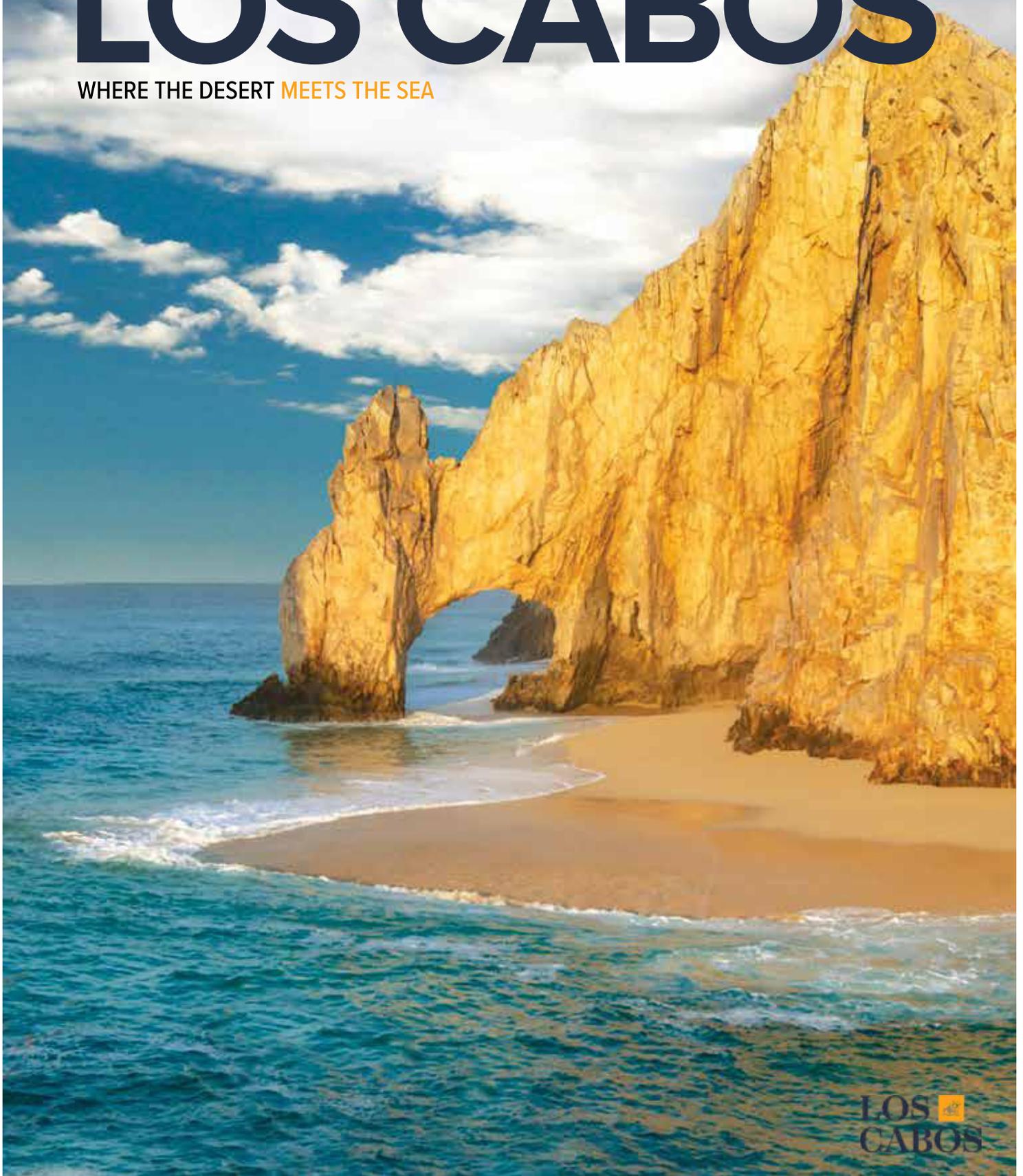


VISIT LOS CABOS

WHERE THE DESERT MEETS THE SEA



LOS CABOS

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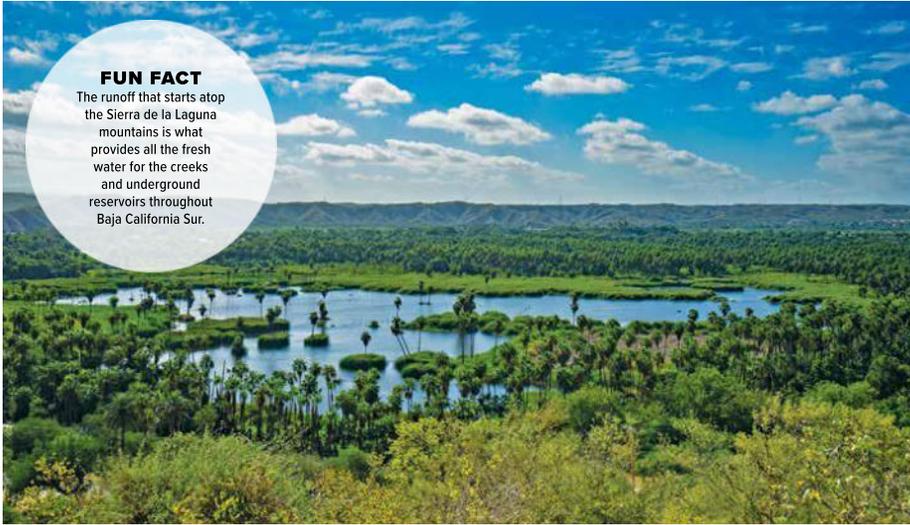
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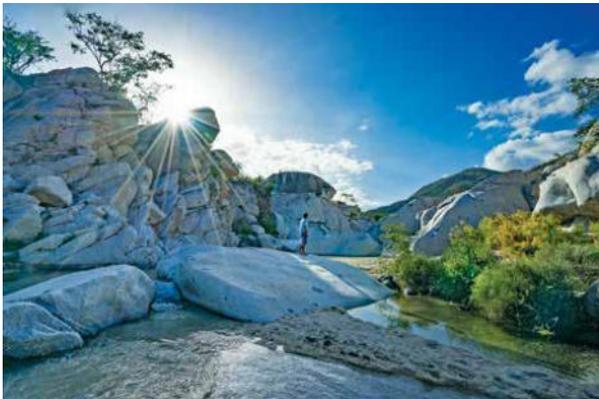
Courtesy of Instagram



FUN FACT

The runoff that starts atop the Sierra de la Laguna mountains is what provides all the fresh water for the creeks and underground reservoirs throughout Baja California Sur.

Head to the Desert



Leave the crowds behind for a day and visit a desert oasis not far from the ocean and the sea.

BY RICK STEDMAN

Most visitors to Los Cabos rarely leave the city limits, but if you want to immerse yourself in an adventure in a less frequented part of Baja California Sur, consider a day trip into the outback, an arid country with sweeping vistas.

Just 34 miles north of Land's End, the quaint rural town of Santiago is home to flourishing orchards and working ranches that make the land resemble a verdant island amid a sea of desert scrub. Santiago doubles as the gateway to the Cabo Real Ecological Reserve, which itself skirts the Sierra de la Laguna mountain range. Designated a UNESCO global biosphere reserve in 1994, the range is graced with a wealth of biodiverse vegetation and magnificent rock formations.

Located within the reserve, the locally owned Rancho Ecologico Sol de Mayo is home to some of the region's most iconic

flora and fauna, including lizards, quail, roadrunners, rabbits and the occasional ring-tailed cat. Hit the trail early to get a better chance of seeing the animals. They tend to come out before the sun is at its peak and spend the rest of the day tucked in shaded hideaways, ideal for an extended siesta.

The drive to the ranch is relatively easy, though it is recommended that you rent an all-wheel drive vehicle to get there, as the last several miles are unpaved and uneven. The varied fleet at Ten Car Rental includes midsize sports utility vehicles and Jeeps, ideally suited for this kind of adventure.

Once at the ranch, be prepared to pay a nominal fee to park and another small fee for access to the trail that leads to the waterfall. The hike down to the waterfall itself can take as little as five to 10 minutes, but the return trip takes longer, as it is up the steep incline. You can assist yourself on the rustic but functional trail with railings and ropes you'll find along the way.

The ranch offers a few amenities, including restrooms, fresh meals and beverages, and even cabins for overnight stays.

When the picturesque, 40-foot cascading fall comes into view, it's easy to feel like you have traveled a world away. This natural formation invites visitors to step back in time, as huge granite rocks atop the Sol de Mayo waterfall funnel its crystalline, spring-fed water into a pool below — a sight that has attracted locals to the area for centuries. In fact, you may run into a few locals enjoying the peaceful spot while you're there.

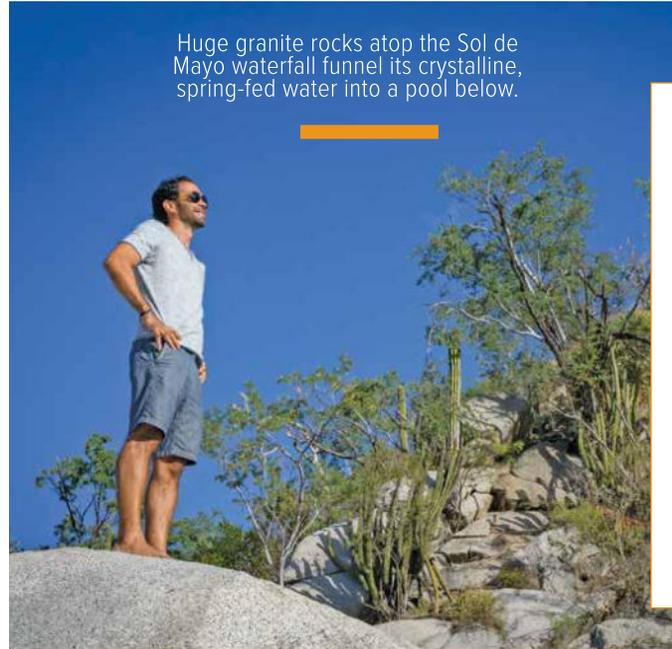
Visitors can easily spend the whole day cooling off in the natural swimming hole absorbing the laid-back atmosphere. The deep pool provides the perfect pick-me-up for adults after a day of exploring, while a safe sandy shallow area is best for kids and less confident swimmers. The water is cool and refreshing, but at the height of summer may be reduced to a trickle or dry up completely.

GETTING THERE: Rent a car, or contact a destination management company (DMC) like Terramar, which regularly organizes tours through the back country.

If you seek a little more insight and context, look for expeditions guided by naturalists who are knowledgeable about the area and its secrets. Various destination management companies, such as Terramar and Mexico Planners organize hiking tours, and can personalize your experience. Their knowledgeable guides provide information about the land, its vegetation, where you are most likely to see specific animals and the indigenous people who lived in the area hundreds of years ago.

"It's such a rush to stumble upon an oasis in the middle of the desert," says Sunny Irvine, owner of destination management company Terramar. "You feel like you're on a discovery expedition as you come upon these remote villages, missions and waterfalls."

Huge granite rocks atop the Sol de Mayo waterfall funnel its crystalline, spring-fed water into a pool below.



Hiking Essentials

The best way to thoroughly enjoy your day trip is to plan ahead and pack accordingly. A day in the desert can be a life-changing adventure just as easily as it can be a lackluster experience if you are not prepared. The most important item to remember when heading out on a hiking trip through desert trails is a good pair of comfortable, closed-toe walking shoes — indispensable for managing the uneven and steep terrain. So, swap the flip-flops for a pair of good hiking boots. Other items to pack include a swimsuit, sunscreen, sunglasses, a hat, plenty of water, a small rucksack to carry everything and, of course, a camera or cell phone to capture your memories. You may also want to pick up some food and drinks at the ranch prior to trekking down the trail to enjoy a scenic picnic when you've made it.

Courtesy of the former Resort at Pedregal, now Wildcat Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal (3)



Los Cabos extends its golf dominance in Latin America.

BY RICK STEDMAN

Inspired by the Sea of Cortés, Pacific Ocean and the rugged Los Cabos terrain, legendary golf designers have carved out their visions of perfection while creating some of the most stunning courses in the world, including the two latest additions: Twin Dolphin Club and Rancho San Lucas Golf Club.

Cabo del Sol – The Desert Course

This Tom Weiskopf par-72 course stretches to 7,049 yards and features undulating greens, elevation changes, dramatic bunkering and mesmerizing ocean views from all 18 holes. The target-style golf experience with sloping fairways offers plenty of bunkers that can challenge golfers of all skill levels. A unique combination of desert and ocean scenery, along with canyon-like arroyos and variable foliage create a breathtaking backdrop. cabodelsol.com | Director of Golf: Erik Evans

Cabo del Sol – The Ocean Course

Measuring 7,091 yards from the tips, the Ocean Course stretches more than a mile along a coastline of craggy rock outcroppings and sun-washed shores. It's easy to forget you're on a golf course, especially when experiencing the final three holes, which sit right on the ocean. The waves crashing against the rocks, verdant fairways and greens, and gentle sea breezes make the experience feel more like a romantic walk on the beach than a spectacular Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course. cabodelsol.com | Director of Golf: Erik Evans

Cabo Real Golf Club

Now in its 20s, this Robert Trent Jones II design is the showpiece of a 2,800-acre resort and residential project with 3.2 miles of beachfront. The par-71 golf club features a multi-themed, target-style course that measures 6,848 yards. questrogolf.com | Director of Golf Operations: Sergio Castillo

Cabo San Lucas Country Club

One of the first golf courses in the region,

Cabo San Lucas Country Club offers spectacular views of El Arco at Land's End. The picturesque par-72, Roy Dye-designed, 18-hole course measures 7,237 yards and is set amid endless cacti and colorful bougainvillea. One of the club's main draws is its "drinking and driving" offering, courtesy of a lighted driving range that's open until 11 p.m. most nights. cabocountry.com | Golf Professional: Luis Rangel Parrodi

Chileno Bay Golf & Beach Club

Designed by Tom Fazio, the 18-hole, par-72 Chileno Bay Club course provides 7,260 yards of play from the tips. The tees, fairways and greens blend in seamlessly with the surrounding desert terrain, and every hole provides magnificent views of the Sea of Cortés. Right in the heart of the course is Lake Chileno, a desalinated lake with a stunning blue hue. This exquisite course is part of Chileno Bay, a 1,200-acre master-planned resort located on a beautiful beach. chileno bayclub.com | Head Professional: Ryan Silverstein

Club Campestre San José

Measuring 7,055 yards from the championship tees, the well-manicured, par-71 Club Campestre San José course is the centerpiece of the 550-acre upscale community that goes by the same name and includes a beach club and social club. Part of prestigious Questro Golf, the 18-hole course was designed by Jack Nicklaus and is spread across the gently rolling foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna mountains. Nestled between the mountains and the sea, it features spectacular views from every single hole. questrogolf.com | Director of Golf Operations: Sergio Castillo

Diamante Cabo San Lucas – El Cardonal

Tiger Woods' architectural debut, the 18-hole, championship El Cardonal visually complements Diamante's famed Dunes Course. With dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean and natural arroyos, mature vegetation and native dunes, the par-72 course measures 7,363 yards. It features a long front nine that meanders through rippling dunes, while its back nine gradually ascends. diamantecabosanlucas.com

Diamante Cabo San Lucas – The Dunes Course

Reminiscent of Ireland's Island Golf Club, the par-72, 7,300-yard Dunes Course was designed by 21-time PGA Tour winner Davis Love III. This beachfront course boasts 18 holes with emerald-green fairways and dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean. Critically acclaimed, it was a Top New International Golf Course in 2010. Its 14-acre practice and performance center is unlike anything else. diamantecabosanlucas.com

El Dorado Golf & Beach Club

Stretching to 7,322 yards, this par-72 Jack Nicklaus-designed course is ranked as one of the top courses in the world. Located on The Corridor, it offers spectacular play opportunities as it winds through desert landscapes featuring colorful canyons and arroyos. The course at El Dorado is a stunning and memorable experience for anyone who has the opportunity to play it. eldoradogolfandbeachclub.com | Head Professional: Jesse Wheeler

Oasis Short Course

The second course designed by Tiger Woods for Diamante Golf and the first par-3 course

Cabo Real Golf Club features a multi-themed, target-style course, which was recently refashioned by Robert Trent Jones II.

in Los Cabos, the Oasis Short Course is the latest addition to Diamante's 1,500-acre master-planned resort community, which is also home to two signature championship courses, a 10-acre man-made crystal lagoon and a wealth of amenities and services. diamantecabosanlucas.com

Palmilla Golf Club

The venerable Palmilla Golf Club has been recognized as the "Grand Dame of Los Cabos." Famous for offering 27 holes of amazing golf and spectacular views, it was Jack Nicklaus' first signature venture into Latin America. With three distinctive nines — Arroyo, Mountain and Ocean — the course gently guides golfers through 800 vertical feet of Baja California Sur desert. palmillagc.com | Director of Golf: Jason Ballog

Puerto Los Cabos Golf Club

Puerto Los Cabos Golf Club features a unique 18-hole composite that includes the Marina Course, designed by Jack Nicklaus, and the Mission Course, designed by Greg Norman. Stretching to 7,461 yards, the par-73 layout is etched into the rolling desert foothills, backed by the Sierra de la Laguna Mountains; all 18 holes are perched high above the Sea of Cortés, the pristine coastline and the resort's marina. The Mission Course has more than 400 feet of elevation change. Making use of its flash-faced bunkers to signpost the fairways and defend the greens, the layout reveals Norman's fondness for Australia's classic Sandbelt courses. The club's Marina Course features rippling fairways, undulating greens and sculpted bunkers. Eventually, Puerto Los Cabos is slated to offer two separate courses: an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed public course and an 18-hole, Greg Norman private course. questrogolf.com | Director of Golf Operations: Sergio Castillo

Querencia Golf Club

A private course designed by Tom Fazio, Querencia is truly one of Latin America's greatest layouts. Its 18 holes span more than 300 acres, carving their way through deep

arroyos and resting atop arid plateaus. It is Fazio's first project in Mexico and has been ranked the number one golf course in the country by Golfweek magazine. The par-72 course measures a total of 7,070 yards and features harmonious transitions and subtle breaks. loscabosquerencia.com | Head Professional: Luke Brosterhus

Quivira Golf Club

This stunning Jack Nicklaus-designed par-72, 18-hole course stretches to 7,139 yards and is set along massive sand dunes, rugged cliffs and white-sand beaches. With views of the Pacific Ocean from all 18 holes, Quivira offers more oceanfront exposure than any other course in Los Cabos. This is Jack Nicklaus' sixth course design in Los Cabos. quiviragolfclub.com | Director of Golf: Antonio Reynante

Rancho San Lucas Golf Club

Designed by legendary golfer and course designer Greg Norman, this course is one of the highlights of the new Grand Solmar at Rancho San Lucas, which sits on 1.2 miles of beachfront property right on the Pacific. The 7,260-yard layout has a few holes on the beach, notably the par-3 third, which parallels the sea. grandsolmarranchosanlucas.solmar.com

Twin Dolphin Club

This Fred Couples Signature course features a par-72 layout that stretches to 7,156 yards from the back tees. Built on a broad sloping plateau bisected by three major arroyos, it is perched nearly 600 feet above sea level. twindolphinloscabos.com

Vidanta Golf

One of the most enjoyable golf outings in Los Cabos, the nine-hole, par-35 Vidanta Golf measures 3,153 yards and is semi-flat, but presents quite a few challenging holes that include both water and bunkers. Built for soft play in 1987, it was originally proposed to attract more tourists. Even as the oldest course in Los Cabos, Vidanta is widely considered one of its best values. vidantagolf.com | Golf Course Manager: Saul Buguerio Zepeda

Courtesy of Questro Golf

Sportfishing is what placed Los Cabos on the map.

BY NICK HONACHEFSKY

Here's how it all plays out. You're on the deck of a 70-foot sportfishing yacht. Charging into mounting Pacific swells, you're strapped to the fighting chair, battling a 600-pound blue marlin sporting monumental shoulders and a sharp sword for a nose. Waves crash over the transom, spraying saltwater in your face as the captain backs down on the beast. After a 45-minute war of give and take, the mate reaches down into the water, the billfish wildly slashing around. He grabs the leader at boatside, the hook is dislodged, and the marlin is released to fight another day. High fives round the house.

Sweating bullets, you unstrap the fighting harness and coolly walk into the salon of the sportfisher, kick your feet up and dine on fresh sushi, stir a martini and catch some rays while waiting for the next bite. That's the real catch in the Los Cabos fishing scene: You can be out on a rugged maritime brawl with genuine beasts while indulging in state-of-the-art luxury.

BIG GAME FISHING

The waters off Los Cabos are comprised of the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortés. Both consisting of prolific marine environments and submarine sea mounts, myriad species can be found anywhere from right along the shoreline out to 60 miles. Big game fishing in Los Cabos is highlighted by its world-renowned striped marlin fishery,

but other seafaring sportfish include blue marlin, black marlin, wahoo, yellowfin tuna and dorado.

The easiest way to have a thoroughly Los Cabos fishing experience is to charter a boat. Picante Sportfishing runs daily trips out to the fishing grounds right around Land's End: the five- to 50-mile range where you can target marlin species. Luxury charter vessels from the Pisces Fleet are built with world-class service in mind. Charter boats are equipped with the latest size 50 to 80 class gold conventional reels matched with stand-up heavy-duty rods spooled with 80-pound line, suitable for a strenuous battle with a billfish. When making the one- to three-hour run 10 to 60 miles offshore, nothing beats traveling in comfort and style, and these sportfishing yachts are decked out with comfortable couches, fully



grandriver / Getty Images (2)

Fishing Tournaments

Los Cabos hosts numerous fishing tournaments that pit the skill and knowledge of seasoned sea captains and anglers competing to win some of the most lucrative jackpots in the world. Six main tournaments hit the Los Cabos shores with the Stars and Stripes Tournament in June, Los Cabos Billfish Tournament in October, the Cabo Tuna Jackpot in November, and then the trifecta of the local Bisbee's circuit: Bisbees East Cape, Los Cabos Offshore and Bisbee's Black and Blue in late October. At the latter, payouts can exceed \$4 million! The Bisbee's tournaments are legendary, making their mark for over 30 years. Celebrating 25 years in business, Picante Sportfishing lays claim to being the fishing champion of Los Cabos, with more than \$4.6 million in tournament earnings. Even if you don't participate, it's always exciting to watch the weigh ins at the docks.



stocked refrigerators and even TVs to keep your party entertained.

Once at the grounds, captains and mates work hard setting a trolling spread of lures and baits to tempt marlin, tuna, wahoo and dorado. A spread can contain up to 10 rods out as the lures crashing across the water surface resemble a school of baitfish, triggering a reaction strike from the pelagic species. Trolling is a fairly easy way to get strikes, as once the spread is set, rods are placed in the rod holders in the gunwales, and the boat simply cruises at a six- to eight-knot pace dragging the lures in its wake.

You'll certainly know when you get a hit. The reel's drag system starts singing and screaming as the fish rips line off at a breakneck pace. While dorado and wahoo are generally reeled in within 15 to 20 minutes, marlin pushing 500 to 800 pounds and tuna weighing in at over 250 pounds can sometimes test the willpower, spirit and stamina of even the strongest angler with drag-out battles that can last hours. The excitement of watching a 40-pound dorado's

acrobatic jumps or a 200-pound striped marlin's sword smashing the baits and lures with the adeptness of a swordfighter is a sight you won't forget. Monstrous gladiators of black, blue and striped marlin, (striped marlin being Los Cabos' most common marlin species) run September through mid-March, with catches averaging six to 12 marlin a day during peak season. In February, March and April, dorado (aka mahimahi or dolphin fish) can be caught. Yellowfin tuna hit hard September through January, and wahoo and sailfin round out the mix of species in the warm summer months.

INSHORE ACTION

While many anglers most often associate the marquee species of marlin and tuna with Los Cabos, a vibrant and exciting inshore fishery exists that doesn't require anglers to make the long run out to the blue water grounds. When bottom fishing or trolling off the beach in the East Cape, the main targets include various species of grouper, jacks, cabrilla, snapper and — the crown jewel

of the region — the atavistic roosterfish. Characterized by the long-flowing cox-combed dorsal fins that spike out of the water, these fish resemble works of art.

Most times, inshore fishing is done while trolling live baits or casting lures just outside the breaking waves, but it can extend for one to five miles off the coastline, as the spread is dragged over submarine rock piles and underwater ledges that attract fish. Shoreline trolling is the easiest way to experience Los Cabos fishing as many small boating and panga charters operate right from the local marinas, and the inshore species, such as jacks, grouper, roosterfish and snapper, can be found all year round.

And remember this: The sportfishing experience doesn't end when you dock. Many of the restaurants that line Marina Cabo San Lucas, such as Captain Tony's and Fisherman's Landing will cook your fresh catch for a nominal fee. Simply bring your prize to the kitchen, and the culinary team will clean, filet and cook your catch and serve it with sides.

Escape to Los Cabos



There is plenty to see and do where the land ends and possibility begins.

BY NICK HONACHEFSKY

A vast, prolific playground lies within these desert-born reaches. Bristling and bustling with opportunity, the Baja California peninsula beckons intrepid adventure seekers with its tempting azure waters and dusty landscape. Whether traveling with your significant other, a group of friends, the extended family or simply out on a solo mission, there are so many experiences, can't-miss attractions, activities and adventures to cross off while exploring Los Cabos that you'll find yourself planning a return trip with a whole other crew.

COUPLES THERAPY

Nothing is sweeter than sharing a life-changing experience with your partner. And, believe me, there's no shortage of activities for couples to bond over in Los Cabos. Start a morning out beach-strolling along the golden sands of Lover's Beach, watching the sun rise through El Arco at Land's End. The sun-kissed morning can continue into midday over at Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park. The 20,000-year-old coral reef there spans 45.75 square miles and is at the epicenter of the region's world-class snorkeling. Swim over the bountiful reef, and you're likely to see green parrotfish, exquisite Moorish idols and curious banded butterflyfish flitting about among the technicolor seascape.

Additional snorkeling opportunities attract lovers of sea life to the calm waters of Chileno Bay and Santa María Bay.

On land, you and your significant other can enjoy peaceful moments of solitude together while hiking Fox Canyon in the Cabo Real Ecological Preserve within Sierra de la Laguna. Follow the strenuous day of exploration with a lazy visit to the quaint towns of Miraflores and Santiago to pick up local arts and crafts. Exploring the Baja California Sur countryside via horseback riding can strengthen bonds between couples, as a trot along the cactus-lined arroyos and a gallop along the beachfront amid the crashing waves of the Pacific are sure to generate buzz.

Seafaring types can book an outing with Cabo Sails to glide over the soft seas on a luxurious vessel for a three-hour excursion

with the majestic Land's End scenery as a backdrop. The folks at Cabo Sails can arrange daily sunset tours, as well as whale watching trips during the winter months. It is truly an awe-inspiring experience to witness majestic humpback, Bryde's, finback and gray whales travel with their families, breach and spout water, throwing their mammoth tails into the air as they dive downward.

For a thoroughly decadent experience, charter a fully catered and liquor-stocked 130-foot Sovereign Luxury Yacht from Pisces Fleet.

THE FRIEND ZONE

Planned a bro trip or a girl's getaway? There's more than enough activity in this region to keep the squad entertained. First, set the tone by grabbing a bite and some brews at Baja Brewing Co. From there, vast and varied activities open up.

Stick to the water, grab your surfboard to pull into some tasty waves at Monuments Beach or at Shipwrecks where chest to head high surf is standard to getting tubed. After an exhilarating day in the waves, clean up and head to The Rooftop at The Cape, a Thompson Hotel, a hip hangout with a sky garden, intoxicating views and well-prepared cocktails.

Rip around the Baja California Sur countryside off-roading in 4x4 vehicles through Terramar Travel or by zipping around your own Baja Racer 1000 Chenoweth dune buggy whacking jumps and kicking up dust among the sand spit arroyo pits.

Over the top adventure — quite literally — can be had on the ziplining tours that send you careening on a wire over the desert. At the end of the day — or as you're getting started, if you prefer — get into the watersports scene at Médano Beach, where wave runners, paddleboards, parasailing and kayaking keep visitors busy. Don't forget to wash it all down with the revolving drink specials at the always lively Mango Deck.

FAMILY FUN

A family that plays together stays together, but an unruly bunch of bored kids can throw a wrench into an otherwise wonderful vacation. Thankfully, there's no shortage of options for the underage set to enjoy in Los Cabos.

A number of hotels and resorts host well-organized kid's clubs that keep children fully engaged with face painting, water balloon fights and sandcastle making, as well as more



Monuments Beach features a tricky left point break and spectacular views of Land's End. It's also home to The Cape.

active pursuits, such as soccer, basketball and pool games.

The waters have a strong call. Book a snorkeling tour with Mexico Planners, whose aquatic adventures in both Chileno Bay and Santa María Bay will have the whole family eyeing all manner of tropical aquarium fish. Older kids might enjoy renting kayaks to paddle over the crystal-clear waters and observe the creatures from above. A central hub for family fun is Médano Beach, where volleyball nets, parasailing tours and Jet Ski rentals are widely available. Many of the beaches on this strip are Blue Flag-certified, so you know your loved ones are in pristine waters.

Famished families can take a few steps from their sandy resting spot to hit up The Office and fuel up with family friendly menu options showcasing finger food fare such as Baja Style Shrimp and Cabo Burritos.

One of the most fantastic family experiences in Los Cabos can be had at Dolphin Discovery, a fully enclosed facility

that's home to seven bottlenose dolphins. Various 45-minute packages have guests swimming, playing and frolicking with the dolphins in their own environment. Digital photos and streaming video are available to take home to show friends and loved ones or simply to relive the experience with these wonderful creatures.

With so much activity, the whole family can feel a little spent at the end of the day. Wind down with dinner and a show aboard Caborey's three-deck catamaran. Families get a full view of the rock formations at sunset as they dine and enjoy performances by Mexican mariachi singers and Argentine tango dancers.

BUILT FOR TWO: Plenty of activities in Los Cabos can be enjoyed during a couples' getaway, which makes the destination perfect for newlyweds, honeymooners and romantics at heart.

This page: PatriciaRix / Getty Images; Opposite page: Courtesy of The Cape, a Thompson Hotel



Whether this is a repeat visit to Los Cabos or you're on an extended stay, there's always more to see and do just around the bend.

BY JUSTIN P. BIEL

A visit to La Paz is a serene contrast to the high-energy, activity-driven Los Cabos. Even as the biggest city in Baja California Sur, this capital city feels like a tight-knit Mexican community, complete with a historic town center, cobblestone streets, adobe houses and jacaranda trees. Settled on the iconic coastline that inspired John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, La Paz is a wondrous blend of Mexican culture and natural beauty. A gem of a city that's often overlooked, those who journey to La Paz usually return, seduced by the peaceful spot on the Sea of Cortés.

To reach Baja California Sur's eclectic capital, rent a car and enjoy the serene two-hour desert drive marked by coastal views, the Sierra de la Laguna Mountains and rolling desert landscape. Upon arrival, book a room at CostaBaja Resort, Marina & Spa. It's a full-service resort that serves as an ideal hub for your exploration. With a golf course, spa

and several dining options on site, you'd be hard-pressed to find a reason to leave... other than to explore the city, of course. Start at the Malecón, a stretch of seaside boardwalk that exemplifies the city's vibe. For the best experience, explore the pedestrian path on foot and discover the diverse mix of beachfront restaurants, shopping and local artisans that thrive along the Sea of Cortés. The Malecón is a favorite destination for residents and tourists and should be the first stop on any trip to La Paz.

Like many traditional Mexican towns, La Paz is infused with Old World charm. But to genuinely understand the city's culture and geography, take a trip to La Paz's Regional Museum of Anthropology and History. A handful of engaging exhibits will guide you through the history of the Baja California peninsula and its people. A few hours allow you to explore the cave paintings, arrowheads, sculptures and fossils. The inexpensive museum is one of the best cultural activities in town, but keep in mind the exhibits are in Spanish, so unless you have a good grasp of the language, ask someone to help with translation.

Then, it's time to shift gears to other cultural attractions. An excellent place to start is the

city's most iconic church, the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Guadalupe. It is both a spiritual and cultural center for the Catholic community in La Paz and is a prominent symbol of the city's deeply religious heritage. The building's architecture is rare for Baja California Sur, as it emulates the opulent churches typically found in Mexico's interior, both in scale and design.

Beyond its cultural significance and history, the city of La Paz is known for its connection to the sea. For where the city of La Paz ends, the Sea of Cortés begins. The waters off the coast offer world-class diving, fishing and unrivaled marine life.

Start your ocean escapade with a trip to Balandra Bay, widely considered one of the most beautiful beaches in all Mexico. Balandra offers a sensory overload, a smattering of picture-perfect coastal strands within a vibrant landscape of white sand, turquoise water, red mountains and scattered giant cactuses. The bay is massively wide but shallow enough to spot colorful schools of fish from atop your paddleboard or while splashing in knee-deep water along the shore. Get there early to lay out towels and coolers beneath the shaded palapas that line the beach and note that buying food and drinks at Balandra is limited, so you should have everything you need for

the day. Once you get there, there's a strong chance you won't want to leave.

For stage two of your ocean journey head to Marina La Paz, get yourself a boat and set sail for Espíritu Santo Island. Only a short ride from La Paz, this protected World Heritage site is an ideal location for anyone seeking a pristine outdoor experience. By water, explore caves and inlets teeming with tropical fish and playful sea lions. By land, hike trails and keep an eye out for rare species of reptiles and birds. For the most adventurous, overnight camping trips are available, and if you're the more glamorous type, check out the overnight glamping options. A day at Espíritu Santo, or a night spent under its lovely stars, disconnects you from the world.

It's impossible to talk about La Paz and its oceans without noting the majestic whale sharks that feed here each winter from October through May. Getting the chance to swim beside the largest fish in the world is just what it sounds like: a once in a lifetime experience. After the initial shock of being face to face with these gentle giants, expect a sense of awe and gratitude to settle upon you — mind and spirit. The sense of being alive you feel while swimming with a whale shark doesn't last forever but experiencing it in the first place is entirely up to you. La Paz is a city of rich culture and plentiful natural resources, attracting those in pursuit of a peaceful life. But the secret of Baja California Sur's lovely capital city, has officially gotten out. These days the hidden pearl shines brighter than ever.

WHAT A SAINT

Whereas La Paz is a sanctuary of natural wonders, Todos Santos is a bastion of art. One of three magical towns in the Baja



California peninsula, it exudes a vitality that is downright enchanting. Just an hour outside Los Cabos, the coastal town is a haven for artists, dreamers and those who live to create. Upon arrival, you'll find a Colonial city overlooking the Pacific Ocean that moves to a much slower rhythm. Park beside the picturesque, yellow church downtown, and set out to explore the city's galleries, restaurants and shopping, all of which are infused with a hefty dose of creative expression.

Walking through the town is a joy in itself, with camera-worthy pastel buildings and historic façades around every corner. Still, the standout feature is in the city's galleries, most of which line the cobblestone streets surrounding the downtown district. Some are housed in weathered, single-story, brick buildings, while others, such as in-home galleries where the artists live and work, offer more intimate settings. On any given day, you can visit a dozen or more studios where you're likely to meet the artists and hear a bit about their latest projects. You may even hear the story behind what brought them to town or why they never left.

The galleries feature a variety of artistic disciplines including painting, sculpture, photography, ceramics, mixed media and glass art. A few notable galleries are the Galería de Todos Santos, a beautiful, well-lit space featuring the work of owner-artist Michael Cope, along with other artists.

The Gabo Art Gallery — an appointment only establishment — features playful pieces

that have traveled extensively across Mexico, the U.S. and Europe. Galería Logan stars Jill Logan's dreamlike Baja California Sur-inspired works that feel alive with a wash of color, form and emotion. Finally, Galería Arturo, is home to long-time local artist Arturo Mendoza Effeo, and Ezra Katz Gallery, houses the plein-air and studio impressionist's works.

The galleries in Todos Santos aren't limited to paint and canvas. If glass art is your thing, call ahead to visit Wendy Faith at Las Casitas for a chance to see her architectural-quality art glass, objets d'art and a line of kiln worked silverware. And a short drive from downtown is Galería N.E. Hayles, where you can take art classes on mosaics, abstracts and more.

You will notice the artistry here extends beyond the galleries. A weekend stay leads you to yet another well of creativity. The legendary Hotel California, with its vibrant décor and festive scenery, treats guests to live music at its lively bar, and Guaycura Boutique Hotel Beach Club & Spa houses a private collection of contemporary art that is prominently showcased throughout the property.

Nearly every street in Todos Santos offers something different. Down one road you'll find silversmiths, on another, a boutique selling small-batch mezcals. There are shops stacked with woven rugs, fashion stores with one-of-a-kind garments and coffee shops with beans from local Baja California Sur roasters.



This page: Photomexico. Opposite page, from left: Rob Albertson / Getty Images; Courtesy of CostaBaja Resort, Marina & Spa



Insider Tips

LOCATION: Los Cabos refers to two towns — Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo — found at the end of Baja California Sur, about 1,000 miles south of San Diego, California, just south of the Tropic of Cancer.

POPULATION: Approximately 288,000 people live in Los Cabos.

CLIMATE: It's a subtropical desert. During the summer, the highs can reach 90° F with sporadic showers. Winter evenings may drop to 60° F, with daytime highs near 80° F.

TIME ZONE: Los Cabos is on Mountain Time (MT), which is one hour later than Pacific Time.

LANGUAGE: In Mexico, Spanish is the official language, but English is widely spoken throughout Los Cabos, especially by those within the hospitality industry.

ELECTRICITY: 120 volts/60 hertz. Electrical outlets are the same as those used in the U.S.

BANKS AND CURRENCY: The official unit of currency is the Mexican peso (MXN), but the U.S. dollar (USD) is widely accepted. All major Mexican national banks are represented here and are usually open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Many locations have ATMs that accept U.S. bank cards the same way they do in the U.S. Transaction fees may be higher, and some ATMs can dispense both Mexican pesos and U.S. dollars. While you can exchange dollars for pesos at the airport, many hotels or at any bank, banks usually have the best rates.

Credit cards are welcome at most major restaurants and hotels. When using your credit card, the statement total will appear in pesos at the exchange rate posted on that day.

EXCHANGE RATE: At press time, one

Mexican peso equaled .050 U.S. dollar. This rate changes regularly. Check what the rate is when you are ready to travel and once you arrive.

COMMUNICATION: Most major wireless carriers offer packages that provide messaging, calling and data services at reasonable rates. Check with your provider and ask about roaming rates in Mexico, international package options and other travel-related services prior to your trip. The Internet works quite well throughout Los Cabos, and Wi-Fi is a standard amenity at a number of businesses and most hotels and resorts, so Skype, FaceTime, Whatsapp and other Wi-Fi-enabled apps are a cost-effective way to stay connected.

To call the U.S. from your U.S. cell phone, dial 00 + 1 + area code + phone number. To call locally to landlines, just dial the seven-digit phone number.

To call locally to local cell phones (within the same area code), dial 044 + phone number. To call Mexico outside of Los Cabos, dial 01 + area code + phone number.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: Mexico celebrates a number of public holidays annually. Except for banks and government offices being closed, your vacation plans should not be disrupted by them of them.

- Jan. 1 New Year's Day
- Feb. 5 Constitution Day
- Feb. 24 Flag Day
- Mar. 21 Benito Juárez Day
- May 1 Labor Day
- May 5 Battle of Puebla (Cinco de Mayo)
- Sept. 16 Independence Day
- Oct. 12 Día de la Raza (Columbus Day)
- Nov. 2 Día de los Muertos
- Nov. 20 Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution
- Dec. 12 Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe
- Dec. 25 Christmas Day

LOS CABOS TOURISM BOARD

Contact: Rodrigo Esponda, Managing Director
Tel: (624) 143-4342
E-mail: info@visitloscabos.org
Web site: VisitLosCabos.travel
Toll-free: (800) 746-2226
Twitter: @LosCabosTourism
Facebook: Los Cabos Tourism
Instagram: @LosCabosTourism
YouTube: youtube.com/loscabostourism
Share your experiences with us through social media using the hashtag #LosCabos.

BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR

For information about Baja California Sur, call (612) 124-0100 or go to VisitBajaSurtravel.

CAR RENTAL AT OR NEAR THE AIRPORT

- Alamo (624) 146-1900
- Avis (624) 146-0046
- Budget (800) 002-8343
- Dollar (624) 146-5012
- E-Z Car Rental (800) 216-7700
- Fox Rent A Car (800) 225-4369
- Hertz (800) 405-7000
- National (877) 222-9058
- Payless (624) 105-8411
- TEN Car Rental (624) 172-2402
- Thrifty (624) 146-5030

GETTING AROUND

To get from one town to the other, you can expect to pay between \$50 and \$60. Red and yellow taxi vans operate in San José del Cabo; blue and green vans cruise Cabo San Lucas. They are available 24 hours a day and are never far.

Buses run regularly and cost \$2–3, depending on the exchange rate. Accounting for stops at major hotels along The Corridor, the ride takes between both towns can take about an hour. As of 2018, Uber is also available in Los Cabos.

AIRPORT & TRAVEL DETAILS

To enter Mexico, you need a valid passport. All foreign travelers must pass through immigration and customs. Once you have been cleared by immigration officials, collect your luggage and proceed to customs where you push a button on something that looks a lot like a traffic light; if the light turns red, your luggage has been selected for inspection. After getting through customs and immigration, you may walk past time-share sales people eager for your attention.

Unless you've arranged pickup with your hotel, yellow and white mini shuttles are a good option. They are less expensive than taxis, but they won't depart unless full, so you may find yourself waiting a few minutes.

Cab drivers and other pre-arranged transportation providers have a designated waiting area just outside.

Just 20 minutes north of San José del Cabo, the Los Cabos International Airport (SJD), services more than 400 domestic, international and private flights weekly. At press time, the following airlines offered flights to Los Cabos: Aeroméxico, Aero Pacifico, Air Canada, Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Calafia Airlines, Delta, Frontier, Interjet, Magnicharters, Southwest Airlines, Spirit Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, Sunwing, United Airlines, VivaAerobús, Volaris and WestJet.

Nonstop flights and connections to Los Cabos are available from numerous cities across the U.S., including Atlanta; Charlotte; Chicago; Dallas/Fort Worth; Denver; Detroit; Houston; Kansas City, Mo.; Minneapolis; Newark; Phoenix; Salt Lake City and Seattle. From California, there are flights and connections available from Los Angeles, Orange County, San Diego, San Francisco and San Jose. From Canada, there are flights available from Calgary, Edmonton,

Kelowna, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg. The smaller, less frequented airport Cabo San Lucas International Airport (CSL) services mostly private aircraft. It is located just 10 minutes away from downtown Cabo San Lucas.

AIRLINE PHONE NUMBERS

- Aeroméxico / (624) 146-5098
- Air Canada / (800) 296-3408
- Alaska Airlines / (800) 252-7522
- American Airlines / (800) 433-7300
- Calafia Airlines / (800) 560-3949
- Delta Airlines / (800) 221-1212
- Frontier / (800) 432-1359
- Interjet / (866) 285-9525
- Magnicharters / (55) 51-41-13-51
- Southwest Airlines / (800) 435-9792
- Spirit Airlines / (855) 882-0464
- Sun Country Airlines / (800) 359-6786
- Sunwing / (800) 668-4224
- United Airlines / (800) 864-8331
- VivaAerobús / (888) 935-9848
- Volaris / (55) 1102-8000
- WestJet / (888) 937-8538

CONSULATES

U.S. Consular Agency
The Shoppes at Palmilla
Carr. Transpeninsular, Km. 27.5,
Local B221, San José del Cabo
Tel: (624) 143-3566
E-mail: ConAgencyLosCabos@state.gov
Consular Agency of Canada
Carr. Transpeninsular, Km. 0.5
Plaza San Lucas, Local 82
Col. El Tezal, Cabo San Lucas
Tel: (624) 142-4333 • (800) 706-2900
E-mail: lcabo@international.gc.ca

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

Emergency – 911
Federal Highway Patrol
(624) 122-5735
(624) 125-3584
Cabo San Lucas Fire Department
(624) 143-3577
San José del Cabo Fire Department
(624) 142-2466
Military Hospital – (624) 122-3488
Red Cross – (624) 143-3300
Airport – (624) 122-1486

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

AmeriMed – (624) 105-8500
Blue Net – (624) 104-3911
Hospital H+ – (624) 104-9300

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