



Baja



Land's End is even more
spectacular in person.



moment

BY JANICE MUCALOV

Land's End?
Why, that's only the
beginning in **Mexico's
Los Cabos area**, which
offers the perfect balance
of action and relaxation.

I've been to Los Cabos about 20 times, so I speak from experience when I tell you that the late spring and summer months are a good time to go. The water, which has lost its winter chill, is perfect for swimming and snorkeling, and the shopping and restaurant scenes, are, as always, terrific.

In case you're not familiar, Los Cabos is really two towns at the southern tip of the Baja California Peninsula — energetic Cabo San Lucas, with its glitzy shops and party-'til-the-wee-hours nightclubs favored by Beyoncé and Michael Jordan; and quieter, more colonial San José del Cabo, known for its art galleries and romantic restaurants.

Since the towns have different vibes, your best bet is to sample a little of both, which is easily done by making an exchange or purchasing a Getaway to either destination. They're only 20 miles apart, so it's a cinch to go to and fro. If you're an Interval Gold or Interval Platinum member, you can also string together or take separate ShortStay Exchanges to the destinations. However you plan your Cabos vacation, here are some suggestions for three days in each town. Feel free to mix and match.

George Mucalov

Cabo San Lucas

Day One

10:00 a.m. Start your trip with a day at Médano Beach. Lined with restaurants, bars, and activity shacks, Médano is the most happening stretch of sand around. Stroll along the shore, and take in the lively scene of personal watercrafts zipping across the waves, parasailers soaring above, beach vendors hawking their wares, and vacationers kicking back with a Corona (yes, even at 10:00).

11:00 a.m. Time to learn how to SUP. The fastest growing water sport in the world, stand-up paddle surfing, or SUP, has taken Cabo by storm. Standing on a large stable board while paddling with a long oar is fun and good exercise. Get a free lesson with your board rental from Cabo SUP at The Medano Beach Club.

1:00 p.m. Enjoy a meal at Cascadas Beach Grill. Sip a margarita in the

restaurant's beautiful thatched palapa, overlooking the beach, and tuck into your first Mexican lunch. Order the guacamole, made fresh from ripe avocados right at your table.

3:00 p.m. Hail a water taxi to take you to Land's End, the gigantic rock formations jutting out into the sea at the end of the Baja California Peninsula. Sea lions bask in the sun on rocky ledges and surf surges through the famous El Arco, a 200-foot outcropping with a huge hole in the middle. Jump off at Lover's Beach, an idyllic cove of golden sand. Be sure to walk past the towering granite and sandstone cliffs to watch the immense waves pounding Divorce Beach (but don't swim there), then chill at Lover's Beach until you're ready to take a water taxi back.

7:00 p.m. Splurge on fresh-from-the-ocean seafood that you handpick from

mounds of shaved ice at El Farallón. You drive through a torch-lit tunnel to this fabulous restaurant, where the ocean views and cliff-top setting alone are worth the cost of your dinner.

Day Two

9:30 a.m. Rent a car and head to the artists' colony of Todos Santos for the day. The scenic 45-mile drive winds through cactus-studded desert up the Pacific coast, and the whole excursion makes for a wonderful day-trip.

10:15 a.m. On the way, pull in to Los Cerritos Beach for a sightseeing stop. Collect shells on the vast expanse of beach, and watch boogie boarders and surfers play in the waves.

11:00 a.m. Once in Todos Santos, happily get lost browsing the galleries, jewelry stores, and crafts studios. Expat artists and artisans have joined talented



locals in recent years, and the quality of the jewelry and art is excellent.

1:30 p.m. Crispy tuna flutes and scallop fritters on El Gusto's rooftop terrace are the main attraction for lunch. The restaurant is also a good place to sample a bottle of noteworthy Northern Baja white wine.

3:30 p.m. Walk down the narrow sand road outside El Gusto and follow the bush path alongside the lagoon and out to the remote beach. The glorious stretch of white sand that seems to go on forever will take your breath away. Frigate birds swoop overhead, and you can almost feel the vibrations of the thunderous Pacific surf. Stroll barefoot in the sand or just relax, but don't completely lose track of time. You need to get back to Cabo before dark. Wandering cows on the highway are a hazard at night.

7:30 p.m. Up for really good, cheap Italian tonight? Salvatore's serves gigantic portions of its famous lasagna in a cozy courtyard setting.

Day Three

10:00 a.m. Walk the boardwalk around the marina, chockablock with gleaming white sportfishing boats and luxury yachts. It's a kaleidoscope of colorful sights. Flea markets, restaurants, and shops all vie for your visual attention, along with Lycra-clad joggers, and pelicans diving for fish. Shopaholics will want to linger at the Puerto Paraiso shopping mall. And you should ogle the bling at the upscale Luxury Avenue mall. That Cartier diamond watch would look nice on your wrist.

1:00 p.m. Find your way to Gardenias for lunch. True, it's a hole-in-the-wall with a concrete floor, but the no-nonsense eatery cooks up the tastiest shrimp tacos

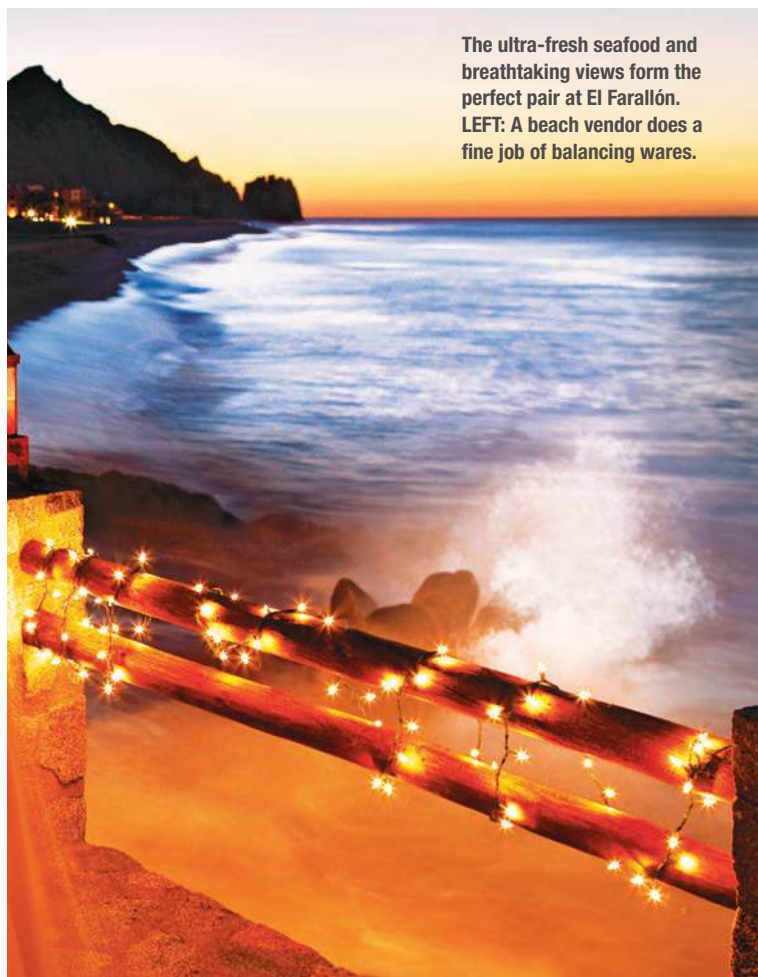
in town (less than \$3 each, too), and the beer is ice-cold.

2:00 p.m. Take a short taxi ride to Artesanos, a giant warehouse-style store, to shop for beautiful blown glass, ceramics, and everything silver.

6:00 p.m. You've seen Land's End by day. But you still must do a sunset cruise. Motor out on Pronatur/Pro-Tours' 37-foot catamaran Rissalena for a dinner cruise. The sight of Cabo's lights twinkling in the velvety dusk is magical.

8:30 p.m. Ready to party the night away? Sip martinis at the ultra-hip, open-air Barometro lounge on the marina. Then, if you're feeling adventurous, hit El Squid Roe, the king of Cabo nightclubs, with three stories of flashing neon lights, dance cages, and servers with tequila spray tanks.

The ultra-fresh seafood and breathtaking views form the perfect pair at El Farallón. LEFT: A beach vendor does a fine job of balancing wares.



George Mucalov, Robert Reck Photography/El Farallon Restaurant

More Mexico: Cancún/Riviera Maya

There are two ways to explore the wreck of *Nuestra Señora de los Milagros* (Our Lady of Miracles). But first, the back story: On November 30, 1740, captain Juan Bacaro and his crew set sail from Cádiz, Spain, for Veracruz, Mexico. The ship was loaded (possibly overloaded) with jewelry, metals, household items, brandy, wine — you name it. In February 1741, the vessel crashed into coral reefs off the Yucatán Peninsula, broke apart, and sank. Today, many of *Nuestra Señora's* artifacts are on display at Museo CEDAM in Puerto Aventuras, 70 miles south of Cancún and 25 miles south of Playa del Carmen. And take note, divers: The actual wreck is accessible from Akumal, a few miles south of Puerto Aventuras.

Turn to page 84 for a Riviera Maya Getaway offer.

San José del Cabo

Day Four

11:00 a.m. Up late last night? A quiet morning and afternoon spent poolside or at the beach is in order.

4:00 p.m. San José's marsh estuary is a sanctuary for snowy egrets, great blue herons, and other migratory birds. But it's hard to explore unless you go with Cabo Outfitters, which offers three- to four-hour guided tours of the freshwater channels at sunset. Glide past fishermen as you spy hundreds of birds clustering in bulrushes and tall palms.

7:30 p.m. Have dinner on Deckman's adobe patio. The menu lists the ingredients, but you don't know exactly how chef/owner Drew Deckman will create the dishes each night. His twice-cooked octopus in garlic with pork belly and cauliflower puree is a favorite, so order it if available. But everything is delicious and moderately priced.

Day Five

9:30 a.m. Chileno Beach is where you're headed this morning — the golden crescent is one of the area's best snorkeling spots. Snorkeling-and-sailing tour boats don't arrive until after 11:00 a.m., so you pretty well have the place to yourself for a while. Going early also means you can snag one of the palapas for shade. Don't expect much in the way of coral, but moray eels, clouds of yellow porkfish, and rays put on quite a marine show.

4:00 p.m. Late in the afternoon, after the midday heat has eased, is a good time to stroll around San José del Cabo. Founded as a mission town in the 18th century, it still retains much of its Mexican heritage. Wander by the cathedral overlooking the main plaza, where children lick ice creams and play hopscotch. Narrow, leafy side streets hide folk-art boutiques and jewelry stores, along with art galleries, which are next on the agenda.

5:00 p.m. Let's assume today is Thursday. From November to June, Art Walk takes place every Thursday evening in San José del Cabo. Featuring works of Mexican and international artists, dozens of art galleries stay open from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m., welcoming guests for a delightful evening of strolling the historic art district, sipping wine, and viewing art. You won't go hungry, as there are plenty of complimentary tapas to sample. Meet the artists and admire works from amber perfume bottles and hand-painted pottery to contemporary oil paintings.

Day Six

10:00 a.m. Surf's up! In summer, long waves rock the Sea of Cortez side from Cabo to San José and all the way up the

East Cape. If you don't know how to pop up on a board, take a one-hour private lesson from the Cabo Surf Shop on Playa Acapulquito (the best beach for beginner surfers). Group classes and three-day clinics are also offered.

4:00 p.m. From July to November, endangered sea turtles return to Los Cabos' beaches to nest and lay their eggs. The babies are typically born between August and early December. But it's a perilous journey of survival for the tiny newborns to return to the sea. You can help usher the hatchlings into the water on a heartwarming

fastFACTS

Resort Directory: IntervalWorld.com or pages 188 to 190 and 201

Climate: During the summer months, the average daytime high temperature is 93°F, and it's dry.

Currency: Mexican peso

Sales Tax: The value-added tax is 16%.

Tipping: At restaurants, leave 15% to 20%.

Taxi drivers do not expect tips, but leave 10% if the driver assists you with your bags.

Interval Travel: IntervalWorld.com

Rental Car: Recommended

Contact: Cabo SUP, cabosup.com;

Pronatur/Pro-Tours, rissalena.com; Cabo

Outfitters, cabo-outfitters.com; San José del

Cabo Art District, artcabo.com; Cabo Surf Shop,

cabosurfshop.com; Baja Outback,

bajaoutback.com

Visitor Information:

Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Bureau

866.LOS.CABOS

visitloscabos.travel

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PURCHASE A GETAWAY AT
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A kayaking adventure is a Cabo must.

turtle-release tour with Baja Outback. Visit the hatchery run by the official nonprofit conservation organization that protects the turtles in Los Cabos, then place squirming baby turtles in the sand and help them crawl into the ocean.

7:30 p.m. If thoughts of cucumber-and-mint soup, cocoa-and-coffee-crusted pork, and other gourmet bites made from organic ingredients make you salivate, then Manuel's Creative Cuisine is where you should dine. Opt for the six-course tasting menu, and toast your terrific vacation with a glass (or two) of bubbly. ■

Travel writer Janice Mucalov contributes to many U.S. and Canadian magazines. She is the author of *Cabo Insider*, a travel app on Cabo San Lucas for iPhones, iPads, and Android phones and tablets.



Manuel's Creative Cuisine in San José del Cabo lives up to its name.



More Mexico: Puerto Vallarta

The most habitable cities incorporate a comfortable place for people to stroll, chat with their neighbors, and commune with nature. Puerto Vallarta's iconic *Malecón* is such a spot, and as a bonus, it boasts eye-popping views of the Pacific Ocean. Thanks to a recent makeover, the promenade — popular with locals and tourists alike — now sports wider sidewalks, new landscaping, pedestrian-only zones, and an art gallery at City Hall. If you're in town May 31, head to the renewed Malecón to celebrate the anniversary of Puerto Vallarta's founding, with live music, open markets, and festive crowds.

Turn to page 87 for a Puerto Vallarta Getaway offer.

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