

# La Paz Visitor's Guide

Visiting La Paz for the first time is an exciting experience. To ensure you have a successful house hunting trip, we've put together some travel tips.

## When To Visit?

The best time of year to plan your visit to La Paz depends on your goals and what you want to do while you're here. La Paz and the surrounding areas offer a wide variety of experiences, but not all of them are available all year long. Here are some things to consider when planning your trip:

**Fall (October-November):** By mid-October the summer heat and rains are usually gone, although there can be a few late storms. The desert is often green from the rain, and the water is still warm from summer, so this is a great time to visit. By November, the whale sharks are usually returning to La Paz and the tours are starting up again, so this is a great time to book a tour and swim with the whale sharks. You can book tours with one of the many tour guides right on or near the malecon (we

recommend this one: <https://redtravelmexico.com/>) and the whale sharks are just 15 minutes away on the far side of El Mogote peninsula. Also, if you want to see the Baja 1000 race, every second year (even years) the race finishes in La Paz in November. Check the schedules at <http://score-international.com/>.

**Winter (December-March):** This is the busiest season in La Paz. The weather is pleasant and not too hot, and many of the popular tourist attractions (whale watching, swimming with whale sharks) are in full swing. Many hotels and vacation rentals are booked months in advance, so it's best to start planning early if you want to visit at this time. Winter is also prime season for house hunting, so more properties are available on the market now. Days are usually sunny and warm, but it can get windy and chilly at night, so be sure to pack layers.



You can book a tour to snorkel with whale sharks from November through April in La Paz.



Summer is a great time to snorkel in La Paz, the water is warm and there are dozens of great spots to explore.

**Spring (April-June):** This is a great time to visit La Paz, as the both the weather and the water are warming up again, making it a good time to scuba dive and snorkel. It's also the time of year when seasonal residents head back north, which means more available rooms at hotels and vacation rentals, and fewer crowds at the most popular beaches. The exception is the week of Semana Santa (Easter week), as that is the week when many locals head to the beach to camp and celebrate, and it can get quite crowded. Try to avoid scheduling your trip during that week if you want to avoid the crowds.

**Summer (July-September):** Summers in La Paz are hot, but this is also one of the best times to come for deep sea fishing or diving. By now the water is very warm, and the humidity starts to rise. Late summer through early fall is storm season, so keep an eye on the weather reports if you are traveling during this time. Because of the heat and humidity, many locals leave town to visit family and friends elsewhere, and

the inventory of homes for sale can also be a bit thin. The upside is there are few crowds and the pace of everything slows considerably, so it's a good time to relax and enjoy the downtime.

## Arranging Travel to La Paz

There are many ways to get to La Paz from the US and Canada. Following are a few of the most popular.

**Fly into Los Cabos International Airport (SJD):** This is the most popular way to travel, simply because there are multiple airlines that fly directly into Los Cabos. The Cabo Airport is 2 hours south of La Paz, so you'll need to rent a car or arrange ground transportation from the airport to La Paz.

**Fly into La Paz:** This past year, American Airlines started offering direct flights into La Paz from Dallas/Fort Worth and Phoenix. It's not clear whether they will continue these flights, so check with the airline. You can also connect through Mexico City or Guadalajara from several US cities to fly into La Paz. Or, you can fly to San Diego, take the Cross Border Express to the Tijuana airport, and then take a short flight from Tijuana to La Paz on Volaris or Calafia airlines. The connections mean this option takes at least as long as flying into Cabo and driving to La Paz.

**Drive down the Baja peninsula:** If you are planning to call La Paz home permanently or even seasonally, chances are that you will want to make the drive at least once to bring down some household goods, clothes and maybe even your pets. The Transpeninsular highway makes the drive relatively easy, as long as you plan ahead. For tips on preparing for and making the drive, see our [Driving Baja Guide here](#).

## Getting from Los Cabos to La Paz

If you decide to fly into Los Cabos airport, the most popular way to get to La Paz, there are several options for ground transportation to make the 2 hour drive north to La Paz.

**Rent a car:** The new toll road and 4-lane Transpeninsular Highway 1 make it an easy drive from the Los Cabos airport to La Paz. During the first part of the drive you will enjoy gorgeous views of the Pacific Ocean. If

you're lucky you may even spot a whale breaching. If the timing is right, stop in Todos Santos, a small town known for its art galleries and shops, for lunch and a bit of shopping. The rental company will quote you a low daily rate for the vehicle, but keep in mind the insurance will run another \$25-\$35/day. You cannot refuse the liability insurance as your US or Canada insurance won't cover it. Both National and Cactus car rental companies quote the entire price up front, and have good reputations. As you enter La Paz, you will go through a military checkpoint. Relax, smile and say hello, they will usually just wave you through.

**EcoBaja Tours shuttle** (<http://www.ecobajatours.com>): Takes you from the Los Cabos airport to the bus station on the malecon in La Paz. Cost is 545 pesos per person each way. From the bus station, you can take a taxi or Uber ride to your hotel. Be sure to look at the schedules and make sure you leave enough time from the time your flight lands to clear immigration and customs, and get to the shuttle stop by the departure time. This shuttle normally goes the scenic route on the old Highway 1 through Los Barrilles, but they also have one that goes along the Pacific Ocean via Todos Santos.

**Aguila Bus** (<https://www.autobusesaguila.com>): This is a much larger bus with a restroom and on-board wifi service. The bus leaves from San Jose del Cabo and arrives at the downtown La Paz bus terminal, making multiple stops along the way. The one-way fare is 225-360 pesos and there are multiple buses each day. To take this bus, take a taxi from the Los Cabos airport to the bus stop in San Jose del Cabo.

**Costanova Tours** (<https://web.facebook.com/pg/Costanova-tours-and-travel-1229224513814877/services/>): This is a private car service, they will arrange to meet you at the airport and deliver you directly to your final destination. Cost is \$170 USD one way for up to 6 people, so this is a great option if you have several people in your party, if you just want that extra service or if your air travel won't get you to Cabo early

enough to take one of the shuttles. The drivers speak English and do a great job of giving you tips and advice on things to do and see in La Paz during your visit.

## Where to stay in La Paz

Whether you prefer a resort style hotel, a boutique inn or a vacation home rental, La Paz has many great options to fit your budget and goals for your visit. Following are some of our favorites.

**Puerta Cortes Resort** (<https://puertacortes.com/en/home/>). This is the only full resort style hotel in La Paz. The hotel includes several restaurants on site, pools, private beach, spa and an 18 hole golf course. It is not walking distance to downtown, but there are shuttle, taxi or Uber rides available for the short 10 minute drive into downtown. Rates start around \$200/night.

**Hotel Catedral** (<http://hotelcatedrallapaz.mx>). A very nice, modern, boutique style hotel in the middle of downtown. Walk to the malecon, the farmer's market, downtown restaurants, and more. Rates start at \$85/night for a room but you can upgrade to one of their suites for not much more (call to reserve the suites). Includes free breakfast, wi-fi and secure parking. It can sometimes be noisy late at night on weekends because of the downtown location.

**Hyatt Place** (<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/mexico/hyatt-place-la-paz>): Modern and very clean with a pool, restaurant and a fitness center site. Free WiFi and breakfast are included, and the hotel is pet friend-



**Hotel Catedral, located in the center of downtown, has a rooftop pool and bar.**



ly. The staff will take you by golf cart to the marina at Costa Baja resort for the restaurants, or get a taxi or Uber ride into town.

**La Posada Hotel & Beach Club** (<https://laposadahotel.mx/>). This boutique, beachfront hotel is located midway in between El Centenario and downtown La Paz. It has a pool and a full restaurant on site, and a beautiful view of La Paz Bay. It's centrally located, so you can easily walk to local restaurants and grocery stores. It's also an easy 15 minute walk or short bike ride or Uber ride into downtown La Paz.

**B&Bs** ([www.airbnb.com/mexico](http://www.airbnb.com/mexico) or <https://www.vrbo.com/vacation-rentals/mexico>). If you're looking for something with a bit more of a local feel, a Bed & Breakfast is a great option. The hosts usually will have options for you to rent kayaks or paddleboards, and can help arrange tours and other sightseeing activities. A few we recommend are <https://www.casakootenay.com/>, located right on the Bay of La Paz in the La Posada neighborhood; or this one just a few blocks away: <https://www.bandbhaciendaparisodelapaz.com/>.

**Rent a Home:** This can be a great option if you plan to stay in La Paz for a few weeks or a few months, or if you want to see what it's like to live in a specific neighborhood. There are many different options for rent, from condos to beachside bungalows and luxury custom homes. Just make sure you book early, as many of

the rental homes book up months in advance. You can book most on AirBnB or VRBO, or, if you plan to stay in the El Centenario neighborhood, we recommend contacting [BCS Home and Pool](#).

## Pre-trip Preparations

You've made your travel plans, but as you get closer to your departure date, you'll want to make sure you are prepared so you can optimize your experience.

**Passports:** Make sure your passports are valid for 6 months after the last day you're here. It's easy to get surprised by this rule unless you travel often. Also, make copies of the photo pages just in case, and/or take digital photos and store them securely online, it will make things much easier in the unfortunate case you lose your passport during your trip.

**Get some Mexican pesos.** Unlike more popular tourist destinations, US and Canadian cash is not always taken or given as change in La Paz. You can use credit cards to purchase most items here, but there are times when you will need some pesos for the farmers markets and other places that only accept cash. Paying in cash will also get you the best deals when you're negotiating prices. Your bank should be able to get you some pesos at a good exchange rate if you give them some advance notice. We don't recommend exchanging money at the airport, as you will get a much lower exchange rate, and they also charge a service fee. There

are ATM machines right outside the exit lounge at the Los Cabos airport where you can withdraw pesos from your bank account. The ATMs in town will also dispense cash in pesos, but make sure your bank knows you're coming (also good to do with the credit card company) so they don't put a hold on your card while you are here.



To get a more local feel for La Paz, stay at a local B&B like Casa Kootenay.

**Cell Phone Service:** If you want to use your cell phones while you're here, call your service provider to make sure it will work in Mexico (not all phones do), and ask them what they charge to add an international plan with data. The service providers usually charge between \$20 to \$30 to add international service for the month, and then you can return to your regular plan when you get back. Note: The Canadian service provider, Rogers, is the exception and apparently charges quite a bit to add the international service, so if you are with Rogers you may want to just use your phone on wifi only while you are here. If you don't add international service to your plan, you will need to turn off roaming and data on your phone when you arrive to avoid excessive charges to your cell phone bill. Most hotels and restaurants have wifi, so you will be able to use your mobile devices there.

**Download a Few Handy Mobile Apps:** Following are a few apps you may find useful while you are visiting La Paz and are available in your cell phone provider's mobile app store:

- Google Maps. Finding your way around La Paz can be a bit overwhelming when you're here for the first time. Google Maps works very well here and can help you more easily find restaurants, shops, doctor's offices and other destinations.
- Google Translate. Unlike more popular tourist destinations, La Paz residents speak predominantly Spanish at most local shops and restaurants. While you can get around without knowing Spanish, knowing even a few words will make your experience much more fun. Google Translate is great at helping you figure out how to say specific words and some basic phrases, and you can save the phrases you use most for easy access. Plus, it's tons of fun when you can get what you want all in Spanish.
- Uber and DiDi: The popular ride share services are now operating here in La Paz, which means you can get around to many places without driving yourself. Uber drivers are available in town and at the marinas and hotels.

**Print our La Paz Guides:** Check out and download our Things to Do in La Paz and our La Paz Restaurant Guide so you can start exploring the area and try some of the many options for inexpensive and tasty food in La Paz.



**Our Favorite Restaurants in La Paz, BCS**

Following are a few of our favorite restaurants in La Paz. This list is by no means complete, and restaurants come and go, so it's always best to check to confirm hours and location.

**Breakfast and Coffee Shops**

**Cafe Esquisito:** Multiple locations throughout La Paz and El Centenario. Fine pastries and baked goods, coffee drinks, juices and smoothies.

**Cafe La Choya:** One of the best sources for organic local coffee. Many coffee shops serve this coffee, or buy it to make at home.

**CinnaRolls:** Coffee & bakery specializing in delicious cinnamon rolls located downtown on the malecon.

**Doce Cuarenta (1245):** Very popular coffee shop on Madero. Beautiful decor with a courtyard patio and free WiFi. Great coffee with pastries, as well as a small breakfast and lunch menu. Browse the Got Baja store for gifts and souvenirs, and pick up a free tourist map.

**Dulce Romero:** On Ignacio Allende near Madero. Excellent salads, sandwiches and breakfast. Fresh baked goods, try the cranberry bread!

**KM-D:** Coffee shop on the Malecon next door to Funtto ice cream. Excellent organic coffee and pastries.

**Maria California:** Excellent breakfast and brunch spot with a huge menu, a wide variety of fresh juices and a nice outdoor patio.

**Starbucks:** Located in the Shoppes at La Paz, behind Liverpool. Just in case you can't do without it!

**Tacos & Mexican Food**

**Claro's Fish Jr.:** Great local spot with a wide variety of tacos, tostadas, seafood cocktails and more. Try the "crunchy" fish or shrimp tacos, or the Shrimp a la Diabla if you like it a little spicy, and top it off at the large topping bar with lots of options. Multiple locations including downtown one block behind the Applebees.

(continued...)

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[Download Our Favorite Restaurants and our Things to Do in La Paz guides for more tips on what to see and do while you're here.](#)

**Pack a phone charger cable and car adapter in your carry-on.** Part of the drive to La Paz will be out of cell phone range. When that happens your phone boosts the antenna power to try and find a network to use. This means that your phone uses battery life a lot faster when it can't find a network. It's a good idea to always have a cable to plug into the car lighter to keep your phone charged, especially if you're going to use it for directions.

## Travel Day

As with any other trip, planning ahead and being organized is the best way to make your trip go smoothly.

**Arriving at Cabo airport.** Los Cabos is a major tourist destination, with multiple time-share sales outfits operating out of the airport. Unless you specifically want to attend a time share presentation, your best bet is to get outside of the airport as fast as possible. Once you clear immigration, gather your luggage and clear customs, you will exit into two big rooms where some-



one will try their best to get you to stop and talk to them. They will offer to help get you a shuttle or taxi. If you stop and accept their help, they will take you to a desk where they will use the opportunity to try to get you to agree to go to a presentation. Stopping inside is not necessary. All taxis, shuttles and rental car agency representatives are waiting in the area just outside the airport! Walk confidently through both exit rooms until you are outside. Restrooms are in the second room after you exit customs, on your left before you go outside, as are ATM machines. Once you get outside, look for someone who has the right sign or company shirt for your shuttle or car service, and they will help you from there. Taxis are also out here.



Keep an eye out for free roaming livestock on the roads in Baja.

**The drive to La Paz.** Rental cars are off site from the airport, and you will need to take a shuttle to get there. If you will be driving yourself to La Paz, there are several routes you can take. The fastest route is to take the toll road behind the airport, and take that all the way to the end, towards Todos Santos. Cost is around \$3.50 US (70 pesos) each way, and they only take cash.

Once you leave the toll road, stay on Highway 19 past Todos Santos and towards La Paz. The highway will merge with MX-1 halfway from Todos Santos to La Paz. If you are going to use your phone for directions, turn it on BEFORE you get on the highway; it will stay on even after you lose cell service, but if you try to turn it on when there is no service, it won't be able to connect.

You can also drive to La Paz via the old MX-1 highway through the East Cape, Los Barriles, and El Triunfo, but that route tends to take at least 3 hours because it winds through mountain roads and small towns along the way. Drive carefully, livestock often roams free in Baja, and it's not uncommon to come around a curve and spot a cow or herd of goats in the road!

**Arriving in La Paz:** You will pass a police checkpoint when arrive on the outskirts of La Paz. Relax, roll down your window and smile/wave and they will usually just wave you through. Once you pass the checkpoint, it's a

good idea to have your directions on. Slow down and watch carefully for directional signs, street lights, and especially other drivers. For more tips on driving in and around La Paz, download our [Driving Baja Guide](#).

### Enjoy Your Visit!

We hope our guides help you enjoy your visit to La Paz. Remember to download our Things to Do in La Paz and our Favorite La Paz Restaurants Guide. You can also visit our blog This Baja Life for articles and ideas on how to enjoy your stay here. We look forward to welcoming you to our beautiful and peaceful city!



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