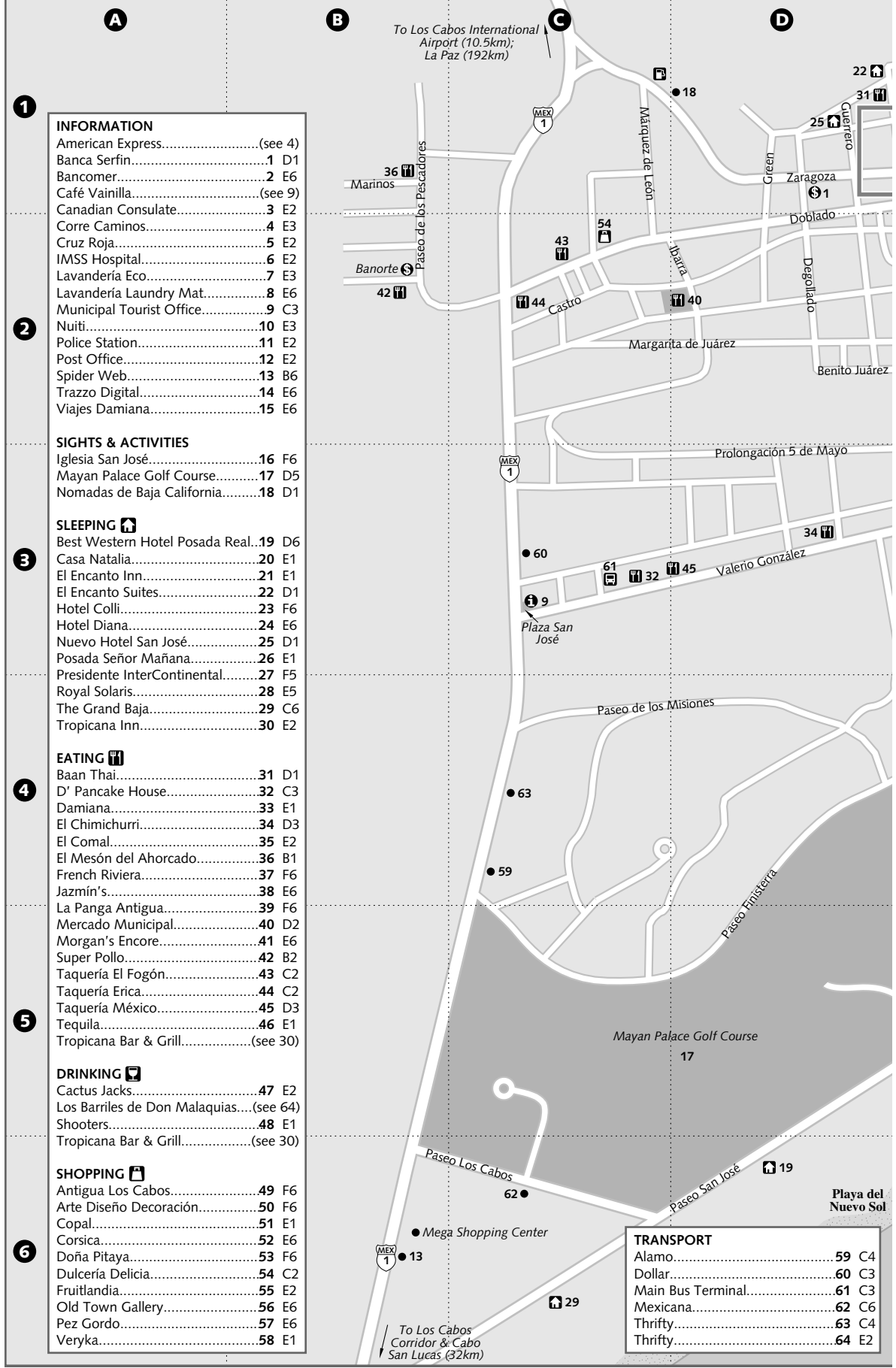
Small hotels often maintain the same price throughout the year, or have a simple high-season/low-season structure. Resort rates, however, fluctuate dramatically, depending upon season, day of the week, room availability, how and when you book and whether the concierge is sporting a standard or double Windsor knot in his tie.

Turning up at the hotel without a reservation usually guarantees you'll be quoted the highest price. However, if you turn up, check the place out and find rooms to your liking available, you'll get a better rate by grabbing a brochure, finding the nearest payphone and reserving by telephone. If you're setting something up from home and find a deal online, always call first to see if you can score something cheaper over the phone – you often can.

Rates quoted throughout the Los Cabos chapter apply to peak season (usually November to May), so expect to pay 25% to 50% less at other times. November to mid-April is high season, with peak season (when prices are at their absolute highest) between December 20 and January 5. Low season is May to October. Prices quoted here include both 13% tax and gratuity, plus the 10% to 15% service charge the resorts all tack on top. Room rates are for two adults, but often you'll get the same rate for two adults and two children or even four adults (all in the same room, of course).

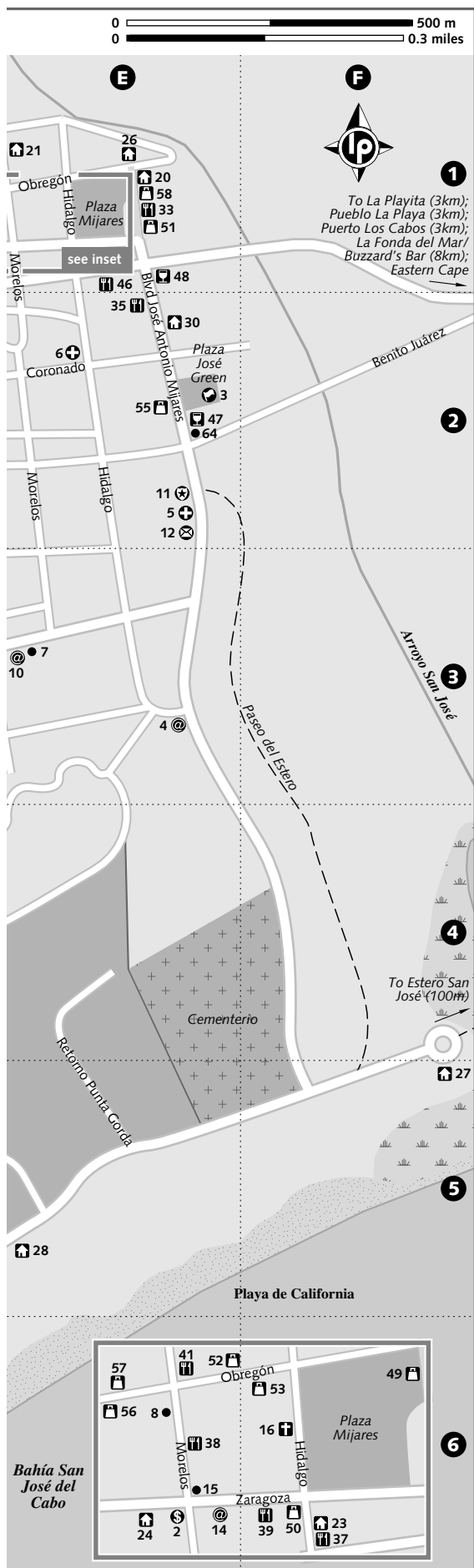
SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO

LOS CABOS



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José was mostly abandoned, but by the late 1700s all the Pericú had died of European diseases.

The town later became an important military outpost, sheltered occasional sailors en route to Acapulco and attracted a mishmash of farmers, miners, ranchers and fishermen who worked throughout the southern cape. It remained, for the most part, a frontier town until tourism hit the cape in the 1960s. Today it's the municipal seat of Los Cabos.

ORIENTATION

San José lies about 1.6km (1 mile) inland from the beach and the beachfront *zona hotelera* (hotel zone), home to the town's giant resorts. It's about 32km (20 miles) east of Cabo San Lucas and 192km (119 miles) south of La Paz. The historic downtown is linked to the *zona hotelera* by the manicured Blvd José Antonio Mijares (abbreviated to Blvd Mijares); the *zona hotelera* hugs the beaches of Playa de California and Playa del Nuevo Sol, which together makes one long beach. San José's commercial center orbits Plaza Mijares, the northern terminus of Blvd Mijares.

Benito Juárez leads east past the Puerto Los Cabos development to Pueblo La Playa (a former fishing village), Laguna Hills and the Eastern Cape Rd (p204).

INFORMATION

Bookstores

Spider Web (☎ 105-2048; Plaza los Portales, Local 102, Transpeninsular Km 30) Outstanding selection of Baja-related books and maps and plenty of used novels. Also has internet.

Emergency Services

Crux Roja (Red Cross; ☎ 066; Blvd Mijares near Benito Juárez) Call for ambulance.

Fire (☎ 068)

Police (☎ 060, 142-0361; Blvd Mijares near Benito Juárez)

Internet Access

Café Vainilla (Transpeninsular, Plaza San José, Local 13; per hr US\$3) Coffee house with internet.

Corre Caminos (Blvd Mijares; per hr US\$5; ☎ Sun) Coffee, juices and baked goods served.

Nuiti (Valerio González; per hr US\$2) Cheap.

Trazzo Digital (☎ 412-0303; Zaragoza 24; per hr US\$5) Fastest internet downtown.

LOS CABOS

Internet Resources

For internet resources pertinent to all of Los Cabos, see p237.

Laundry

Lavandería Eco (Valerio González near Morelos; full service US\$3.50)

Lavandería Laundry Mat (Morelos at Obregón; self-service/full service US\$2.80/5; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Media

For a list of the local English-language publications, see p237.

Medical Services

IMSS hospital (☎ emergency 142-0180, non-emergency 142-0076; cnr Hidalgo & Coronado)

Money

The *cambio* (money exchange) at Los Cabos International Airport offers poor rates. In town, several *cambios* keep long hours, but banks pay better rates. Downtown's **Bancomer** (cnr Morelos & Zaragoza) and **Banca Serfin** (cnr Degollado & Zaragoza) cash traveler's checks and have ATMs. **Amex** (☎ 142-1306; Blvd Mijares near Paseo Finisterra) has an office on the road to the beach.

Post

Post office (Blvd Mijares near Valerio González)

Telephone

Ladatel public telephones are plentiful everywhere, especially around Plaza Mijares.

Tourist Information

Municipal tourist office (☎ 146-9628; www.loscabos.gob.mx, turismoloscabos@prodigy.net.mx; Plaza San José, Local 3 & 4, Transpeninsular near Valerio González; ☎ 8:30am-3pm Mon-Fri) Plenty of brochures, helpful staff, but a lousy location away from the center. On the lower floor of the Plaza San José complex.

Travel Agencies

Viajes Damiana (☎ 142-0752, 142-3752; cnr Zaragoza & Morelos) Widely respected, full-service travel agency.

SIGHTS

Plaza Mijares & Iglesia San José

San José's central plaza is far more traditional than anything found in San Lucas. In the evening, tourists mill around, local families wander down with the kids and the plaza turns into a small kickball-court-cum-tricycle-track, with oblivious wandering toddlers thrown in

for suspense. On weekends, bands (for better or worse) take to the stage. The plaza is surrounded by colorful, historical buildings and anchored by the Iglesia San José, an imposing replica of the original mission church. Note the mosaic above the front portal depicting a 1734 local indigenous uprising.

Estero San José

Although the Puerto Los Cabos development is taking a devastating toll upon the San José estuary – especially near the ocean – it's still one of the town's most delightfully peaceful spots and a good place to squeeze in a little bird-watching. It is, at least in name, a protected wildlife sanctuary and home to many bird species, including frigate birds, sparrow hawks, white herons and red-tailed hawks. From near the corner of Benito Juárez, a palm-lined pedestrian trail, known as the **Paseo del Estero**, parallels Mijares all the way to the *zona hotelera*. This is a peaceful alternative to the boulevard, but it may not always be passable because of high water levels, especially after rains. In colonial times, pirates took refuge in the estuary between raids on Spanish galleons.

Beaches

San José's long, white, sandy beaches are a major attraction for visitors, but they're a good 20-minute walk from the center of town. **Playa del Nuevo Sol** and its eastward extension, **Playa de California** (at the southern end of Blvd Mijares), are both good for sunbathing but the current and strong shore-break make swimming risky. Together, the beaches make an incredibly long stretch of sand – a great morning walk if you head east away from the hotels. After 1km (a half-mile) or so, you'll reach **La Playita**, the beach adjacent to Pueblo La Playa (p229). La Playita has always had excellent surf fishing and a more local feel than the other beaches, but this is all changing dramatically with the development of Puerto Los Cabos (in early 2007, still a work in progress). Unfortunately, until the project is complete (a date that's anybody's guess), giant dump trucks will continue to pound down the beach.

ACTIVITIES

Surfing

There's loads of great surf around San José del Cabo, especially along Playa Costa Azul (see p232), just southwest of town.

Fishing

Fishing is not as big a pastime in San José as it is in Cabo San Lucas and on the east cape, but several operators do offer excursions. One of the best-known local operators is **Gordo Banks Pangas** (☎ 142-1147, in the USA 800-408-1199; www.gordobanks.com), based in La Playita, which charges US\$200 to US\$280 for *pangas* (out-board fishing skiffs), depending on the size. *Pangas* hold up to three people. Cruisers run US\$350 to US\$530.

Golf

Formerly the municipal golf course, the Fonatur-designed **Mayan Palace Golf Course** (☎ 142-0905; Paseo San José) is a nine-hole, par-35 course. With a green fee of US\$70, it's the cheapest in Los Cabos – not bad, considering your cart is included. Club rentals cost US\$10. If you want to swing in style, head to the Corridor courses (p232).

TOURS

Nomadas de Baja (☎ 146-9612; www.nomadasdebaja.com; Zaragoza near Márquez de León) is an ecologically minded adventure tour company that offers a wide range of explorations along the coast, the Los Cabos hinterlands and the Sierra de la Laguna. Options include trips to waterfalls and hot springs (US\$65), a sunrise hike (US\$45) and biking through the desert (US\$85). The very popular kayak-and-snorkel trip to Cabo Pulmo costs US\$105. Local kayaking trips cost US\$45. Guided two-day, two-night hiking treks to the Sierra de la Laguna cost US\$350, including mules, food, guides and transport.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

March 19 marks the **Fiesta de San José**, a celebration of the town's patron saint. Festivities last four or five days and include folk dancing, parades, lots of food and horse races.

SLEEPING

Downtown San José has several sophisticated boutique hotels, but it's tight on budget options. The most expensive hotels are the all-inclusive luxury resorts down on the beach. The nearest established campgrounds are in the Corridor; free camping at La Playita may be possible. Also see the boxed text, p219.

Downtown San José

Nuevo Hotel San José (☎ 142-1705; Obregón at Guerrero; r US\$20-35; 🏠) The street-facing rooms at San

José's cheapest hotel are giant, while those in the back are smaller and darker. Special touches include exposed electrical wires (that do indeed shock), pipes masquerading as shower heads, seatless toilets, industrial toilet paper holders and a motley (burp) clientele. It's fine if you're on a budget.

Hotel Diana (☎ 142-0490; Zaragoza 30; r US\$35) Hotel Diana pays unknowing tribute to its previous life as a bar with faux-rock arches in the back rooms and chimerical bedspreads featuring wild-eyed horses bursting from clouds. Rooms are tolerable, bathrooms are basic and everything's a little worn. Friendly and cheap.

Hotel Colli (☎ 142-0725; Hidalgo near Zaragoza; r US\$45; 🏠) One of the best-value places in town, the family-run Hotel Colli has immaculate rooms (flowered bedspreads, painted furniture), free bottled water and a tiny patio out back. It has a perfectly preserved c-1963 look to it. Best of all, the owners are wonderfully friendly. Try for the quieter off-street rooms.

Tropicana Inn (☎ 142-1580; www.tropicanacabo.com; Blvd Mijares near Coronado; r US\$79-130; 🏠 🏠) With its outdoor patio, banana trees, tropical foliage and a *palapa*-roofed poolside bar (complete with underwater chairs), it's hard to believe this handsome hotel is right downtown. Its unpretentiousness and central location make it an excellent choice. Enter through its namesake restaurant.

El Encanto Inn (☎ 142-038; www.elencantoinn.com; Morelos 133; r US\$89; 🏠 🏠) El Encanto is basically two hotels: the Inn and El Encanto Suites (suite US\$119 to US\$240), across the street. The best rooms are those in the latter and open onto a flower-festooned garden, replete with a lovely swimming pool and chaise lounges. Those at the Inn are large and very comfy, but open only onto a narrow (though well tended) courtyard.

Casa Natalia (☎ 142-5100, in the USA 888-277-3814; www.casanatalia.com; Blvd Mijares 4; s US\$198-275, d US\$396-412; 🏠 🏠) European-owned Casa Natalia is an ultrachic luxury hotel squeezed into the confines of an historic building on the north-eastern corner of Plaza Mijares. Each of the 18 rooms is decorated uniquely with locally produced artwork, and bears a name (Watermelon, Shell, Cactus etc) to match. They all have private patios (where breakfast is served each morning), and the grounds are simply stunning. To call it divinely comfortable is even an understatement.

Beach Hotels

San José's closest beachfront hotels are a 20-minute walk from downtown. Because most are chain resorts, rates fluctuate wildly; prices quoted here are only intended to give a rough idea. There are several other hotels on this strip and more go up each season.

Best Western Hotel Posada Real (☎ 142-0155, in the USA 800-780-7234; www.posadareal.com.mx, www.bestwestern.com; Playa de California; r from US\$190; (P X ♻️ 📺 🚰)) Good choice if you're looking for something in the resort vein without the Roll's Royce price tag.

Royal Solaris (☎ 145-6800, toll free in Mexico 800-557-7684; www.hotelessolaris.com; r from US\$266; (P X ♻️ 📺 🚰)) This is the most affordable of the all-inclusives with food and atmosphere to match. Great place to let the kids run wild. Family atmosphere.

Grand Baja (☎ 400-1605, in the USA 800-745-2226; www.grand-baja.com; r from US\$265) Offers European and all-inclusive plans. The latter runs about US\$350 per double. Classy feel, great swimming pool.

Presidente InterContinental (☎ 142-0211, in the USA 888-567-8725; www.loscabos.interconti.com; d from US\$450; (P X ♻️ 📺 🚰)) The big daddy of San José's beach resorts offers all-inclusive rates only. Three pools means you can chose your scene.

Pueblo La Playa/La Playita

Pueblo La Playa is 10 to 15 minutes by car from downtown San José. Accommodations are much closer to the beach here than they are in downtown San José and cost less than the luxury resorts on Playas California and Nuevo Sol. However, due to the massive development of Puerto Los Cabos, Pueblo La Playa was not the most peaceful place to stay at the time of research. The following hotels once offered some of the best value around – and with the completion of the project may well again – but at research time they weren't conducive to a quiet, romantic stay near the beach (unless you like dodging dump trucks during your stroll down the sand).

If you're in Los Cabos to fish, surf or engage in other activities that draw you out of Pueblo La Playa for the day, it's still a great place to stay. Just be sure to call ahead of time and be certain to ask the owners how quiet things are when you call. These are all small hotels and the owners will give you an honest assessment of their changing slice of paradise.

El Delfín Blanco (☎ 142-1212; www.eldelfinblanco.net; s/d US\$30/39, casita US\$50-56) Facing La Playita beach, this Swedish-run accommodation sits in a garden filled with palm and banana trees. Amenities include a barbecue area and outdoor kitchen. Tent sites cost US\$10 to US\$15. Otherwise you stay in the neatly decorated, thatch-roof *cabañas* (cabins) with shared or private bathroom. It's a lovely little place.

La Playita Hotel (☎ 142-4166, in the USA 626-962-2805, 888-242-4166; laplayitahotel@prodigy.net.mx; r US\$78) Almost *in* the sand at La Playita beach, this modest and wonderfully friendly American-owned hotel has large, comfortable rooms that open to the outside. Rates include continental breakfast. Give the owners a call and they'll be very frank with you about how much construction is going on nearby. It's a great spot, really, and a good place to crash if you're heading up the Eastern Cape Rd.

Elsewhere

La Fonda del Mar/Buzzard's Bar (☎ in the USA 951-303-9384; www.buzzardsbar.com; r shared/private bathroom US\$75/95) Owned by a friendly American couple, this four-room B&B is just the spot for low-key relaxation. Three of the rooms have their own sinks and toilets but share a separate shower (which is immaculate), and a fourth has its own shower. They're all set within a small garden, just off the fabulous outdoor restaurant. The beach is a shell's throw away. Prices drop by US\$10 May 16 to October 31. Considering the rates include breakfast ordered off the menu (a US\$6 to US\$8 value per person in itself), it's a great deal. The B&B is located just beyond Pueblo La Playa, at the start of the Eastern Cape Rd.

EATING

After the success of pioneering restaurants such as Tequila, the formula for the San José restaurant was set: fancy flatware, artsy presentation and sky-high prices. It's as if the city's restaurateurs banded together and decided that no main course sold within three blocks of the main plaza should cost under US\$18. *Alta cocina* (haute cuisine) is big business in San José. Quality, admittedly, is high, and the atmosphere inside these old Mexican buildings is undeniably romantic. But choose carefully, and don't mistake high prices for equally high quality.

For something more authentic (and easier on the wallet) hit the more casual eateries

along Valerio González, Doblado and Paseo de los Pescadores, which is on the other side of the Transpeninsular.

Plaza Mijares & Blvd Mijares

Tropicana Bar & Grill (☎ 142-0907; Blvd Mijares near Coronado; mains US\$7-15) Tropicana has a large, open sports bar, sidewalk seating and a dedicated clientele who roll in to eat good food at prices that are kept relatively reasonable. Nonsense Mexican-American main courses such as baby-back ribs and a lobster-steak combination characterize the menu. Breakfasts are huge and delicious. The Sunday breakfast buffet (US\$14) is well-attended.

Damiana (☎ 142-0499; Blvd Mijares at Plaza Mijares; mains US\$12-25) Popular Damiana occupies a restored 18th-century house with wood-beam ceilings and traditional decorations. At night the courtyard, canopied with bougainvillea, is especially romantic. Reservations are recommended.

La Panga Antigua (☎ 142-4041; www.lapanga.com; Zaragoza s/n; mains US\$18-35; ☎ noon-10:30pm) With dishes such as yellow fin tuna in a merlot reduction, pan-fried jumbo shrimp over fettuccini with organic vegetables and rack of lamb in annatto rub and pineapple salsa, La Panga Antigua sits squarely within the mold of San José haute cuisine. It's beautifully decorated and highly regarded.

South of the Plaza

French Riviera (☎ 147-7198; cnr Hidalgo & Doblado; snacks US\$1-4, mains US\$8-15) This French-owned bakery whips out superb croissants, baguettes and pastries fresh daily. Salads, crepes and other sit-down dishes make for a pricier meal than ordering morsels such as miniquiches, ham-and-cheese croissants and personal pizzas to go from the pastry counter. Excellent.

El Comal (☎ 142-5508; www.restaurantelcomal.com; Blvd Mijares; mains US\$12-22; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Boasting some of the best patio seating in town, El Comal serves classic mainland Mexican dishes with a gourmet twist. Plates include beef medallions in *mole* (a rich sauce seasoned with chocolate and spices), *cochinita pibil* (a traditional pork dish from the Yucatán; US\$16) and *arrachera en su jugo* (flanksteak served in its juice). Prices are reasonable by San José standards, and locals say it's good.

Tequila (☎ 142-1155; www.tequilarestaurant.com; Doblado near Hidalgo; mains US\$18-36; ☎ dinner only) The big draws for this classy favorite are the

beautiful patio and the 90 varieties of Tequila's namesake swill. The food has morphed from Mexican and Mediterranean-inspired over the years to more strictly Californian, prices have skyrocketed and quality has remained about the same (great, but astoundingly overpriced).

Morgan's Encore (☎ 142-4737; cnr Obregón & Morelos; mains US\$19-35; ☎ 6pm-midnight) Set in a beautifully remodeled heritage building, Morgan's specializes in gourmet Mexican and international food. Follow the staircase to the open-air terrace upstairs for a fabulous setting. For those of you who really want to splash out, try the US\$42 rib-eye.

West of the Plaza

Jazmín's (☎ 142-1760; Morelos near Obregón; breakfast US\$8-23, mains US\$9-20; ☎ 8am-11pm) Jazmín's serves Mexican, seafood and vegetarian meals in a peaceful setting with unobtrusive service and, incongruously, a paperback book exchange. Breakfasts are excellent. Unfortunately, prices have recently climbed.

Baan Thai (☎ 142-3344; Morelos near Obregón; mains US\$10-20; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Sat) For a change of pace, try the flavorful and spicy concoctions at this upscale Thai restaurant. Dishes such as *tom kha ghai* (coconut) soup, fish wrapped in banana leaf, and the catch of the day in lemon black-bean sauce are all assiduously prepared.

Elsewhere

For cheap eats, you'll have to remove yourself from the touristy area of downtown and venture west toward the Mercado Municipal, the highway and the bus terminal. A stroll along Paseo de los Pescadores, west of the highway, will turn up some interesting choices.

Mercado Municipal (Municipal Market; cnr Ibarra & Coronado; mains about US\$3; ☎ 6am-4pm) The numerous *loncherías* (lunch stalls) alongside San José's municipal market offer simple, inexpensive and good meals. A bowl of *menudo* (tripe and hominy stew) or a plate of enchiladas will set you back only about US\$3.

Super Pollo (chicken US\$3-5) This local branch of the Super Pollo chain is *the* place to go for roast bird. It's just off of Paseo de los Pescadores, west of the Transpeninsular.

D' Pancake House (☎ 130-7611; www.dpancakehouse.com.mx; Valerio González s/n; mains US\$4-7; ☎ Tue-Sun) This is *the* place for breakfast in San José. Huge portions, reasonable prices and more

than 50 items to choose from (including waffles, egg dishes, fruit, granola and, of course, pancakes) make it a sure shot. At press time, the owner was firing up a new dinner feature: a US\$9 buffet featuring sushi, salads and Mexican food.

El Chimichurri (☎ 158-1202; Valerio González s/n; 3 empanadas for US\$5; ☎ Tue-Sun) This small Argentine-owned meat importer sells fresh empanadas (baked turnovers stuffed with meat, cheese or veggies) at US\$5 for three or US\$20 for a dozen. Delivery offered.

Taquería México (Valerio González s/n; tacos US\$1.20-1.80, mains US\$5-13; ☎ 11am-2am) Open-air Taquería México has plastic tables and fabric tablecloths and serves up delicious tacos, stuffed potatoes and reasonably priced seafood to a mostly local clientele. The fish filets (US\$12) and whole snapper (US\$14) are particularly good. On Thursday and Sunday, try the *pozole* (pork and hominy stew; US\$6). Full bar.

If you head west along Doblado you'll encounter several cheap *taquerías*, the two best being **Taquería Erica** (Doblado near México 1; tacos US\$1-2; ☎ 10am-4am) and **Taquería El Fogón** (Doblado near México 1; tacos US\$1-3; ☎ 8am-2am). The latter serves outstanding *tacos al pastor* (roisserie pork tacos) and several other variations on

the tortilla-packed-with-goodies concept. Vegetarians can dig into quesadillas or stuffed potatoes.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

San José is pretty *tranquilo* (mellow) after dark. If you're really looking to party, head over to Cabo San Lucas. There are a few places in San José, however.

Tropicana Bar & Grill (☎ 142-0907; Blvd Mijares near Coronado) Tropicana features a popular happy hour and hosts live music nightly in high season.

Cactus Jacks (Blvd Mijares near Benito Juárez) Cactus Jacks does karaoke Wednesday through Saturday nights and hosts the occasional live band. Pool tables and a large-screen TV (showing sporting events) help bring in the night owls.

Shooters (cnr Blvd Mijares & Doblado) Great happy hour and reasonably priced beer make this rooftop bar a good hang-out, especially when there's live music (weekends, usually).

Los Barriles de Don Malaquias (☎ 142-5322; cnr Blvd Mijares & Benito Juárez; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Los Barriles stocks more than 300 varieties of tequila and keeps at least two dozen bottles open for tasting. Prices are a bit steep, but the selection is great.

DINING WITH THE HANGMAN

It's hard to beat a name like **El Mesón del Ahorcado** (cnr Paseo de los Pescadores & Paseo de los Marinos; ☎ 6pm-1am Tue-Sun), which means 'the hanged man's restaurant' or, as it's called locally in English, the Hangman. And, indeed, the easiest way to spot the place is by the cowboy effigy dangling by its neck from the gallows out front. Even harder to beat than the name is the Hangman's food. This is the one restaurant in San José you shouldn't miss. The best part: it's cheap.

But why the morbidity? It all started in the town of Tamazula de Gordiano, in the mainland Mexican state of Jalisco, when owner Sergio Velasco opened up a *taquería* beneath a giant eucalyptus tree – apparently a tree with a history. During the Mexican Revolution, General Gordiano Guzmán, after whom the town is named, used the tree to string up counterrevolutionaries and outlaws by their undesired necks. So decades later, even though Sergio Velasco named his *taquería* 'Sergio's,' everyone who ate there said they were 'going to eat with the hanged man.' And the name stuck.

In 1996 Velasco moved his family and the restaurant to San José and, as at the original, filled every inch of the patio with junk: ranch paraphernalia, carousel horses, devil heads, license plates, broken surf boards, dolls, masks, bumpers. His wife and four kids (and a handful of friends) all help run the place, carefully explaining (in English, if you wish) the menu's imaginative tacos and quesadillas, all stuffed with traditional ingredients you won't easily find around here.

At no more than US\$1.80 a pop, choices include quesadillas made with *huitlacoche* (a black fungus that grows on corn), *flor de calabaza* (squash flower) and *nopal* (cactus paddles). The tacos are equally imaginative (try the cow tongue in mustard sauce), and every table has 11 varieties of salsa with which to garnish your food. And the Velasco family is so friendly you'll find yourself hanging around all night!

LOCAL LORE: DAMIANA

Start sampling the margaritas in Cabo and you'll likely run across the *damiana* margarita. Rather than Cointreau or Triple Sec, this version of the standard tequila-and-lime cocktail contains *licor de damiana*, a liqueur made from the desert shrub known as *damiana* and poured from a bottle shaped loosely like an Inca fertility goddess.

Native to southern Baja, *damiana* is a desert shrub with tiny yellow flowers and small green leaves. Throughout Mexico it is used – most often in the form of tea – to treat everything from anxiety and depression to coughs and constipation. It is also used to treat bronchitis, dysentery, diabetes, menstrual irregularities and even bed wetting. But what it's best known for is its supposed effects on the male and female reproductive systems. *Damiana* is widely believed to be an aphrodisiac. Its scientific name is *Turnera diffusa* or, perhaps more appropriately, *Turnera aphrodisiaca*.

The liqueur version of *damiana*, available in its distinctive bottle throughout Cabo, is called Guaycura after the indigenous Guaycura (Waicura) who inhabited southern Baja until the early 1800s. Supposedly, smoking the leaves of the plant produces an effect similar to, but much milder than, cannabis. Honestly, we haven't experimented ingesting the herb in this manner. As a tea, however – well, let's just say it tasted great. Keep your eyes peeled and try some yourself!

SHOPPING

San José is loaded with shops; stroll down Blvd Mijares from the plaza and you'll encounter dozens. In rhyme with the town's restaurants, there's plenty of high-end shopping, with loads of eye-catching design items, and examples of the best crafts from throughout the country. Shopping can be a bit trying here, however, as salespeople relentlessly coerce passersby into their shops and small-talk them to death once inside. Silver jewelry is a huge seller, but bargain or you'll pay more than you would for the same piece at home. And, fear not, there are plenty of gaudy souvenirs.

Arte Diseño Decoración (cnr Zaragoza & Hidalgo) Excellent selection of Talavera (Puebla) ceramics, as well as high-end silverware.

Antigua Los Cabos (cnr Blvd Mijares 5 & Obregón) Small selection of women's handbags, fine tequilas (you can taste 'em, too) and traditional handicrafts.

Copal (Blvd Mijares near Doblado) Great for lacquered boxes from Olinalá, Guerrero; fine Yucatecan hammocks; Oaxacan wool blankets; fancy glassware and interesting Christmas decorations.

Veryka (☎ 142-0575; Blvd Mijares 6-B) Wide selection of outstanding crafts from all over Mexico.

Fruitlandia (Blvd Mijares near Coronado) Bring home some fresh traditional sweets such as ground, sweetened *semilla de calabaza* (squash seeds), *tamarindo con chile* (tamarind paste with chili), *pepitorias* (brittle sesame and peanut bars), candied limes, *jamoncillo* (milk fudge) and *chilacayote* (candied squash). Be sure to

try the bright green *biznaga* (candied cactus), a local specialty.

Dulcería Delicia (Doblado west of Márquez de León) Stocks piñatas and every kind of Mexican factory candy and kitschy party favor imaginable.

Galleries

San José is a veritable museum of contemporary painters, and browsing its galleries – whether you intend to buy or not – is a highlight. Most of the best galleries are on (or just off of) Obregón, between Hidalgo and Guerrero. Every Thursday evening during high season, galleries open their doors and serve wine and snacks during the **Thursday Art Walk** (🕒 5-9pm Oct-Jun).

There are loads of other galleries, but don't miss the following:

Corsica (☎ 146-9177; www.galeriacorsica.com; Obregón 15) Features works by some of Mexico's top artists. This is one you want to pop into even if you're not buying.

Doña Pitaya (☎ 142-6550; Obregón 8) Sells psychedelic beaded Huichol handicrafts from the Mexican mainland.

Old Town Gallery (☎ 142-3662; www.oldtowngallery.net; Obregón 20)

Pez Gordo (☎ 142-5788; www.pezgordogallery.com; Obregón 19)

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Serving both San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, **Los Cabos International Airport** (☎ 142-2111, 146-5013; www.sjdloscabosairport.com) is 10.5km (6.5 miles) north of town. **Mexicana** (☎ 142-1530) has an office at Plaza Los Cabos between the

beachfront Paseo San José and Paseo Los Cabos. It's also at the airport, as are offices for the airlines listed here. For airline websites and more information, see p266.

Aero California (☎ 142-0943, 413-3700) Flies daily to/from Los Angeles.

Aeroméxico (☎ 142-0341, 146-5097/98) Flies daily to/from San Diego. Serves mainland Mexican destinations, with international connections via Mexico City.

Alaska Airlines (☎ 146-5106, 146-5210) Flies to/from Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose (California), Portland and Seattle.

America West (☎ 142-2880, 146-5380) Flies twice daily to/from Phoenix.

American Airlines (☎ 142-2735, 146-5300) Flies daily to/from Los Angeles and Dallas–Fort Worth, and from November 1 to April 31 to/from Chicago.

Continental Airlines (☎ 142-3840, 146-5040, 146-5050) Flies to/from Houston.

Frontier Airlines (www.frontierairlines.com) Flies seasonally to/from San Jose (California), San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Denver and Kansas City.

Mexicana (☎ 142-0606, 146-5001/02) Flies twice daily to/from Los Angeles and daily to Mexico City.

Bus

The **main bus terminal** (☎ 142-1100; Valerio González) is just east of the Transpeninsular. Autotransportes Aguila goes to La Paz (US\$17) at least 14 times daily between 6am and 7:30pm; seven buses travel straight north (*via larga* or long route; 3½ hours) and the other seven go via Cabo San Lucas and Todos Santos (*via corta* or short route; three hours). The fare to Todos Santos is US\$9 (two hours). There are also daily buses to Loreto (US\$39 to US\$43, eight hours) and Tijuana (US\$146, 25 hours).

GETTING AROUND

San José is small enough to be pedestrian-friendly; even from the *zona hotelera* the walk into town takes only about half an hour. Outside town, buses, taxis or bicycles may be necessary.

To/From the Airport

Taxis from the airport to downtown San José or the *zona hotelera* cost about US\$50; they cost about US\$80 to Cabo San Lucas and somewhere in between to resorts along the Corridor. Heading the opposite direction, they're about US\$30 from downtown San José to the airport and around US\$45 from Cabo San Lucas. Top-end hotels often arrange transportation for their guests.

A much cheaper alternative are the Los Cabos Express shuttle services available at the airport, which charge US\$11 to San José, US\$12 to any Corridor hotel and about US\$13 to Cabo San Lucas. They drop you at your hotel. The office is just outside the international terminal.

You can take a bus from the airport into town, but it entails a 20- to 30-minute walk in the pounding sun, past the car-rental agencies and out the airport access road to the Transpeninsular. There you can flag a bus to either San José (US\$0.80) or Cabo San Lucas (US\$2). From downtown San José, buses leave the main terminal on Valerio González to the airport junction on the Transpeninsular.

Bus

Aguila buses travel from San José to Cabo San Lucas (US\$2, 30 minutes), but far more frequent are the local buses departing from the Transpeninsular (México 1) just west of downtown; the price is the same. These buses will also drop you anywhere along the Corridor. Buses run down Blvd Mijares to Playa California (US\$0.50). Buses along the Corridor and to Cabo San Lucas stop running around 10pm; if you plan to go out in San Lucas for the night, you'll have to spring for a cab.

Car & Taxi

A taxi anywhere in town costs US\$3 to US\$5, and a ride to/from Cabo San Lucas costs about US\$30 (ouch!). Taxi is the only public transport between San Lucas and San José after 10pm.

All major car-rental agencies have offices at the airport; some have branches downtown. You can also set up a car rental through your hotel or by calling the company directly. The car-rental business on the southern cape is more competitive than elsewhere on the peninsula, and some good deals with unlimited mileage are available. Agencies include the following:

Advantage (☎ airport 146-0700)

Alamo (☎ Transpeninsular 146-0626)

Avis (☎ airport 146-0388, 142-1180)

Dollar (☎ airport 146-5060, Transpeninsular 142-0100)

Hertz (☎ airport 146-5088)

National (☎ airport 146-5020/22)

Thrifty (☎ airport 146-5030, Transpeninsular 142-2380, San José del Cabo 142-3656; cnr Blvd Mijares & Benito Juárez, San José del Cabo)

AROUND SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO Pueblo La Playa & Laguna Hills

Drive east on Benito Juárez, and in 15 minutes you'll hit the village of **Pueblo La Playa**, also known as La Playita after the village's beach. There are several good places to stay (p224), but, thanks to construction at nearby Puerto Los Cabos, Pueblo La Playa is much less tranquil than it was in the past.

Pushing for completion in 2007, Puerto Los Cabos is a massive 800-hectare (2000-acre) resort community with a 535-slip marina, an ecopark, two new 18-hole golf courses, luxury hotels, condominiums and several gated subdivisions with deluxe vacation homes. The development essentially engulfs the once tiny fishing village of Pueblo La Playa and has transformed the San José estuary and surrounding coastline for good. Until the entire development has been completed, construction will detract significantly from the area's allure. There has been plenty of controversy over the development because of its environmental impact on the area and because numerous town residents were forced to relocate elsewhere.

Leaving Pueblo La Playa, the road turns inland to skirt the beachfront developments of **Laguna Hills** and **El Encanto** (which both successfully closed an entire stretch of the coastal road to the public, making it necessary to drive inland along the current road). Next to Laguna Hills you'll find delicious food, cold beer and a great atmosphere at friendly **Buzzard's Bar** (mains US\$5-10; ☎ 8am-8:30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun). Buzzard's is part of La Fonda del Mar (p224) and makes for a fabulous breakfast stop before heading up along the Eastern Cape Rd.

Eastern Cape Road

One of Baja's classic drives, the Eastern Cape Rd (see Map p188) is a graded dirt road which winds, bumps and clatters its way up the cape's breathtaking east coast. It passes Bahía Los Frailes, Cabo Pulmo and La Ribera (all covered in the Eastern Cape section, p204), before rejoining the Transpeninsular at Buena Vista. It's a spectacular drive and possible for nearly all vehicles, except after heavy storms. The worst part of the road is the stretch just south of Bahía Los Frailes.

San José del Cabo was once the southern terminus of the road, but construction and the laying of asphalt has, for all intents and

purposes, nudged the terminus up to Laguna Hills, just outside Buzzard's Bar parking lot. This is where the dirt now begins. From here on up, the desert scenery, backed by stunning little beaches and rocky coves, is astonishing.

Heading north from Buzzard's, you'll soon pass **Punta Gorda** (home to the surf break known as Shipwrecks) and the increasingly populated **Santa Cruz de los Zacatitos**. About 10km (6 miles) offshore from Zacatitos are the famous **Gorda Banks**, two seamounts that are prime fishing grounds for marlin and other big-game fish; they are also popular with divers.

Immediately after Zacatitos, the fences disappear for a short stretch and you reach the first accessible beach, **Playa Tortuga**, named for the turtles that nest here.

About 25.5km (16 miles) from San José there's more beach access at **Playa Santa Agueda**, and again by way of an *arroyo* (dry riverbed) about 1km (0.5 miles) further on. Shortly after Santa Agueda is the turnoff to the **Palo Escopeta Road**, which leads back to the Transpeninsular (a good way back to San José if you don't want to go all the way up the cape). A few miles past this junction, a roadside **monument** commemorates the completion of the 'Camino Rural Costero' (Rural Coast Rd), better known as the Eastern Cape Rd. It was finished in 1984.

About 59km (37 miles) from San José, you reach **Bahía Los Frailes** (p209). After 78km (49 miles) from San José, or several miles past **Cabo Pulmo** (p207), the pavement begins again.

Getting There & Around

From San José, head east on Benito Juárez, and you'll encounter several roundabouts. To get to Buzzard's Bar (about 8km or 5 miles from San José) and the Eastern Cape Rd, follow the signs toward Laguna Hills and Zacatitos. To get to La Playita, follow the 'La Playita' signs and head toward the beach at the fourth roundabout you come to. Because the area east of San José is changing rapidly and detours come and go as construction around Puerto Los Cabos progresses, you'll likely make a wrong turn here or there. The road is paved as far as Buzzard's. Most vehicles can make it all the way to Buena Vista, experiencing, at worst, serious tooth-chatter from the washboard.

LOS CABOS CORRIDOR

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The 29km (18-mile) stretch of the Transpeninsular between San José del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas is commonly referred to as 'The Corridor.' This state-of-the-art, divided four-lane highway parallels the most beautiful stretch of coast in the Los Cabos area. It's a visual feast of secluded coves, jutting points, generous sandy beaches, teeming tidal pools, rolling desertscapes and drop-dead-gorgeous ocean views.

Naturally it's also the arena for the area's most aggressive developers, who have snapped up and divvied up the choicest beachfront properties to build sprawling resorts and condo complexes. Practically all of them are of the sophisticated, extremely expensive variety, intended to appeal to travelers with social statuses ranging from upscale to filthy rich. Interspersed between the hotels are world-class golf courses – seven at last count – with more in the planning stages. Most locals seem to welcome all this expansion, primarily for its job- and income-creating potential, and many have migrated from mainland Mexico to work in the tourist industry this development generates. Meanwhile, old-time travelers lament the area's loss of charm and natural beauty. Still, whether you stay on the Corridor or not, exploring its beaches is one of the highlights of Los Cabos.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES Beaches

All along the Transpeninsular you'll see blue beach-access signs sporting pictographs of the types of activities available (snorkeling, fishing, diving, surfing etc) at the beach the sign marks. Parking is along the highway or in parking lots. If you're taking the bus, ask the driver to drop you off at your beach of choice. By law, all Mexican beaches are open to the public, but access from the highway is becoming increasingly restricted because of developments. If you look like a tourist, you'll have no problem walking through the lobbies of the bigger resorts, strolling past the pool area and out to the beach.

The Corridor beach closest to San José is **Playa Costa Azul**, at Km 28. The excellent surfing break known as **Zipper's** is here. Access to the beach and the break is through Zipper's

Bar & Grill (p234). Surfers also hang out at the much smaller adjacent **Playa Acapulquito**, accessible at Km 28 just before the lookout. The beach is directly below Cabo Surf Hotel (p233), which has a great restaurant and rents surfboards.

The next beach up is **Playa Palmilla**, at Km 27. It's a long crescent of fine sand popular with swimmers and water-sports enthusiasts. Facilities include a dive shop, equipment concession and restaurant.

The Hotel Meliá Cabo Real, at Km 19.5, sits on a lovely cove known as **Playa Cabo Real**, which is protected by a breakwater, making it safe for swimming and water sports. The hotel also provides access to **Playa La Concha**, a beach club (admission is charged). East of here is **Playa Bledito**, sought out by beachcombers.

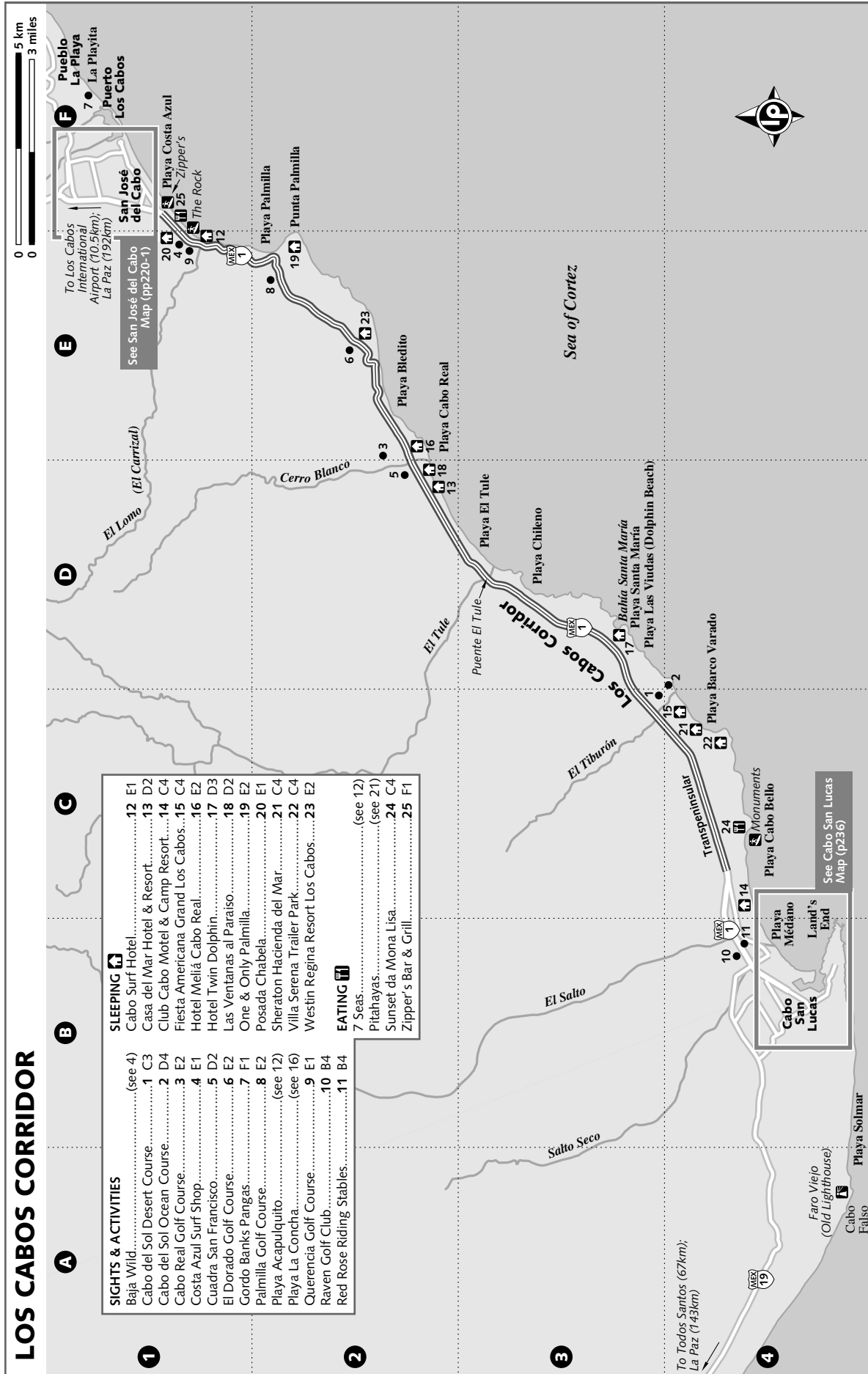
One of the largest open stretches of beach is at **Playa El Tule**, at Km 15, reached through the *arroyo* at Puente Los Tules. Surfers come here, as do the occasional beach campers. There are zero facilities.

Next up is **Playa Chileno** at Km 14 (actually, between Km 14 and Km 15), which offers excellent swimming and snorkeling and fresh-water showers. A concession here rents kayaks, snorkeling and dive equipment. The beach is easily accessible from the road and just a short walk from a large parking lot. If you want a quick and easy escape, this is a good bet. On weekends it fills up with local families.

Perhaps the nicest Corridor beach is **Playa Santa María** on its namesake **Bahía Santa María**, a sheltered cove teeming with underwater creatures. Numerous snorkeling excursions from San José and Cabo San Lucas come here, so waters may occasionally get crowded. Snorkeling gear and beach chairs are available for rent, but there's no infrastructure otherwise. It's reached via a sandy road between Km 12 and Km 13 and there's a guarded parking lot (free). If you only have one day to hit a Corridor beach, this is probably the one.

Access to **Playa Las Viudas**, also known as Dolphin Beach, is via a sandy road next to the Hotel Twin Dolphin turnoff at Km 12. Depending on road conditions, it may be advisable to walk the 400m (0.25 miles) to the beach, which is secluded and good for swimming.

Playa Barco Varado now fronts the mega-sized Cabo del Sol development and is better for diving and snorkeling than for swimming.



LOS CABOS CORRIDOR

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Baja Wild..... (see 4)	12 E1
Cabo del Sol Desert Course..... 1 C3	13 D2
Cabo del Sol Ocean Course..... 2 D4	14 C4
Cabo Real Golf Course..... 3 E2	15 C4
Costa Azul Surf Shop..... 4 E1	16 E2
Cuadra San Francisco..... 5 D2	17 D3
El Dorado Golf Course..... 6 E2	18 D2
Gordo Banks Pangas..... 7 F1	19 E2
Palmilla Golf Course..... 8 E2	20 E1
Playa Acapulquito..... (see 12)	21 C4
Playa La Concha..... (see 16)	22 C4
Querencia Golf Course..... 9 E1	23 E2
Raven Golf Club..... 10 B4	
Red Rose Riding Stables..... 11 B4	
SLEEPING	
Cabo Surf Hotel..... 12 E1	
Casa del Mar Hotel & Resort..... 13 D2	
Club Cabo Motel & Camp Resort..... 14 C4	
Fiesta Americana Grand Los Cabos..... 15 C4	
Hotel Meliá Cabo Real..... 16 E2	
Hotel Twin Dolphin..... 17 D3	
Las Ventanas al Paraiso..... 18 D2	
One & Only Palmilla..... 19 E2	
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EATING	
7 Seas..... (see 12)	
Pitahayas..... (see 21)	
Sunset da Mona Lisa..... 24 C4	
Zipper's Bar & Grill..... 25 F1	

LOS CABOS

Access is through the Cabo del Sol entrance at Km 10. The closest surf beach to Cabo San Lucas is at **Playa Cabo Bello**, reached via the Misiones del Cabo turnoff at Km 5. The break is known as **Monuments**.

Surfing

The entire Los Cabos area has great surf, with several reef and point breaks along the coast. The added bonus: warm water. The closest surf to San José, and probably the most crowded break on the peninsula (with good reason), is **Zipper's**, at Km 28.5 on the Transpeninsular. It's a reef point break and often loaded with locals. Nearby **Playa Acapulquito** (p230) has been nicknamed 'Old Man's' because its forgiving wave is great for beginners, long boarders and – apparently – old men. Between these breaks is **The Rock**. These are all at Playa Costa Azul (the lengthy beach northeast of Punta Palmilla) and mostly visible from the highway lookout just west of San José.

There are several other breaks along the Corridor (p230), including the excellent right at **Playa El Tule** (near Km 16.2) and the powerful left point-break at **Monuments**, on the western side of Cabo Bello. The latter is accessible through the Misiones del Cabo development at Km 5.5 and is the closest surf to Cabo San Lucas.

There are a handful of good breaks up the Eastern Cape Rd (p229) as well. They include the right point-break at **Shipwrecks** (Map p188), between Punta Gorda and Santa Cruz de los Zacatitos, and the mighty **Punta Perfecta** (Map p188), further north. Beyond here, the Sea of Cortez begins to resemble a lake.

For rentals and repairs, head to **Costa Azul Surf Shop** (Map p231; ☎ 147-0071; Transpeninsular), which sits above Zipper's, on the inland side of the highway. Stop here for the latest surf report and to pick up its free surf-break map. Surfboards cost US\$20 per day. They cost US\$35 per day at the beachfront stand below the Cabo Surf Hotel (opposite). **Nomadas de Baja** (p223) offers full-day surfing lessons for US\$95 per person, gear included, and Baja Wild (right) offers lessons for US\$85/105 per half-/full day.

Water Sports

The best **snorkeling** along the Los Cabos Corridor is at Playa Santa María. Concessions at Playa Chileno and Playa Santa María run two-hour snorkeling trips for about US\$25,

though you can do much the same on your own by going right to the cove. Dive operators based in Cabo San Lucas (p242) offer snorkeling trips to sites off the Corridor and elsewhere.

Baja Wild (Map p231; ☎ 172-6300; www.bajawild.com; Transpeninsular Km 28, Playa Costa Azul) offers well-received **kayak-and-snorkeling** combo trips for US\$60/120 for a half-/full day. It's a reputable operation with bilingual guides.

Horseback Riding

Cuadra San Francisco (Map p231; ☎ 144-0160; www.loscaboshorses; Transpeninsular Km 19.5) is a full-fledged equestrian center with excellent horses, equipment, trainers and guides. There's a big sign on the highway near Km 19.5. Closer to Cabo San Lucas, **Red Rose Riding Stables** (Map p231; ☎ 143-4826; Transpeninsular Km 4) also maintains a stable of well-treated horses.

Golf

The worldwide popularity of golf has skyrocketed in recent years, so it was only a matter of time before a developer would have visions of the pristine Los Cabos coastline covered with velvety green blankets. This man was Don Koll from Orange County, California, owner of the Hotel Palmilla. So when he, in 1990, asked golfing guru Jack Nicklaus to design three nine-hole courses near the hotel, Los Cabos took the first step toward becoming the premier golfing destination it is today: no fewer than six signature championship courses now grace the Corridor – some of the most spectacularly set courses on the planet.

By all accounts, each of these coastal courses is a golfer's dream – and an environmentalist's nightmare, although local regulations at least require all golf courses to be irrigated with gray water.

The following courses are described from east to west. Green fees change with the season, with winter rates (generally, mid-October to mid-June) the highest. Summer green fees (the rest of the year) can be nearly half the winter rate. Most courses offer 'twilight fees' (more like 'roaster fees') for play after anytime between 10:30am and noon in summer and 1:30pm and 3pm in winter, when it can be brutally hot. All green fees quoted here include golf cart, driving range, bottled water and tax. Renting a set of clubs will set you back another US\$50 or so.

Querencia (Map p231; private course) Tom Fazio–designed; members only.

Palmilla (Map p231; www.oneandonlyresorts.com; green fees winter/summer US\$255/190) Jack Nicklaus signature course; 27 holes, 6900 yards, par 72. Cabo's first signature course, with 27 holes between the Arroyo nine, Mountain nine and Ocean nine.

El Dorado (Map p231; private course) Jack Nicklaus signature course; members only.

Cabo Real (Map p231; ☎ 800-543-2044; www.caboreal.com; winter/summer US\$260/180) Robert Trent Jones signature course; 18 holes (three oceanfront), 6988 yards, par 72. Front nine considered toughest in Los Cabos. Host of two Senior Slams.

Cabo del Sol Ocean Course (Map p231; ☎ 145-8200; www.cabodelsol.com; green fees winter/summer US\$295/220) Jack Nicklaus signature course; 18 holes, 7103 yards, par 72. Nearly 2 miles of oceanfront course and often referred to as the 'Mexican Pebble Beach.' Listed by *Golf Magazine* as one of top 100 courses in the world.

Cabo del Sol Desert Course (Map p231; ☎ 145-8200; www.cabodelsol.com; green fees winter/summer US\$220/185) Tom Weiskopf signature course; 18 holes, 7097 yards, par 72. Inland course with views of Sea of Cortez at every hole.

Raven Golf Club (Country Club Cabo San Lucas; Map p231; ☎ 143-4653; www.golfincabo.com; green fees winter/summer US\$169/119) Roy Dye signature course; 18 holes, 7220 yards, par 72.

SLEEPING

For more information on where to sleep in Cabo, see p219.

Hotels & Camping

Posada Chabela (☎ 172-6490, in the USA 310-492-5629; r US\$89-109; ☒) Clinging to a hillside, high above Playa Costa Azul, Posada Chabela is a beautifully designed B&B with four private *casitas* (little houses) set within a meandering garden of banana trees, palms, succulents and other mood-enhancing vegetation. The views over the ocean are vast. Each *casita* has a private terrace and hammock, and breakfast is included. At press time, the new owner had just taken over and promised all sorts of enticing additions. At Km 28.5, take the dirt road that leads uphill beside the landmark bar Havana's.

Cabo Surf Hotel (☎ 142-2666, in the USA 858-964-5117; www.cabosurfhotel.com; Transpeninsular Km 28; r US\$180-670; P ☎ ☒ ☑) If you want to surf *and* treat yourself well, this is the spot. Right on the beach at Playa Acapulquito, this deluxe surfers' favorite offers giant, beautiful rooms with views of the break, direct beach access and

a fabulous restaurant for refueling sessions before getting back in the water. Try for an upper-level room – they have balconies and views, unlike the lower-level rooms which only open onto the grass. It's at Km 28, easily spotted from the road.

With Corridor properties fetching astronomical prices, beachfront camping has become a thing of the past. The last beachfront RV park (Brisa del Mar) closed its doors in 2007. The only other campground/RV park in the Corridor is **Villa Serena Trailer Park** (☎ 143-0509, in the USA 800-932-5599; www.grupobahia.com; site US\$21; ☒) within a resort complex at Km 7.5, near Playa Barco Varado. The park has 54 unadorned but sunny sites with full hookups and a great blufftop restaurant. Facilities include a pool, Jacuzzi, laundry, showers and bathrooms.

Resorts

All the resorts on the Corridor fall into the five-star luxury category with amenities and prices to match. Breathtaking bay views, gorgeous landscaping and top-rated service are *de rigeur*, as are facilities such as swimming pool(s) with swim-up bars, lighted tennis courts, multiple restaurants and bars, fitness centers and room service. Most rooms have ocean views and private terraces. Rarely do they cost less than US\$200 per night. Some hotels enforce minimum stays (especially around holidays) of two or more nights. All resorts can arrange for a wide range of activities from sportfishing to horseback riding to diving.

The Corridor's resorts include (but are not limited to) those here, and are listed from east to west. The following rates are all per night, and are only meant as a rough idea of what rooms cost. Unless noted, the following hotels operate on the European plan. For more on resorts, see p219.

One & Only Palmilla (Hotel Palmilla Resort; ☎ 146-7000, in the USA 800-637-2226, 866-829-2977; www.oneandonlyresorts.com; Transpeninsular Km 27; r US\$375-1125, ste US\$650-2600; P ☒ ☎ ☑) Built in 1956 by Rod Rodríguez, son of a former Mexican president, this is the Corridor's original Hollywood hideaway. Its location against the rocks at Playa Palmilla is simply unbeatable. It's very classy, and perfect for a romantic getaway. The golf course is tops.

Westin Regina Resort Los Cabos (☎ 142-9000, in the USA 888-625-5144; www.westin.com/loscabos; Transpeninsular Km 22.5; r US\$181-2231; P ☒ ☎ ☑) ☑

This mega-resort boasts daring, modern architecture and landscaping designed to complement the desert colors and surroundings. With a bit of imagination (and a couple of margaritas), you can see what the architect was going for: the arches of the hotel reference the arches of Land's End. You can literally fall out of the swimming pool into the sand; proximity to the beach is one of the hotel's most alluring features. And the beach itself is to die for. Families and couples will both feel comfortable.

Hotel Meliá Cabo Real (☎ 144-0000, in the USA 800-336-3542; www.solmelia.com; Transpeninsular Km 19.5; d US\$270-795; P ☒ ☎ ☑ ☒ ☑) Of the Meliá company's two Cabo hotels (the other is in Cabo San Lucas), this is the family- and group-oriented one. It's at Playa Bledito and is easily recognized by its glass and marble pyramid lobby. The resort was recently renovated and sits on a lovely, breakwater-protected cove next to the Cabo Real golf course. There's a small section of beach that's good for swimming. Great for families. All-inclusive.

Las Ventanas al Paraíso (☎ 144-2800, in the USA 888-525-0483; www.lasventanas.com; Transpeninsular Km 19.5; d US\$875-6875; P ☒ ☎ ☑ ☒ ☑) In a class by itself, the most exclusive of Cabo's resorts oozes Zenlike serenity and charms with deceptively simple landscaping and architecture. A luxurious spa and golf course are adjacent. A minimum stay of four or seven days is required in January, February and around most holidays. If you can afford to stay here, please participate in the adopt-an-author program by contacting the Lonely Planet author at the front of this book.

Casa del Mar Hotel & Resort (☎ 144-0030, in the USA 888-227-9621; www.casadelmarmexico.com; Transpeninsular Km 19.5; d US\$560-700; P ☒ ☎ ☑ ☒ ☑) Comparatively intimate (24 rooms and 36 suites), the Casa del Mar, like the Meliá, is part of the Cabo Real development that also includes the Ventanas, a condo complex and a golf course. And holy hot-tubs, Batman, you should see the spa!

Hotel Twin Dolphin (☎ 145-8190, in the USA 800-421-8925; www.twindolphin.com; Transpeninsular Km 12; r US\$205-800; P ☒ ☎ ☑ ☒ ☑) Also an original Corridor resort, the Twin Dolphin is built on a more intimate scale (50 rooms and suites) at Playa Las Viudas. Assets include a jogging trail and free shuttle to Cabo. Rooms with balconies and terraces are divine. Another of its wildcards is its proximity to Playa Santa María, one of the most beautiful beaches on the Corridor.

Fiesta Americana Grand Los Cabos (☎ 145-6200, in the USA 800-343-7821; www.fiestamericana.com; Transpeninsular Km 10.3; r US\$300-2500; P ☒ ☎ ☑ ☒ ☑) Neighboring the Sheraton Hacienda del Mar, the colorful Fiesta Americana is part of a Mexican chain and has 330 rooms, three restaurants, a beautiful pool area and an expansive beach. It has a sophisticated flare.

Sheraton Hacienda del Mar (☎ 145-8000, in the USA 888-672-7137; www.sheratonloscabos.com; Transpeninsular Km 10; r from US\$250, ste from US\$880; P ☒ ☎ ☑ ☒ ☑) Part of the Cabo del Sol development, which also encompasses two golf courses, the Hacienda del Mar is distinguished by its three dramatic, riverlike swimming pools and its warm nouveau-colonial atmosphere.

EATING

Eating along the Corridor takes place mostly at the resort hotels, where you should figure on spending *at least* US\$40 per person for a full meal, including wine.

Pitahayas (☎ 145-8010; Sheraton Hacienda del Mar; ☎ 5:30-10pm; mains US\$20-35) Pitahayas is one of the most highly regarded restaurants in the Corridor and a sure-shot if you're out for a decadent evening. It specializes in Pacific Rim cuisine, including vegetarian selections and has fabulous ocean views.

Notable eateries outside the resorts include the following.

Zipper's Bar & Grill (☎ 172-6162; Transpeninsular Km 28, Zipper's Beach; mains US\$7-15; ☎ 11am-10pm) Zipper's caters to surfers (meaning big portions of pub grub) and specializes in mesquite-grilled beef, ribs, beer-battered shrimp and classic rock. The hamburgers and fish and chips are both excellent, but it hurts every time 'Free Bird' rolls around (again) on the stereo.

7 Seas (☎ 142-2666; Transpeninsular Km 28; mains US\$9-18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Inside Cabo Surf Hotel, 7 Seas prepares seafood and steaks with equal aplomb, though the former (including shrimp risotto, lobster, seafood-stuffed peppers and more) is the real specialty. Dinner atmosphere is romantic yet casual, while lunches and breakfasts are laid-back affairs.

Sunset da Mona Lisa (☎ 145-8160; Transpeninsular Km 5.5; mains US\$17-35) No matter the silly name – the restaurant's dramatic, terraced, cliff-top setting makes it one of the best spots in the Corridor to watch the sun set over Land's End. The menu is strictly Italian. Located at the Misiones del Cabo development at Km 5.5.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Public buses running between San José and Cabo San Lucas will drop you anywhere along the Corridor for US\$2. Taxis from either town cost US\$10 to US\$30, depending on where you want to go.

CABO SAN LUCAS

☎ 624 / pop 90,000

Suspended in a salty paradise at the tip of the peninsula, Cabo San Lucas is Baja's most brazenly self-indulgent destination, packed with people year-round who arrive by plane, yacht and car to partake in the fun. With its vast array of excellent restaurants, bars that stay open practically round-the-clock, night clubs, strip joints, stunning beaches, luxury hotels and activities ranging from parasailing to banana boating, this is the place let it all hang out.

In all sincerity, one could easily yield to lamenting the development, the exorbitant prices, the modern marina's increasingly strip-mall-like atmosphere, the materialism and the gringo hordes that have all come to define Mexico's most expensive destination. But, armed with the right information and a good plan, you can tap this town for the funky, down-to-earth experiences that do still exist – *and* partake in the hedonism that attracts frolickers from around the world.

Remember, from downtown Cabo San Lucas you can hop in a rental car and beat it out the dirt roads into spectacular desert scenery, to wee ranch villages or to empty beach paradises all in less than an hour. As an independent hotel owner once put it: 'I'll have guests in town for a few days, and then they rent a car to get out of Cabo. They come back all wild-eyed and shaking, and when I ask them where they went, they say, "I don't know. But it was *amazing!*"'

HISTORY

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, the area of present-day Cabo San Lucas was inhabited by the indigenous Pericú. Spaniard Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo landed here in 1542, but the place remained a backwater, visited only by occasional privateers such as Sir Francis Drake (in 1578) and Tomas Cavendish (in 1587), who used the natural harbor as a base for staging raids on Spain's Manila galleons heading to Acapulco.

Continued pirate attacks on their treasure-laden galleons prompted the Spanish to investigate establishing a stronghold in the cape, but, while Cabo San Lucas had a natural harbor, it had no fresh water. A Spanish presence wasn't secured in the area until the founding of Misión San José del Cabo, some 32km (20 miles) east, in 1730. The harbor at Cabo San Lucas remained a hideout for pirates well into the 18th century (which explains the plethora of pirate names and activities in Cabo San Lucas today). Aside from small-scale ventures by local inhabitants, Cabo San Lucas remained a relative backwater until sportfishing hit the cape in the 1950s and 1960s. With the completion of the Transpeninsular in 1973, San Lucas began to attract more American road-trippers as well as a steady increase in developers that has grown exponentially ever since.

ORIENTATION

At the southernmost tip of the Baja peninsula, Cabo San Lucas is 1694km (1059 miles) from Tijuana and, via México 1, 221km (137 miles) from La Paz; via México 19, it's 153km (95 miles) from La Paz. The Transpeninsular is also called 'Carretera a San José del Cabo,' whereas México 19 is referred to as 'Carretera a Todos Santos.' A bypass road skirting Cabo's northeastern edge connects the two.

The town's main drag, Blvd Lázaro Cárdenas (abbreviated to Cárdenas), is a continuation of the Transpeninsular. Past the intersection with Zaragoza, it peters out into a minor shopping street while most of the action continues along Blvd Marina, culminating at Land's End. Most services are along Cárdenas and Blvd Marina. The commercial area north of Cárdenas here has a more local flair.

Cabo does not use street numbers, so addresses always specify the nearest cross streets.

INFORMATION

Bookstores

Libros Libros Books Books (Map pp238-9; Blvd Marina s/n) Good selection of English novels and magazines.

Emergency Services

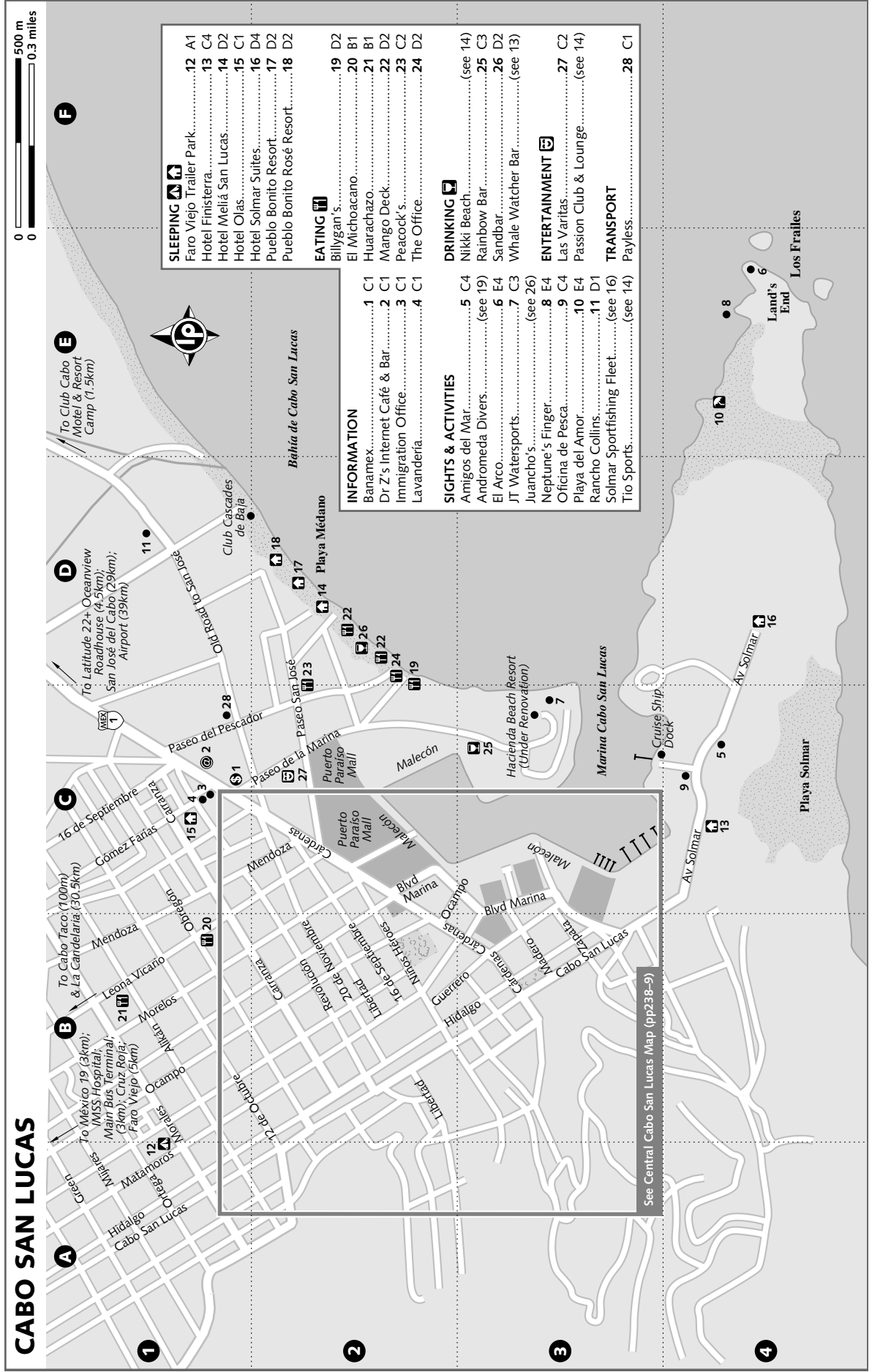
Cruz Roja (Red Cross; Map p236; ☎ ambulance 066, 143-3300; México 19, Km 121)

Fire (☎ 068, 143-3577)

IMSS Hospital (Map p236; ☎ emergency 143-1194, nonemergency 143-1589) Just north of the Pemex station on México 19.

LOS CABOS

CABO SAN LUCAS



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El Arco.....6 E4
JT Watersports.....7 C3
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Oficina de Pesca.....9 C4
Playa del Amor.....10 E4
Rancho Collins.....11 D1
Solimar Sportfishing Fleet.....(see 16)
Tio Sports.....(see 14)

See Central Cabo San Lucas Map (pp238-9)

CABO SAN LUCAS IN...**Two Days**

Start off the morning by renting snorkel gear and taking a water taxi to **Playa del Amor** (p240) for some beach and underwater fun. Return for lunch at **Nikki Beach** (p250) on **Playa Médano** (p240) to maximize beach time. Take a sunset pirate cruise aboard the 19th-century **Sunderland** (p244). Return to land for a late dinner at **Mi Casa** (p248) before a long night of bar hopping. On your second day, rent a car and drive to **Cabo Pulmo** (p207), stopping in **Pueblo La Playa** (p229) for a massive breakfast burrito at **Buzzard's Bar** (p229).

After snorkeling the coral reef, have lunch at **Nancy's** (p209) and, on your way back to Cabo San Lucas, stop at **Mesón del El Ahorcado** (p226) in San José del Cabo for dinner. After this, you'll surely sleep the whole flight home.

Four Days

Follow the two-day plan but hang on to your rental car so you can drive to **La Candelaria** (p252) for traditional ceramics and a taste of ranch life. Go from *ranchos* to riches by dining at fabulous **Mariscos Mocambo** (p248) upon your return to Cabo San Lucas. On day four, head to San José del Cabo in the morning for Los Cabos' best **shopping** (p227); hit the **Mercado Municipal** (p225) for local action and a cheap lunch. Spend the afternoon on **Playa Santa María** (p230) and return to Cabo for more nighttime merrymaking.

One Week

To the four-day plan add an overnight trip to historic **Todos Santos** (p210) or to vibrant **La Paz** (p189) for a spectacular sea-kayaking trip to **Isla Espíritu Santo** (p200).

Police (Map pp238-9; ☎ emergency 060, non-emergency 143-3977; cnr Old Rd to San José & Cárdenas) Next to the McDonald's.

Immigration

Immigration office (Servicios Migratorios; Map p236; ☎ 143-0135; cnr Cárdenas & Farías; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri)

Internet Access

Using the internet in San Lucas can put a serious dent in the wallet if you are not careful.

Café Cabo Mail (Map pp238-9; cnr Cardenas & Zaragoza, Plaza Arámuro; per hr US\$6) Air-con, big booths, fast computers.

Corner (Map pp238-9; cnr Cárdenas & Matamoros; per hr US\$4) Full bar, great for drinking while typing.

Dr Z's Internet Café & Bar (Map p236; Cárdenas near 16 de Septiembre; per hr US\$4) Full bar, coffee.

Internet Express (Map pp238-9; Cárdenas near Matamoros; per hr US\$2.50) Cheap.

Internet Resources

Cabo Bob's (www.cabobob.com) Great site, for Cabo Bob's humor as much as for his trove of information.

Los Cabos Guide (www.loscabosguide.com) Hands down the most comprehensive guide to Los Cabos on the internet.

Los Cabos Tourism Board (www.visitcabo.com) The tourism board's official site is clunky and rather useless.

Laundry

Laundries charge about US\$5 per load.

Lavandería (Map p236; cnr Revolución & Gómez Farías)

Lavandería California (Map pp238-9; Plaza Los Arcos, cnr Leona Vicario & Revolución)

Lavandería Santa Fe (Map pp238-9; cnr Zaragoza & Obregón) In Hotel Santa Fe.

Media

There are loads of English-language publications floating around town, most of them geared blatantly toward selling real estate. There are a handful of old faithfuls, however, that contain plenty of good information, from tongue-in-cheek news bits to restaurant reviews. Look out for the following.

Destino: Los Cabos Quarterly newspaper with good articles about lesser-known area attractions as well as hotel and restaurant profiles.

Gringo Gazette (www.gringogazette.com) English-language biweekly publication with an offbeat but surprisingly informative editorial approach, despite the preponderance of real-estate-related articles. Geared toward both the visitor and resident.

Los Cabos Magazine Published twice yearly. Useful, informative and fun to look at, it's packed with hotel and restaurant reviews, details about beaches, golfing and other activities, plus several good maps. The cover price is US\$5.95 but you can often find it for free.

CENTRAL CABO SAN LUCAS

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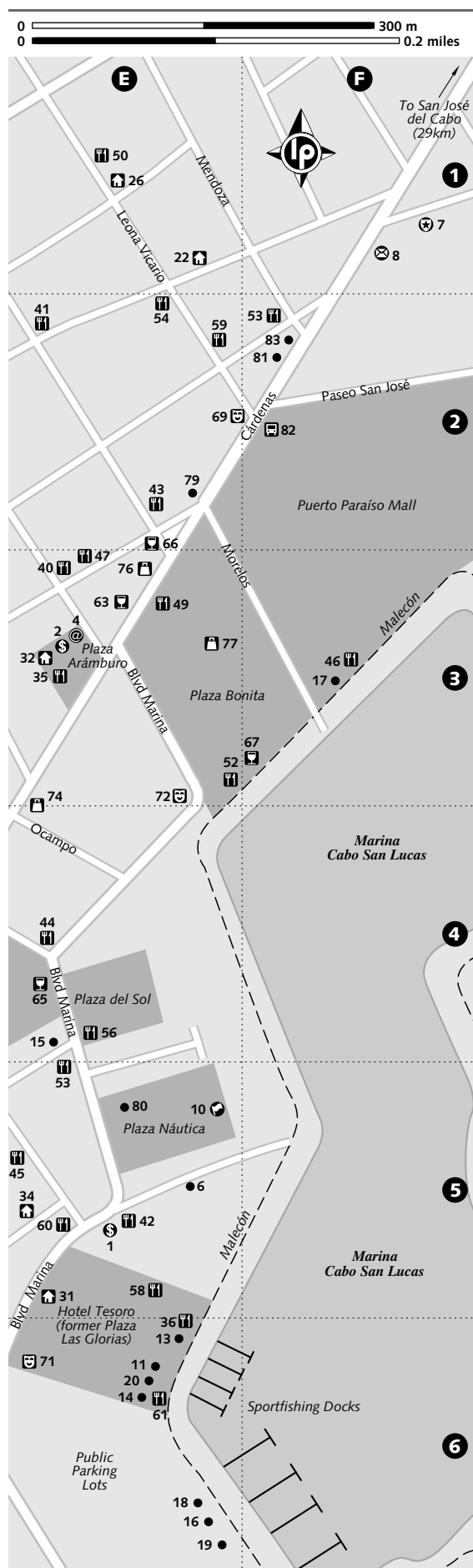
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LOS CABOS



Los Cabos News Bilingual biweekly covering general and tourism-related news in the Los Cabos area.

Money

US dollars are widely accepted at stores, restaurants and hotels, but you usually spend less paying in pesos.

Banamex (Map p236; Cárdenas & Paseo de la Marina)

Banca Serfin (Map pp238-9; Plaza Arámbaro, Cárdenas near Zaragoza)

Banco Santander (Map pp238-9; cnr Cárdenas & Av Cabo San Lucas)

Baja Money Exchange (Map pp238-9; Blvd Marina near Hotel Tesoro) Changes cash and traveler's checks; poorer rates than banks.

Post

Post office (Map pp238-9; Cárdenas near 16 de Septiembre)

Telephone & Fax

Telmex/Ladatel pay phones are located on nearly every street corner in Cabo. Telephone calls from the Corner internet café cost US\$0.40/0.70 to the US/Europe.

Tourist Information

Cabo San Lucas' only official tourist office is the state-run **Secretaria de Turismo de Baja California Sur** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 105-1666; turismo_loscabos@prodigy.net.mx; Dársena, Suite 2-B), near the sportfishing and boat tours docks. Unfortunately, it's of little help. Signs around town that announce 'Tourist Information' are usually time-share booths. Your best bet for information is the staff at your hotel.

Travel Agencies

Los Delfines (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1396, 143-3096; cnr Leona Vicario & Revolución, Plaza Los Arcos, Local 1) Well-established travel agency with an English-speaking staff.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

A major annoyance is the gauntlet of time-share salespeople lined up along Blvd Marina like buzzards on a fence. They will try to entice you with free meals, drinks or rounds of golf if you attend a 'short' tour and presentation, which usually ends up taking up half your vacation day. Do your best to ignore them.

If you're not used to Mexican resort beaches, the many wandering beach vendors – often poor immigrants from mainland Mexico – can be abrasive. Dressed in their city-mandated white outfits, they are especially prevalent

along Playa Médano but also work more remote Corridor beaches such as Playa Chileno and Playa Santa María. A simple *'no gracias'* (no thank you) will usually send them on their way, but it can get to you after the 30th time. However, if you *are* inclined to buy something, you'll probably pay less than in stores. After showing you their wares, the younger men often close the conversation with offers for illicit goods and services.

SIGHTS

Built into the solitary hill in downtown Cabo San Lucas, the **Casa de la Cultura** (Map pp238-9; entrance on Niños Héroes) is home to a theater, a small park and a mirador (lookout point). The mirador is surrounded by landscaped gardens and offers a view of all of Cabo. It is a peaceful retreat from the craziness of downtown.

Marina Cabo San Lucas

Part yacht harbor, part party and part *Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous*, Cabo's multimillion-dollar, 380-slip marina is backed by the town's priciest shopping malls, restaurants and bars. The *malecón* (waterfront promenade) zigzags from the sportfishing docks at the marina's southern end, up to the **Puerto Paraíso Mall** (Map pp238-9), hooks back around and dead ends near the sand at Playa Médano. On a busy day, it offers people-watching at its finest, as sportfishing operators, sun-burnt expats, dusty off-road freaks, drunk college kids, gaudily dressed vacationers, real estate agents and the occasional movie star sit, sip and stroll under the Cabo sun. Ooh-ing and ah-ing at the luxury yachts and sailboats is a prime activity.

Playa Médano

Cabo San Lucas has three main beaches. The most popular is Playa Médano (Dune Beach; Map p236), which runs northeast for about 3km (2 miles) from the Hacienda Beach Resort (under renovation). The water is crystal clear and calm, making it ideal for swimming (or, as the case may be, wading with a margarita glass in hand). Buoyed swimming areas keep the jet skis, parasailers and fishing *pangas* away from the swimmers (at least in theory), and cruise ships float offshore. With several bars placed right on the beach, it's a great place to chill out, pound your favorite cocktails and basically feel merry in the sun.

Land's End

After stretching 1240km (775 miles) from the California border, the peninsula comes to a dramatic end at **El Arco** (Map p236), a natural granite archway with the Sea of Cortez on one side and the Pacific on the other. Immediately offshore stand **Los Frailes** (Monks), two granite pinnacles that offer some very unique rock climbing, should you feel inclined (in fact, a scene from the movie *Everest* was filmed here). Just off the eastern shore, the thin spire of **Neptune's Finger** protrudes some 24m (80ft) out of the water.

Land's End is also home to Baja's most famous beach, **Playa del Amor** (Lover's Beach), which has sands on both the Pacific Ocean and the bay side. Hurricanes have eroded the bay side of the beach significantly but the Pacific side still has plenty of sand. The Pacific side is unsafe for swimming, however, and is jokingly referred to as Divorce Beach. From Playa del Amor, it's possible to swim (or walk at low tide) to **Roca Pelicano** (Pelican Rock), named for the many pelicans that roost upon it.

Land's End is equally spectacular below the water. A vast **underwater canyon** begins below the surface and descends steeply for hundreds of feet. After leveling off to a gentler grade, it drops slowly to a depth of 1800m (6000ft). Granite walls up to 900m (3000ft) high tower over the bottom of the canyon. If you'd rather stick closer to the surface, you'll find excellent snorkeling off Playa del Amor. The diving at all levels is superb.

Land's End and Playa del Amor are separated from Cabo San Lucas by a Class 3 scramble over the rocks behind Hotel Solmar (not recommended). The best way out is by water taxi from Playa Médano or the Hotel Tesoro docks. They charge anywhere from US\$7 to US\$12 depending on who you ask and how many people are in your group (hang on to your ticket for a return trip). Some days the waves are too rough for the taxis to land, in which case you'll have to hit a different beach.

Playa Solmar

Playa Solmar (Map p236), on the Pacific side of the point, is quieter and well suited for sun-bathing, but has a reputation for unpredictable breakers that drown several unsuspecting tourists every year. It's accessible via the road to Hotel Solmar.

Around Cabo San Lucas

About 5km (3 miles) northwest of town is Cabo San Lucas' historic lighthouse, **Faro Viejo** (Map p231), perched high above **Cabo Falso** (False Cape; Map p231), so named because it was once erroneously thought to be the southernmost point on the Baja Peninsula. Surrounded by a spectacular dunescape (unfortunately frequented by ATVs), the lighthouse was in operation from 1895 to 1961, when it was replaced by a candy-striped cousin on a hillside above. The latter is worth a visit for extraordinary 360-degree views of the ocean, city and sierras.

If you're traveling by car or mountain bike, follow México 19 for about 4km (2.5 miles; starting from the Pemex station), and then turn left about 800m (0.5 miles) past the Km 120 sign onto a dirt road just in front of the Coca-Cola distributorship.

Day trips to San José (p218) and up the Eastern Cape Rd (p204) to Cabo Pulmo (p207) both make excellent excursions from Cabo San Lucas. You could also drive up to the historic town of Todos Santos (p210) and do a little gallery hopping.

ACTIVITIES

Surfing

There's great surf along the Corridor and up the Eastern Cape Rd. For more information, see p232. There's also excellent surfing around Todos Santos (p212).

Fishing

No doubt about it, the Cape Region is one of the world's best places for big-game sportfishing. With more marlin caught off the cape than anywhere on the planet, Cabo's title of Marlin Capital of the World is well deserved. Fishing is best during hurricane season (July to early October), when rougher seas bring out the marine life.

Competition among the nearly 30 sportfishing charters is fierce, but quality varies. Always ask what's included in a boat charter. Most rates for eight-hour trips include fishing licenses and permits, tackle, crew and ice. Sometimes they also include beer and soda, cleaning and freezing, and tax. Live bait is usually available at the docks, but good charters will take care of that for you. Boats usually leave between 6am and 7am and return between 3pm and 4pm. See p50 for a general discussion of sportfishing.

Prices depend entirely on the size and type of boat, and the reputation of the operator and skipper. Figure on spending, at minimum, US\$75 per person for a good charter, all included. Boats start around US\$175 for a three-person *panga*. Boats 31ft to 35ft run anywhere from US\$500 to US\$850 and can accommodate up to six people. Prices can go as high as US\$2800 for a yacht-sportfisher for six people. It all depends on how many bells and whistles you want.

If you need to obtain your own fishing license (it's usually provided for you by the charter), you can do so at the **Oficina de Pesca** (Map p236; ☎ 8:30am-2pm Mon-Fri), by the cruise-ship docks.

Minerva's Baja Tackle (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1282; www.minervas.com; minerva@allaboutcabo.com; cnr Madero & Blvd Marina) is Cabo's most highly regarded tackle shop. Serious anglers swear by the quality and selection, and give high marks to the friendliness and know-how of the staff. Minerva is a real character who also operates her own fishing fleet. Contact the store to set up a boat.

Other operators with very professional crews and captains and good reputations include the following:

Dream Maker (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-7266; www.dreammakercharter.com; Hotel Tesoro, Local F-10)

Picante Bluewater Sportfishing (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2474, in the USA 714-572-6693; www.picantesportfishing.com; Puerto Paraíso 39-A) Located in Puerto Paraíso Mall, facing the water.

Pisces Sportfishing Fleet (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1288; www.piscessportfishing.com) By the sportfishing docks adjacent to the Hotel Tesoro.

Solmar Sportfishing Fleet (Map p236; ☎ 143-0646, in the USA 800-344-3349; www.solmar.com) At the Hotel Solmar (p246).

The following list indicates the prime months for the various fish species, but most species actually inhabit Cabo's waters year-round.

Blue marlin July to October

Dorado July to November

Roosterfish July to December

Sailfish August to October

Shark January to May

Striped marlin November to June

Tuna June to October

Wahoo August and September

To have your catch vacuum-packed and frozen or smoked, make sure it's been kept on ice and take it to **Gricelda's Smokehouse** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 122-4375), inside Dream Maker.

CATCH & RELEASE

More than 40,000 marlin are caught annually off Los Cabos alone, but most of them are returned to the ocean to fight another day. Although each boat is legally allowed to kill one billfish (marlin, swordfish or sailfish) per daily outing, most anglers follow the advice of the Sportfishing Association of Los Cabos and opt to catch and release. We highly recommend you do the same. Billfish releases are reported to the Billfish Foundation, which will send the proud angler a Release Certificate. Fish need not be killed in order to be taxidermied. Experts can make replica mounts from photographs taken of the fish.

Unless done correctly, fish can be so seriously injured in the release process that they die anyway after being returned to the sea. Avoid treble or stainless steel hooks; instead use long-shank, unplated iron hooks that can be more easily removed. Dragging a fish overboard and holding it in an upright position can lead to internal damage. Try to remove the hook with the fish still in the water. If possible, avoid touching the animal, as this can damage the skin, subjecting it to bacterial infections. If a fish's gills are damaged, or it is already bleeding, it will likely succumb to its injuries.

Diving & Snorkeling

Underwater explorations around Los Cabos may yield encounters with manta rays, sea lions, turtles, hammerhead sharks, marlin and an entire aquarium's worth of colorful tropical fish. Best of all, some of the finest diving sites are just a five-minute boat ride away from the marina.

At Land's End, **Roca Pelicano** (7.5m to 24m, 25ft to 80ft) is perfect for beginners and has lots of tropical and schooling fish, while sites near **Los Frailes** (15m to 18m, 50ft to 60ft) give intermediate to advanced divers a chance to frolic with sea lions. Even more experienced types won't want to miss the **Sand Falls** (9m to 30.5m, 30ft to 100ft), where steep sand banks plunge into a submarine canyon just 27m (30 yards) offshore. (Jacques Cousteau made a documentary on this spectacular place.) Another challenge is **Neptune's Finger** (24m to 30.5m, 80ft to 100ft), an amazing canyon-wall dive. Snorkelers can hit the water right off **Playa del Amor** (on the bay side only).

Dive shops cluster near the Hotel Tesoro docks. Snorkeling tours (gear included) cost about US\$25 in the bay or US\$35 if you head out to Bahía Chileno; one-tank dives cost US\$45; two-tank dives cost US\$65 to US\$75; one-tank night dives go for US\$45 to US\$50. Introductory (resort or Discover Scuba) courses cost US\$80 to US\$100. Open Water certification costs around US\$400 and full PADI Dive Master certification costs about US\$600.

Rates usually include tanks and weights. Regulators, buoyancy compensator jackets and full wetsuits rent for about US\$10 each;

air-fills and weight belts cost about US\$5 each. Mask, fins and snorkel cost US\$10 to US\$12. Some places rent underwater cameras for about US\$25.

Most operators also organize tours to sites further afield, including all-day trips (about US\$130) to Cabo Pulmo (p207) or Gorda Banks (p229). These usually require a minimum of four people. Most companies mentioned under Cruises (opposite) also run snorkeling trips in the mornings.

Reputable dive outfitters, all of which have English-speaking staff, include the following:

Amigos del Mar (Map p236; ☎ 143-0505, in the USA 800-344-3349; www.amigosdelmar.com) Near the cruise-ship dock, south of Blvd Marina off Av Solmar. PADI. Long in the business.

Andromeda Divers (Map p236; ☎ 143-2765; www.scubadivecabo.com; Playa Médano at Billigan's) All PADI courses available.

Land's End Divers (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2200; www.mexonline.com/landsend.htm; Hotel Tesoro, Local A-5) All courses, tours available. Hotel pickup throughout Los Cabos.

Neptune Divers (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-7111; Hotel Tesoro)

Tio Sports (Map p236; ☎ 143-3399; www.tiosports.com; Playa Médano at Hotel Meliá San Lucas)

Underwater Diversions (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-4004; www.divecabo.com; Hotel Tesoro, Local F5-7)

Golf

With its six signature championship golf courses along the Los Cabos Corridor, Cabo San Lucas has become one of the world's premier golfing destinations. The courses are described in the Corridor section (above).

Horseback Riding

Rancho Collins (Map p236; ☎ 143-3652), based directly across the road from the Club Cascadas de Baja complex, offers a variety of well-received horseback rides and has been in the horse business for years. Rides include a one-hour beach ride (US\$30 per person), a two-hour beach-and-desert ride (US\$60 per person) and a four-hour mountain tour (US\$80 per person). For operators in the Corridor, see p232.

Water Sports

For water sports and general goofing off, head to Playa Médano, where you'll find rentals for just about every sort of beach activity and water sport imaginable. Parasailing flights cost about US\$30 and jet skis/Waverunners rent for about US\$35 to US\$45 per half hour or US\$60 to US\$80 per hour. Tio Sports (opposite) rents quality Waverunners at the higher-cost end.

There are also plenty of opportunities to hire a speedboat to drag you and your friends across the bay on a **banana boat**. At US\$10 per person they're cheaper than Waverunners.

Further down the beach, **Juancho's** (Map p236; ☎ 144-4252; Playa Médano) pledges an 'airgasmic experience' with its parasailing operation, and the sign promises 10% off for women who sail naked. Sorry guys, no way out of the normal US\$30 fee. Juancho's is near the Sandbar (p250), in case you need more beer.

Located in the Hotel Tesoro complex, **Cabo Expeditions** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2700; www.caboexpeditions.com.mx; Hotel Tesoro, Local F-9) offers 10-minute parasailing flights (US\$35), and a variety of snorkeling tours incorporating everything from Waverunners to underwater propulsion devices.

CABO SAN LUCAS FOR CHILDREN

Most of Los Cabos' top-end hotels – primarily those on Playa Médano, along the Corridor and on the beach in San José – offer all-day **daycare services** and supervised activities that allow you bigger kids to make off and play on your own for a while. The water is calm at Playa Médano and **buoyed swimming areas** will keep the kids from floating too far off.

Many dive boats allow children under 12 to ride along for free or for a minimal charge. Even better – get them diving on their own. Underwater Diversions (opposite) offers a **PADI Jr Open Water Diver** course for kids age 10

to 14. Children old enough to swim, snorkel and participate in activities such as **horseback riding** (left) will be easily entertained for hours. The **pirate cruise** (p244) aboard the *Sunderland* is always a hit with the young 'ns.

TOURS

All sorts of boat tours are offered in Cabo. Your hotel will likely be able to set you up with something if you don't feel like dealing directly with the operators.

Glass-Bottom Boat Tours

Glass-bottom boat tours are offered by a plethora of operators down at the marina and along Playa Médano and usually cost about US\$10 per person for 45 minutes. Drop-offs and pickups at Playa del Amor (p240) can usually be arranged at no extra charge. Most tours depart from the **sportfishing & boat tours docks** (Map pp238-9) at the south end of the marina.

Sunset & Snorkeling Cruises

Capping off a day at the beach with a sunset cruise is a popular pastime. They're a great way to suck down all the free booze you want (hence their other name: 'booze cruise'), meet some strangers (ahem) and take in some fabulous views. Sunset cruises depart around 5pm in winter and 6pm in summer, and are usually segregated into 'romantic cruises' or the aforementioned booze cruises. Daytime snorkeling trips are a little mellower, departing between 10am and noon, and head to Bahía Santa María (p230) for the dip.

Trips last two to three hours, and prices almost always include drinks and snacks; snorkeling trips include lunch. Most boats depart from the docks near Hotel Tesoro, and children under age 13 usually pay half-price or less.

The 42ft catamarans **Pez Gato I** and **Pez Gato II** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-3797; www.pezgatocabo.com; Marina Cabo San Lucas, Dársena 4; ☹ Mon-Sat) offer booze cruises at sunset (US\$35); snorkeling cruises to Bahía Santa María (US\$45); and an 11:30am 'Gold Coast Tour' that visits Playa del Amor and the sea-lion colony off Land's End. All include open bars. Children under 12 go free.

The 36ft trimaran **Jungle Cruise** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-7530; www.cabobooze-cruise.com) departs daily at 10:30am for snorkel cruises on Bahía Santa María and nightly at 5pm (6pm in summer)

for its notoriously wild sunset booze cruises. Its office is inside the Hotel Tesoro (Map pp238–9). The much tamer *Encore*, a 60ft racing yacht with capacity for 25 people, charges US\$39 for a snorkeling cruise and US\$29 for the sunset cruise with open bar; contact **JT Watersports** (Map p236; ☎ 144-4566; www.jtwatersports.com; Playa Médano) on Playa Médano.

Pirate Cruises

For something a little different, take a ‘pirate cruise’ aboard the **Sunderland** (☎ 143-2714; www.pirateshipcabo.com), a beautiful 19th-century four-masted tall ship that lets you glide into the sunset without noisy engine sounds. The crew dresses in pirates’ garb, and the captain himself will shower you with tales of Cabo’s sordid corsair past. The cost is US\$40, or US\$20 for kids under 12. Contact the *Sunderland*’s office by telephone.

The 96ft **Buccaneer Queen** (☎ 105-9293, 144-4217) is a splendid three-masted tall ship offering whale-watching and sunset cruises as well as its ‘Treasure Hunt’ cruise which includes a visit to Land’s End and the sea-lion colony, snorkeling at Bahía Chileno, games and an open bar. The sunset cruise incorporates swashbuckling pirate performances into the spectacle of Cabo’s sunset. Reserve by telephone.

Whale-Watching Cruises

During the peak of the gray whale migration, from January to March, you can easily spot whales right from the shore. You can get even closer by jumping aboard a whale-watching cruise. Many of the cruise ships listed earlier, as well as Cabo Expeditions (p243) and JT Watersports (above) also run whale-watching trips. They cost between US\$35 and US\$45 and usually last three hours.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Cabo San Lucas has several popular annual events, including many **fishing tournaments**. The most prestigious is the Bisbee’s Black & Blue Marlin Jackpot Tournament, held in late October. A week before is the Gold Cup Sportfishing Tournament, and late November sees the Los Cabos Billfish Tournament. The **Festival San Lucas**, which celebrates the town’s patron saint, kicks off on October 18 or 19.

SLEEPING

Cabo San Lucas’ plethora of accommodations include the resorts along Playa Médano and

Playa Solmar and plenty of small, independently owned hotels and B&B-type places in the center of town.

No hotel in Cabo San Lucas is cheap enough to be considered ‘budget’; this is about the priciest place to stay on the peninsula. Campgrounds and RV parks are just east of town.

Unlike the Mexican resorts of Cancún and Mazatlán, Cabo San Lucas lacks any real gay scene, and there are no specifically gay hotels. But most luxury hotels are so large and anonymous – and the smaller hotels friendly enough – that sexuality is generally a nonissue.

For a general discussion of where to sleep in Cabo, see p219.

Downtown

MIDRANGE

Hotel Olas (Map p236; ☎ 143-1780; hotelolas_csl@hotmail.com; Revolución near Farías; r US\$36; Ⓟ Ⓜ) The vibrantly orange, family-run Hotel Olas offers spacious tile-floor rooms with comfy king-size beds (on cement bases), cable TV and some seriously strange art on the walls. The bathrooms could use a paint job, but for the price, it’s excellent value. A small supermarket and coin laundry are across the street.

Posada San Antonio (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-7353; Morelos s/n; r US\$38) Big rooms, low rates, no parking and a US\$10 deposit (to keep you from getting too wild) make this modest hotel popular among guests with varied interests. Fine for a night or two if you’re on the cheap.

Hotel Dos Mares (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0330, 143-3870; hoteldosmares@yahoo.com.mx; Zapata btwn Guerrero & Hidalgo; r US\$40 or US\$57; Ⓜ Ⓜ) Someone went a little crazy with the architecture *and* the air freshener. With plenty to bump your head upon, it fits right in with those Mexican buildings that grow as the money rolls in. The bathrooms and the rooms are a bit claustrophobic, but you can escape both by diving into the tiny swimming pool in the middle of the big outdoor patio.

Hotel Los Arcos (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0702; sanliz902@hotmail.com; cnr Leona Vicario & Revolución; r US\$43; Ⓟ Ⓜ) Sparkling Hotel Los Arcos is a great deal as long as it stays in its perfectly new condition. Rooms are spacious and sheets are stark white and stretched perfectly across new mattresses beneath green bead spreads. It’s a modern place without character, but you’ll definitely be comfortable.

ESCAPE YOUR RESORT

When the canned poolside entertainment at your all-inclusive resort starts to drive you crazy, rent a car and get out of town. The following destinations, mostly covered in the Southern Baja chapter, make excellent day trips.

- Eastern Cape Rd – Bounce up one of Baja's most beautiful stretches of coast and spend the afternoon lounging on the best beach you find (p229).
- Todos Santos – Head up the western cape and wander around this historic town with loads of international art galleries (p210).
- Bahía Santa María – Spend a day snorkeling and sunning at this beautiful Corridor bay (p230).
- Santiago – Drive up the Transpeninsular to Santiago and hike out to the nearby waterfall or hot springs (p202).
- Cabo Pulmo – Get up early and drive up the Eastern Cape Rd to snorkel in this magical coral reef (p207).

Hotel Mérida (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-6564; cnr Matamoros & Niños Héroes; s/d US\$35/45; 🏠) The dozen or so rooms at this 16-room, family-run property are spacious and spotless and have TVs. The downside is that some rooms have sliding doors that open onto a cement wall near the street, meaning they're a bit noisy. Basically, they all have a bed and a bathroom and that's about it. It's bare bones, but fine.

Hotel El Dorado (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2810; Morelos btwn Carranza & Obrégon; r US\$45; 🏠 🚗 🚰) The 36 large, clean but totally simple rooms here wrap motel-like around a central parking area. All have TVs and plenty of room to spread out. Character is nil, but it's very friendly. The pool is big enough for about three people (four, if you count the adjacent kiddie pool), but it's clean and cool.

Our pick Cabo Inn (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0819; www.caboinnhotel.com; cnr 20 de Noviembre & Leona Vicario; s US\$44-49, d US\$65, r for 6 US\$134, HI member US\$25; 🏠) Perhaps the best value in town, the Cabo Inn is quiet and has the character of a big, old Mexican house. Its courtyard bursts with foliage, and Mexican tapestries adorn the walls. There are plenty of tables outside the rooms and a barbecue grill to cook your day's catch. Bathrooms are a bit small, but the charm more than makes up for this.

Siesta Suites Hotel (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2773, in the USA 866-271-0952; www.cabosiestasuites.com; Zapata near Guerrero; r US\$62; 🏠 🚗) If you're bent on self-catering, try two-story Siesta Suites, whose clean rooms all have fully equipped kitchenettes. Palm trees outside give it a tropical feel, and you can order drinks from the attached bar to sip at the tiny pool. The scene can vary

between chaotic and relaxing, depending on how many people are around. It's smack in the middle of Cabo nightlife.

Hotel Mar de Cortez (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0032, in the USA 800-347-8821; www.mardecortez.com; Cárdenas near Guerrero; r US\$62-68, ste US\$82; 🏠 🚗) This Cabo faithful is the town's oldest hotel, though you'd never know it sleeping in one of the plush rooms in the newer wing. All are sparse but spotless, with tiled floors and, depending on what you pay, a terrace or garden view. The cheapest rooms are in the older sector. There's a good, affordable restaurant attached (great breakfasts), and the staff is particularly adept at setting up fishing and scuba tours. No TVs or telephones.

Las Margaritas Inn (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-6770; margaritas@hotmail.com; Plaza Arámuro; s/d US\$60/70; 🏠 🚗) En-suite kitchens and giant rooms are the main attractions here. Atmosphere? Not a lick. It's a modernish, three-story, motel-type place facing a big parking lot on a busy street. Its big rooms and location in the heart of Cabo's nightlife strip definitely notches it up in appeal, however, especially if you're here to party.

Hotel Santa Fe (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-4401; www.hotel.santafeloscabos.com, www.villagroup.com; cnr Zaragoza & Obregón; r US\$89; 🏠 🚗) The 46 spacious and immaculate studios at this four-floor hotel have satellite TV, kitchenettes, air-con, telephones and sofa beds (plus the main bed, of course). The decor is a bit Home Depot-ish, with prefab cupboards and cabinets, but it's brightened up with yellow paint and colorful art and bedspreads. Most have sliding doors that open onto the pool area. A small market, café and coin laundry are adjacent to the hotel.

TOP END

Hotel Los Milagros (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-4566, in the USA 718-928-6647; www.losmilagros.com.mx; Matamoros 116; r US\$75-115; 🚗 🚶 🚲) This US-owned boutique hotel is an oasis of good taste and style. Rooms feature scalloped brick ceilings and Mexican manor-style furniture. All have air-con but lack phones or TVs to emphasize the desert-retreat atmosphere. Some have kitchenettes. Ambient music spills softly over the cactus- and bougainvillea-filled patio, and the miniature, tiled pool nails the point home that you're here to relax. Trivia: Boy George stayed here.

Casa Bella (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-6400; hotelboutiquecb@yahoo.com; Hidalgo near Cárdenas; r US\$145-165, ste US\$185; 🚗 Oct-Jul; 🚗 🚶 🚲) Although the classically styled rooms at this elegant boutique hotel have low ceilings and no windows, they're undeniably comfortable. The real highlight, however, is the garden: palms, bougainvillea, roses and fig trees shade a lovely little swimming pool and white wrought-iron patio furniture. No TVs or telephones in the rooms, however. Rates include a continental breakfast.

Bungalows Breakfast Inn (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-5035, in the USA 800-424-2226; www.cabobungalows.com; near cnr Libertad & Herrera; r US\$152-175, bungalow US\$186-209, ste US\$198; 🚗 🚶 🚲) Inside central Cabo's most secluded hideaway, a palm-fringed pool gives way to 16 light-flooded studios and two-bedroom bungalows with Mexican furnishings, fridges and beds you simply melt into. Everything has been decorated with love, including the private patios, which make venturing outside the hotel difficult. The gourmet breakfasts garner rave reviews. The hotel is just off Calle Libertad (follow the signs from Constitución).

Hotel Tesoro (Map pp238-9; ☎ 173-9300, ext 1450/51; www.tesororesorts.com; r US\$166-235; 🚗 🚶 🚲) Formerly the Plaza Las Glorias, Hotel Tesoro is a giant, sprawling deluxe hotel facing the Marina. It's not the beach, but the location is fabulous – you just have to deal with all the foot traffic in and around the lobby. Rooms are excellent, and the adjacent bars and restaurants are some of Cabo's best. If you plan to fish, it's incredibly convenient.

Playa Médano & Playa Solmar

Cabo San Lucas' luxury resorts line the beachfronts of both the bay side (Playa Médano) and the Pacific side (Playa Solmar). Facilities

at each are similar and include beautiful swimming pools, Jacuzzis, tennis courts, restaurants, bars and all other amenities that come with luxury resorts. Prices for the following hotels fluctuate wildly.

Hotel Finisterra (Map p236; ☎ 143-3333, in the USA 800-347-2252; www.finisterra.com; Av Solmar; r US\$190-332, ste US\$325-500; 🚗 🚶 🚲) On Playa Solmar, just off Blvd Marina, the Finisterra commands an impressive cliff-top location. Some rooms have fireplaces, while others have either ocean or marina views. Its Whale Watcher Bar (p250) is a splendid spot for a drink with a view.

Hotel Solmar Suites (Map p236; ☎ 143-3535, in the USA 800-344-3349; www.solmar.com; r from US\$195, ste from US\$289; 🚗 🚶 🚲) East of the Finisterra on Playa Solmar, this secluded beachfront resort boasts ocean-view studios, suites and condos. It's still a biggie, but it's smaller than many of the Playa Médano hotels, which gives it a more romantic feel. Hotel Solmar is also famous for its sportfishing fleet (see p241), making it an excellent choice if you are planning to fish.

Hotel Meliá San Lucas (Map p236; ☎ 143-4444, in the USA 800-336-3542; www.meliasanlucas.solmelia.com; r US\$284-622, ste US\$470-2100; 🚗 🚶 🚲) With its stylish new image, Playa Médano's Meliá San Lucas is easily the hippest resort in Cabo San Lucas. Rather than plastic chaise lounges, guests relax on canvas sun-futons or in chic semiprivate *palapas* shrouded in fabrics. Meanwhile, DJs spin house and ambient grooves over the pool area, making everyone feel like stars. The swim-up bar is fabulous. Miami's sex-addled Nikki Beach operates on the premises, meaning everyone's libido is kept well charged. Basically, if you want a resort without classic rock and cliché Mexican entertainment, this is a great option.

Pueblo Bonito Rosé Resort (Map p236; ☎ 143-5500, in the USA 800-990-8250; www.pueblobonito.com; r from US\$300; 🚗 🚶 🚲) The Pueblo Bonito's (next) adjacent sister property is slightly more sophisticated with its Greek statues and imposing columns around the pool area. The hotel itself is even bigger than Pueblo Bonito and boasts a state-of-the-art spa. Perk: it's on Playa Médano.

Pueblo Bonito Resort (Map p236; ☎ 143-2900, in the USA 800-990-8250; www.pueblobonito.com; r from US\$320; 🚗 🚶 🚲) The Pueblo Bonito's mega-proportions are mitigated by Moorish-style blue-tiled domes. The opulent lobby is

another eye-catcher. Rooms, of course, have all the usual perks. The luxury suites are definitely bigger than the junior suites, but the latter are just as good, considering you'll be spending most of your time outside. Executive, presidential and penthouse suites kick the price tag much higher. The location on Playa Médano is excellent.

Camping

Cabo San Lucas has only one campground/RV park in town. The rest are east of town along the Corridor.

Faro Viejo Trailer Park (Map p236; ☎ 143-4211; Morales btwn Matamoros & Abasolo; site US\$15-20) Cabo San Lucas' only in-town campground, Faro Viejo has full hookups, sites for tents and clean bathrooms.

Club Cabo Motel & Camp Resort (Map p231; ☎ 143-3348; sites per person US\$15, cabaña US\$70; 🚰) After Faro Viejo, this Dutch-operated RV park is the closest to town. It's also the most congenial and has dependable services and stylish thatched-roof *cabañas*. The grounds, which lie adjacent to a migratory bird refuge, are quiet, well maintained and feature a large swimming pool, Jacuzzi and barbecue area. It's a bit hidden but well signposted once you turn toward the beach at the intersection of the Transpenninsular and the Cabo bypass road. The resort is 1.6km (1 mile) east of Club Cascadas de Baja (Map p236), just before the Villas de Palmar development.

EATING

Cabo's culinary side includes everything from taco stands to seafood restaurants to ultraswanky French, Italian and – of course – Mexican restaurants. Prices can be high, but, generally, so is the quality. Most places are casual and feature outdoor seating. Many of the higher end restaurants use organic produce grown on farms in and around Miraflores (north of San José) and El Pescadero, near Todos Santos.

Mexican

Calle Leona Vicario has been dubbed 'Taco Alley' for good reason. The street is lined with *taquerías* offering good, cheap, authentic food (mostly tacos, of course) all day, all night.

Los Paisas (Map pp238-9; cnr Leona Vicario & Revolución; tacos US\$1.25; 🕒 6pm-6am) Renowned for its beef tacos and stuffed potatoes (both always served with a plate of grilled onions and a couple of

greasy short ribs), Los Paisas is *the* spot for the late-night munchies.

Cabo Taco (Map p236; cnr Leona Vicario 5 de Febrero; tacos US\$1-2.50) Cabo Taco whips out delicious seafood tacos and usually has some bizarre things on the menu (like manta ray tacos).

El Oasis (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-8314; cnr Blvd Marina & Cabo San Lucas; sandwiches US\$3.50, set lunch US\$4) Freshly squeezed fruit juices, big sandwiches and a hearty *comida corrida* (set lunch; US\$4) make this clean, family-style joint the perfect alternative to the high-priced eateries flooding Cabo.

El Michoacano (Map p236; ☎ 108-0713; cnr Leona Vicario & Obregón; meal US\$5 🕒 8am-6pm) This open-air branch of the renowned *carnitas* (slow-roasted pork) chain serves up some of the best cheap eats in Cabo – which is why locals flock here, especially on weekends. Three people can fill up on a half-kilo of *carnitas* (unless you're famished). Orders are accompanied by chips, tortillas, *chicharrones* (pork cracklings), beans and salsa.

our pick Huarachazo (Map p236; ☎ 143-8980; cnr Leona Vicario & Alikan; mains US\$4.50-7; 🕒 8am-10m Mon-Sat) Also known as the Burro Loco (Crazy Donkey), Huarachazo keeps its long menu of Mexican specialties authentic and fairly priced, and the place remains more popular with locals than with tourists. Try the *enchiladas de pollo en mole* (chicken enchiladas with *mole* sauce). There's also all-you-can-eat *birria de res* (a type of beef stew) and *menudo* (a traditional tripe and hominy soup). It's a very down-home place.

El Pollo de Oro (Map pp238-9; cnr Morelos & 20 de Noviembre; breakfast US\$3-4, mains US\$5-7; 🕒 7:30am-10:30pm Fri-Wed) Scrumptious grilled chicken and delicious oven-cooked pork ribs are only part of the story. The rest: great prices. A quarter roast chicken goes for US\$3, as do the huge breakfast plates of *chilequiles* (a traditional tortilla chip and chili-sauce dish) or *huevos rancheros* (ranch-style eggs). Patio seating; always busy.

Restaurant Doña Lolita (Map pp238-9; cnr Niños Héroes & Matamoros; mains US\$4-9; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This small eatery serves delicious home-style Mexican fare from an outdoor kitchen of wood-burning stoves and black iron pots. The daily changing menu usually features four main dishes and a soup.

Solomon's Landing (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-3090, 143-3050; Blvd Marina s/n, Hotel Tesora, Local 19 & 20; mains US\$8-20) When you just want a good ol' Cabo-style

Mexican meal without all the hoopla of fine dining, head down to the marina and hit Solomon's Landing. It's been here for ages, and the prices are still fair (relatively, anyway): sandwiches US\$8, Mexican dishes US\$8 to US\$10 and pastas US\$12 to US\$20. Fun place.

O Mole Mío (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-7577; cnr Blvd Marina & Madero, Plaza del Sol; mains US\$10-20; 🕒 8am-11pm) With wrought-iron furniture, Mayan fertility figures adorning the walls and colorful lanterns for light, the decor is as creative as the food. Even standards like enchiladas and tamales are presented with a whole new twist. The seafood is outstanding. Lobster (US\$30) is the priciest thing on the menu.

Baja Cantina (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1591; www.bajacantina.net; Plaza Las Glorias/Hotel Tesoro, Local H-1; mains US\$12-19; 🕒 7am-11pm) This is Cabo at its un-swanky best: outdoor seating over the marina, anglers downing margaritas over chips and salsa, great service, huge plates of tasty (though slightly Americanized) Mexican food, stiff drinks and relatively reasonable prices. No fluff here. Good breakfasts.

Mi Casa (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1933; www.micasa-restaurant.com; Av Cabo San Lucas btwn Madero & Cárdenas; mains US\$12-20) In a flower-festooned patio across from Parque Amelia Wilkes, Mi Casa serves excellent dishes from around Mexico, complete with warm tortillas made freshly on the premises. Dishes range from jumbo shrimp with tamarind sauce or *pulpo al ajillo* (baby octopus sautéed in garlic and butter) to *chile en nogada*, a Puebla specialty of poblano chilies stuffed with meat and smothered in a walnut cream sauce. You can't go wrong here.

Margaritavilla (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0010; www.margaritavillacabo.com; cnr Malecón & Blvd Marina, Plaza Bonita; mains US\$17-30) Famous for its gargantuan margaritas (US\$9), roaming mariachis and hearty appetizers, Margaritavilla is an upscale Mexican restaurant catering to foreign palates. Plates are huge (but a bit bland) and prices are extortionate. Still, a marina-side table is a great place to knock back a margarita.

Playa Médano is home to a string of casual restaurants where you eat with your toes dug into the sand. All serve the usual *antojitos* (Mexican snacks and light meals such as enchiladas and tamales), seafood and Mexican combos at midrange prices and are open all day. They include the following:

Billygan's (Map p236; ☎ 143-0402; Playa Médano) Big plates of good food; sandwiches, burgers and seafood; happy hour from 2pm to 7pm.

Mango Deck (Map p236; ☎ 143-0901; Playa Médano) Very casual place with rustic wood decor.

Office (Map p236; ☎ 143-3464; Playa Médano) This place is known for its raucous Mexican fiestas held several times weekly.

Seafood

Seafood, of course, is a Cabo specialty, and there are numerous restaurants where you can get your fill.

El Pescador (Map pp238-9; cnr Zaragoza & Niños Héroes; mains US\$7-13) The menu at this modest and friendly eatery is an oceanic treasure trove: shrimp, fish, oysters, snails, crab, octopus – you name it, it's served here. It's casual and prices are good.

Mariscos Mazatlán (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-8565; cnr Mendoza & 16 de Septiembre; mains US\$7-18; 🕒 11am-10pm) Local families fill the big dining room here for the good prices and great seafood. Sunday afternoons are especially busy (and especially fun).

La Palapa The Gus (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0808; www.lapalapathegus.com; Niños Héroes near Zaragoza; mains US\$11-17) This longtime Cabo favorite draws big crowds for its good-value seafood dinners. Breakfasts are tasty, though prices have steepened just enough to make it borderline in value.

Giggling Marlin (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1182; Blvd Marina; mains US\$9-24; 🕒 9am-1am) Seafood (as much as partying) may be the specialty at this restaurant-bar, but there's plenty more on the menu. If you're not feeling fishy, try the MOAB (Mother Of All Burgers) or one of many Mexican standbys.

The Fish House (Map pp238-9; ☎ 144-4501; Blvd Marina near Guerrero; mains US\$12-24; 🕒 3-11pm) Although the airy dining room feels quite upscale, the prices are reasonable, especially considering the quality of the fare. The menu (which includes dishes from coconut shrimp to calamari in *guajillo* chile sauce) is imaginative yet straightforward, and emphasis is placed squarely on preparing good food.

Mariscos Mocambo (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2122; cnr Leona Vicario & 20 de Noviembre; US\$15-19) Touristy but renowned for its large portions of fresh fish and shellfish, Mariscos Mocambo is just the place for casual atmosphere and reasonably priced seafood. It's festive without pandering to the bring-out-the-sombreros-and-tequila crowd. Great.

Shrimp Factory (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-5066; cnr Blvd Marina & Guerrero; mains US\$10-35) Casual and popular, the Shrimp Factory dishes out boiled or

fried shrimp and lobster by the kilo or half-kilo. The lobster's good, but the shrimp is where it's really at. A kilo of the latter serves two to three and costs US\$40 for large shrimp and US\$60 for jumbo, with rice, beans and tortillas included.

International

Latitude 22+ Oceanview Roadhouse (Map p236; ☎ 143-1516; Transpeninsular, Km 4.5; mains US\$7-15; 🕒 8am-11pm) Bring your sense of humor along with your appetite to this barbecue and burger joint northeast of town on the road to San José. Who knows where they pilfered all the maritime paraphernalia from, but it makes for great atmosphere. And the food? Wow! Appetizers include chicken wings, barbecued ribs, French onion soup and delicious 'killá' burritos. Over a dozen burgers grace the menu along with mesquite grilled chicken, pork and beef ribs, roasted pork loin and grilled chops.

La Pampa (Map pp238-9; ☎ 144-4939; Blvd Marina near Hidalgo; mains US\$6-18; 🕒 2-11pm Tue-Sun) As small as it is stylish, this Argentine-owned eatery serves up some of the best steaks around (as well as various other parts of the cow), grilled to juicy perfection. The US\$40 *parrillada* (mixed grill) serves two and includes a bottle of Baja wine. Argentine wine is available, too. Great spot.

La Trattoria (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0068; Cárdenas near Blvd Marina; mains US\$12-25) This upscale, classic Italian restaurant features an extensive menu with numerous antipastos, soups, salads, two dozen pasta dishes as well as some great house specialties.

Peacock's (Map p236; ☎ 143-1858; Paseo del Pescador s/n near Paseo San José; mains US\$15-30; 🕒 6-10pm) Another mecca for *alta cocina*, Peacock's serves some of the tastiest food in town. The chef mixes Mediterranean and Latin flavors into dishes like filleted fish braided with strips of nopal cactus; braised duck in tamarind sauce, or (here's heavy) grilled flank steak rolled with cheese and poblano chilies. It's above Playa Médano near the road down to Hotel Meliá San Lucas.

Sancho Panza (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-3212; www.sanchopanza.com; off Blvd Marina, Hotel Tesoro; mains US\$20-35; 🕒 3-11pm) As much a visual as a culinary treat, Sancho Panza is one of San Lucas' most high-profile restaurants. The chef cleverly fuses Mediterranean and Latin tastes to create exquisite dishes such as sea bass with cherry

tomatoes and wild mushrooms, lamb shank Ossobuco, or portabella mushroom filet in a red-wine reduction. The wine bar is superb, and Cuban art adorns the walls. There's also live jazz most nights. Reservations recommended after 7pm.

Other

Tutto Bene (Map pp238-9; ☎ 144-3300; cnr Blvd Marina & Camino del Cerro) Great market for stocking up on gourmet picnic goodies. It also has a huge wine selection.

Arámbruro Supermarket (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1450; Cárdenas, Plaza Arámbruro) Large, centrally located supermarket.

Cabo Coffee Co (Map pp238-9; ☎ 105-1130; cnr Hidalgo & Madero; US\$1-3; 🕒 6am-10pm) Organic Mexican coffees are roasted on the premises, so the coffee drinks rock. Great place to wake up to a light snack and a caffeine kick.

Spencer's (Map pp238-9; Cárdenas near Guerrero; breakfasts US\$2.50-7; 🕒 7am-9pm) Inside Hotel Mar de Cortez (p245), this is one of the best breakfast values in town. US-style eggs and potato plates cost just US\$2.50. Plenty more is on the menu, and it's all good.

La Europea (Map pp238-9; ☎ 145-8760; Plaza Puerto Paraíso, Local 39-B; sandwiches & salads US\$5-7) Big wholesome baguette sandwiches and salads make for healthy and affordable lunches, and marina-front tables make for good people-watching. Excellent selection of tequilas and Mexican wines.

Mamá's Royal Café (Map pp238-9; Hidalgo near Zapata; breakfast US\$6-10; 🕒 7:30am-9:30pm) Mexican decorations splash cheerful colors over the patio here, and breakfasts are the best reason to come. They're big and delicious and include several versions of eggs benedict, French toast and plenty of Mexican egg dishes.

Also recommended:

French Riviera (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-2539; Morelos near Niños Héroes; baked goods US\$0.80-3) Sublime pastries and home-baked bread to go.

Gordo Lele (Map pp238-9; Guerrero near Madero; sandwiches US\$2.50) One fridge, one table, one griddle, one man – and lots of greasy sandwiches. For culinary adventurers with a sense of humor only.

Señor Lechón (Map pp238-9; Leona Vicario near 16 de Septiembre; sandwiches US\$2.50-3.50) Street stall selling Yucatán-style pulled pork sandwiches.

Crazy Lobster (Map pp238-9; Hidalgo near Zapata; mains US\$7-10) Fun place for lobster or grilled shrimp. Tails are small, but so are the prices.

DRINKING

No time is a bad time to drink in Cabo San Lucas, where bars range from beachfront *palapas* and smoky expat hang-outs and chic martini bars to wild, sex-charged loony bins. The best bars for watching the sun plop into the Pacific are at the Playa Solmar hotels, especially the Hotel Finisterra's Whale Watcher Bar.

Playa Médano & Playa Solmar

Happy hour on Playa Médano (ie, two drinks for the price of one very expensive drink) runs all day long, and tipling with your toes in the sand and your eyes on the ocean (or other things) is not to be missed. Places like the Office, Mango Deck and Billygan's (see p248) get packed with revelers.

Nikki Beach (Map p236; Hotel Meliá San Lucas; www.nikkibeach.com) On the sand in front of Hotel Meliá San Lucas, Nikki Beach guarantees a lounging good time all day, all night, with goodies such as sushi happy hours (6pm to 9pm every Friday) and fire shows (8pm to 10pm Thursday and Saturday) and lots of fine, fine people.

Sandbar (Map p236; Playa Médano) A great place to escape the madness is this low-key bar on Playa Médano, next to the Hotel Meliá San Lucas. Here you can sip your drink snuggled into a comfy beach chair while toasting your tootsies beside a crackling bonfire right in the sand. There's live music on weekend nights to boot.

Whale Watcher Bar (Map p236; ☎ 143-3333, in the USA 800-347-2252; www.finisterra.com; Av Solmar) Housed in the Hotel Finisterra, this bar has stupendous views over the Pacific and is one of the finest places for a drink in town.

Marina Cabo San Lucas

Bars along the marina are great for people-watching, and restaurants such as Baja Cantina (p248) are fun for margaritas and beer accompanied by big bowls of chips and salsa.

Barómetro (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1466; www.barometro.com; Marina Cabo San Lucas 18) A break from the mold, Barómetro is an ultrahip open-air lounge down on the marina where martinis – not margaritas – draw the crowds. Great pizzas and appetizers too. Settle into white leather couches and enjoy movies projected onto the wall above the bar.

Nowhere Bar (Map pp238-9; Malecón, Plaza Bonita) The mostly US crowd here spills out onto the *malecón*, drinks in hand, nearly every night of the week.

ONE TURTLE, NO GLASS

For the thirsty among us, Tecate and Pacifico beers are available in 1L bottles. Show you know what's up by using the proper slang: 1L Tecates are called *caguamas* (sea turtles) while 1L Pacificos are called *ballenas* (whales). And forget about *cerveza* (beer) – call it a *chela* or a *cheve* (unless you're minding your manners). *Chupar* (to suck) is slang for drinking alcohol, but be careful in your combinations – laughter may follow an announcement that you're off to suck a sea turtle.

Rainbow Bar (Map p236; Malecón, Marina) This is Cabo's lone gay and lesbian haunt, though it generally draws a mixed crowd.

Downtown Cabo San Lucas

El Squid Roe (Map pp238-9; cnr Cárdenas & Morelos) Whether you can deal with the frat-like party crowd or not, legendary El Squid Roe is a mandatory stop for any serious night out. The music's loud, the margaritas flowing (available even in 'yards!') and the neon bright. You might even brave the elevated 'temporary pimp' stand, where solo revelers show their stuff as the night progresses.

Giggling Marlin (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1182; Blvd Marina) Famous for its debauchery, this is where folks relive their frat-party days (or create the ones they never had), sucking Jell-O shots off strangers' bellies and shaking their booties in sexy dance contests.

Love Shack (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-5010; cnr Morelos & Niños Heroes) Small and festive, the Love Shack is a great place to start off the evening over burgers, cold beer and a loud jukebox. It's very publike, and the vibe is mellow. Pool table, too.

our pick Hemingway's (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-5529; Guerrero near Madero; ☎ 9am-midnight, till 2am Fri & Sat) Saunter into this sophisticated cigar and tequila lounge for good smokes and great swill. The tequila bar features more than 150 premium tequilas, and you can purchase a tasting of five types (which keeps you from getting drunk and going broke too quickly). There's a walk-in humidifier for top-end Cuban *puros* (cigars), and the bar serves knockout mojitos and daiquiris.

TangaTanga (Map pp238-9; Blvd Marina near Guerrero) Sun-baked expats and return vacationers

knock 'em back over fish stories and classic rock at this small outdoor bar. It's a great tequila bar.

Jungle Bar (Map pp238-9; Plaza de los Mariachis) This small zebra-striped bar is a good place to escape the afternoon sunshine while still being outside (sort of) or drown your sorrows in reggae and booze. At night, it's right in the action.

Pancho's (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0973; cnr Hidalgo & Zapata; mains US\$16-28) With more than 500 varieties of tequila, Pancho's remains Cabo's leading purveyor of Mexico's signature beverage.

ENTERTAINMENT

With so many vacationers pouring into Cabo, dress codes at clubs tend to be more relaxed than in other Mexican cities. Cover charges are generally high (US\$15 to US\$30) at the bigger clubs.

Live Music

Cabo Wabo Cantina (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1188; Guerrero near Madero, Plaza de los Mariachis) With countless photos of himself adorning every wall, rock-and-roller Sammy Hagar has erected a shrine to himself as much as a venue for local and international rock bands. Despite the narcissism, it's a pretty cool space, with two stages and live music every night of the week.

Again & Again (Map pp238-9; cnr Cárdenas & Leona Vicario) For a taste of the local pop-music scene, join the youthful crowd here, where gringos in shorts are rarely seen and live bands rock the house every Thursday and Saturday night. On Friday it's a disco, and the dance floor is packed.

Sancho Panza (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-3212; www.sanchopanza.com; off Blvd Marina, Hotel Tesoro) As well as a restaurant, Sancho Panza is a jazz club and wine bar with live jazz, blues, Latin Jazz or vocals, nightly from 7:30pm. Reservations recommended.

Las Varitas (Map p236; Paseo de la Marina near Paseo San José; admission from US\$5) A great place to escape the tourist scene, loud and local Las Varitas hosts live Mexican bands, from *rock en español* (Spanish language rock) to *banda* (raucous brass-band music with vocals). Women get in free 9pm to 11pm.

Clubbing

Passion Club & Lounge (Map p236; ☎ 145-7800, ext 745; Hotel Meliá San Lucas, Playa Médano) Hosting everything from 'Pimp & Ho' balls to international

DJs, this is Cabo's hottest nightclub. Swap your flip-flops for something a little bit dressier.

Mambo Café (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-1484; www.mambocafé.com.mx; Blvd Marina, Hotel Tesoro) Cabo's only Caribbean-themed dance club spins mambo, meringue and more and keeps the frenzied crowd hoppin'.

Zoo (Map pp238-9; www.zoobardance.com; Blvd Marina) Complete with giant plastic elephants and rhinos bursting from the walls, Zoo is one of Cabo's biggest nightclubs, spinning everything from 1980s pop tunes to house music.

SHOPPING

Downtown Cabo is teeming with souvenir shops hawking more or less the same cheesy trinkets, usually at inflated prices – so sharpen those bargaining skills. The stretch of Cárdenas between Matamorros and Ocampo is especially thick with souvenir shops. If you're in the market for high-end Mexican crafts, consider heading over to San José del Cabo where the shopping is better.

For a more Mexican-style shopping experience wander up Morelos. You likely won't take anything home, but you'll see how the locals shop.

Flea Market (Map pp238-9; cnr Cárdenas & Ocampo) This maze of crafts stalls is the easiest place to stock up on souvenirs. Picking through the stalls is fun.

Faces of Mexico (Map pp238-9; cnr Cárdenas & Guerrero) Good selection of arts and crafts.

Galerías Zen-Mar (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0661; Cárdenas near Matamorros) Offers traditional indigenous crafts, Zapotec weavings, bracelets and spectacular masks.

Plaza Bonita (cnr Cárdenas & Blvd Marina) is home to several shops, including **Veryka** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 105-1855; Plaza Bonita, Cárdenas 231, Local 34-C), which showcases the very best of the country's artisans and crafts persons. The prices are high, but these are internationally known artists. It's worth a browse even if you don't intend to buy.

To pick up some of the practically psychedelic beadwork of Jalisco's indigenous Huichol, visit **Tierra Huichol** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 105-0857; cnr Morelos & Cárdenas) or **Wixrarika** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 105-0513; Blvd Marina, Plaza Los Mariachis, Local 3-B).

The **Puerto Paraíso Mall** (Map pp238-9; Cárdenas) provides a typically international mall-of-the-21st-century experience.

DETOUR: LA CANDELARIA

A few days in Cabo San Lucas makes it easy to forget you're in Mexico. A bumpy drive through the cacti and mesquite to the village of La Candelaria (population 85) will take care of that. This small *rancho* (rural settlement) in the foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna is known for its traditional clayware and makes a perfect day trip, not to mention an excellent excuse to buy some locally made pottery.

In many ways, life in La Candelaria is much as it was on the peninsula's *ranchos* generations ago, when livestock was slaughtered at home, and household items such as leather riding chaps, horse-hair ropes, *huaraches* (sandals) and pottery were all made by hand.

Many of these traditions have faded from Baja ranch life, but in the last decade, La Candelaria's pottery tradition has resurfaced, thanks in large part to the efforts of US expat Lorena Hankins, who helped rekindle the craft among a group of local women. Several houses in town, and especially Hankins', sell beautiful handmade clayware: *cazuelas* (cooking bowls), *tinajas* (water coolers), *ollas* (bean pots) and *tortilleras* (tortilla holders). They're all as functional as they are beautiful. The *tinajas*, for example, keep water cool through evaporation, even in the sweltering summer heat. No glazes are used on the pottery, so there's no lead to worry about. You simply season them yourself and cook away.

All the clayware is made from scratch, beginning with the arduous process of digging up the clay, grinding it with *mano y metate* (mortar and pestle) and sifting out the powder. Each piece is formed by hand without a wheel, burnished several times with stones and fired in the ground. The result is a beautiful, blackish-gray, totally functional work of art.

A few men in town also make exceptionally durable chairs from *palo chino* (a deciduous hardwood) and woven palm buds. From tree trunk to chair, they make everything by hand. Ask at the house at the end of the road through town, near Lorena Hankins'.

During La Candelaria's small sugarcane harvest (usually in March or April), residents fire up the old Cuban sugar press by belting the gears to the rear wheel of an old truck (when the tractor isn't working). Around this time, you can buy the finished product: delicious cones of unrefined sugar called *panocha*. If you're lucky a few women may be making *milcocha* (sticky taffy) near the press.

There are no restaurants out here. Either pack a lunch or ask around for Christina's house, where Christina usually has something tasty on hand.

From Cabo San Lucas, head north on Leona Vicario, cross México 19 (reset your odometer here) and continue straight until you hit a three-way fork just after the pavement ends. Take the right fork, and you'll shortly reach a guarded gate, which an old man in a cowboy hat will open for you. Immediately after the gate is another fork; stay left. At odometer reading 5.6km, you'll reach another fork; stay right. At odometer reading 7.5km you'll pass the turn to El Zauzal (stay left). About odometer-reading 9km, you'll run across a sandy stretch through the settlement of Los Pozos. At 13km you'll reach another *arroyo* with a big fig tree on the left and a shrine beneath it. Leaving the *arroyo* you'll soon crest a hill and pass the junction to La Trinidad; veer left here and you'll drop down into La Candelaria. Note on your return the sign says 'Cabo San Lucas – 22km.' The entire drive is actually about 27.5km (17 miles) from the highway to La Candelaria. It takes about one to 1½ hours and is passable for most cars except after heavy rains.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For information on Los Cabos International Airport, see p227. **Aero California** (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-3700, 143-4255) has an office in Plaza Náutica, off Blvd Marina.

Bus

For buses to San José del Cabo, see Getting Around, opposite. Long-distance buses operated by **Autotransportes Águila** (☎ 143-7880) leave

from the main bus terminal (Map p236), at the junction of México 19 and the Cabo bypass road (across from the Pemex). From here, it's a 20- to 30-minute walk south to downtown, which is also served by local bus.

Buses to Todos Santos (US\$8, 1¼ hours) leave several times daily. Numerous buses head to La Paz (US\$17), taking either the *via corta* (via Todos Santos; 2½ hours) or the *via larga* (via San José; 3½ hours). There are four daily buses to Loreto (US\$40, eight

hours) and three daily to Tijuana (US\$125 to US\$135, 24 to 26 hours).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

For information on transport between the airport and Cabo San Lucas, see San José del Cabo's Getting Around section (p228).

Bus

A fleet of orange/blue or green/yellow buses run between Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo along the Corridor at approximately half-hour intervals from early morning to about 10pm.

In Cabo, the main stop for buses to San José (Map pp238–9) is on the south side of Cárdenas at Leona Vicario. Upon request, the driver will stop at any of the hotels or beaches along the Corridor. The flat fare is US\$2. Aguila buses departing from the main bus terminal on México 19 also stop in San José del Cabo on their way to La Paz.

Car & Motorcycle

Numerous places along Blvd Marina and Cárdenas rent motor scooters and ATVs, but usually you're not allowed to take either onto the highways. Figure on spending about US\$25/40/80 per hour/half-day/day.

Major international car-rental agencies have multiple branches downtown, mostly along Cárdenas and Blvd Marina. Every major hotel has a car-rental desk. All agencies have offices just outside the airport.

Prices vary as much as US\$20 per day between companies, so it pays to shop around. Renting an economy car shouldn't set you back more than US\$45 to US\$55 a day, insurance included. You might get better rates by prebooking in your home country. Agencies with offices in Cabo San Lucas include the following:

Advantage (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-0909; cnr Niños Héroes & Cárdenas)

Alamo (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-6060; Cárdenas near Leona Vicario)

Dollar (Map pp238-9; ☎ 143-4166, 143-1250; cnr Cárdenas & Mendoza)

Payless (Map p236; ☎ 143-5222; Old Rd to San José s/n)

Taxi & Shuttle Bus

Taxis are plentiful but lack meters and are not cheap; fares for destinations within downtown should not exceed US\$5 or US\$6. Note that the blue taxis and green taxi vans are for tourists and charge extortionate rates. The white cabs are local cabs – take these. A cab ride to San José costs about US\$30.

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