

Everybody Loves Cabo

Gray whales aren't the only creatures migrating to Baja California at this time of year. Many San Diegans follow their lead and head to the southern part of the peninsula — especially Cabo San Lucas — during February and March.

What makes Cabo so popular? Carmel Valley resident and self-described “margarita enthusiast” Lori Marlett puts it this way: “What’s not to love? It has sand, sun, and top-notch tequila.”

She’s right. The sun shines in Cabo San Lucas 360 days a year and rain falls only between August and December. And beaches? Médano, close to the town center, is the most popular and the safest for swimming. Here, vendors rent pangas, sailboards, snorkeling gear, and

more. Lover’s Beach, near the iconic Los Arcos, stretches from the user-friendly Sea of Cortes to the lovely-to-look-at Pacific. Access to this pristine spot is via water taxi or kayak.

Tequila? Pancho’s Restaurant, on the corner of Zapata and Hidalgo, claims to have the largest collection of tequilas in the world, and their tequileros conduct regular tastings. Participants in this 45-minute “seminar” learn the fine points of good tequila, the difference between tequila and mescal, and the straight scoop on worms. (www.panchos.com)

And Cabo is “so close,” *Ranch & Coast* reader Carol Vadnais reminds me. In reality, it’s over 1,000 miles southeast of San Diego, but it seems close because

Alaska Airlines and Aero Mexico provide frequent nonstop flights from San Diego. Vadnais is right when she says “it’s a world away in only two hours.”

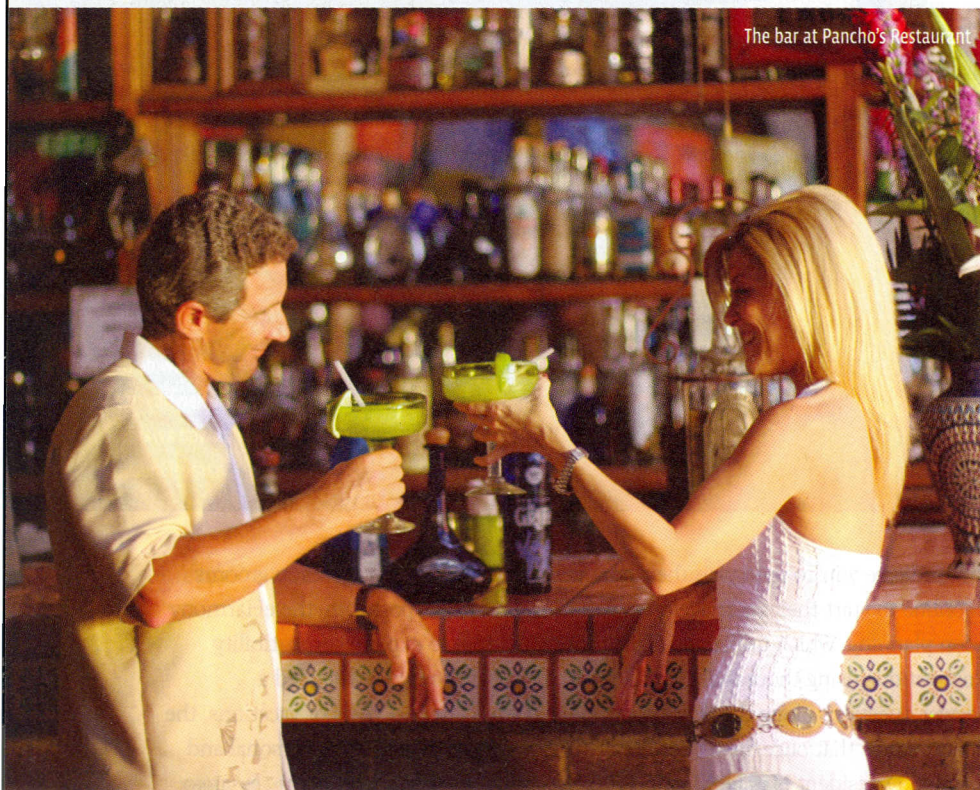
In addition to sand, sun, and firewater, Cabo’s attributes



Monarch butterfly

include a variety of good wining, dining, and staying options. The Vadnaises are frequent guests at Pueblo Bonito Los Cabos and Pueblo Bonito Rosé, luxurious all-suites hotels on Médano Beach. “One of the things we like about Pueblo Bonito (PB) is that they provide shuttle service between their four hotels in the area, so we have access to a variety of pools and restaurants.” PB Pacifica is Cabo’s only holistic retreat and spa. Like PB Sunset Beach, it’s located well away from the city center in a secluded location overlooking the Pacific. (www.pueblobonito.com)

Back in town, La Jollans Mike and Phyllis Flood enjoy breakfast — especially the huevos rancheros — at Pancho’s. The restaurant also serves lunch and dinner in a friendly, colorful environment.



The bar at Pancho's Restaurant

Chicken mole from Puebla, carne asada from Sonora, tamales wrapped in banana leaves from Oaxaca, and fresh seafood from Baja are just some of their popular dishes.

Edith's — a pricey place near Playa Médano — is known for serving excellent steak, seafood, and Mexican dishes and offering top-notch service. Reservations are strongly recommended. Non-Mexican eateries include Nick-San for sushi and Japanese barbecue and Peacock's for international cuisine with an emphasis on seafood.

The Whale Watch Bar at Hotel Finisterra is the Floods' first choice for cocktails or a meal with a view. The pub's location at Land's End affords a world-class panorama of the sun sinking into

Pueblo Bonito Sunset Beach



the Pacific. It's also possible to see migrating gray whales from this attractive perch. In any case, "whale margaritas" are the house specialty. (www.finisterra.com)

At the other end of the size spectrum, millions of monarch butterflies migrate from the U.S. and Canada to spend the winter in Mexico. From November through March, huge groups of the gold and black beauties create a spectacle when they take flight in the Los Cabos area. Serious eco-tourists can see even more monarchs two hours north in the Sierra de la Laguna mountains. Baja Wild offers guided excursions. (www.bajawild.com)

The truth is, there's much more to Cabo than sand, sun, and

tequila. Baja Wild can also provide transportation, equipment, and guiding for memorable kayaking, snorkeling, surfing, hiking, whale watching, and Jeep safari experiences.

If that isn't enough, it's easy to rent a car and drive to charming San José del Cabo, only 20 miles east of Cabo San Lucas, where a shady town plaza and traditional church are the focal points. Mexican Flag Day will be celebrated here on the evening of February 24.

About 45 miles north of Cabo, laid-back Todos Santos, with its numerous art galleries, is another good destination. Here, Café Santa Fe serves excellent Northern Italian fare, and, of course, top-notch tequila.

ELIZABETH HANSEN



Pancho's Restaurant