

BARRON'S

It's Everything Los Cabos, Mexico, Isn't. Quiet, Remote, and Ripe for Exploring.

By Hannah Seligson
June 16, 2023



In East Cape, the desert meets the sea in a striking elemental way.
The Four Seasons Costa Palmas

It's hard to imagine that only an hour away from [Los Cabos](#), with its throngs of people, piña colodas, and never-ending-spring-break vibe, is a completely tranquil side of Baja California. In the East Cape, even the beaches are calm and swimmable.

Baja California Sur (BCS), the southern half of Mexico's 760-mile-long peninsula running south from the San Diego/Tijuana border, is remote and, unless you have a week to road trip, only accessible by air or sea. BCS's East Cape juts into the Sea of Cortez, which oceanographer Jacques Cousteau called "the aquarium of the world," where the desert meets the sea in a striking elemental way.

Until recently, the area offered little by way of tourism infrastructure. About five years ago, development was turbo-charged when Irongate, a Los-Angeles-based real estate firm, started building roads and structures for a massively ambitious 1,500-acre resort and residential community called Costa Palmas, many parts of which are still under construction.

Costa Palmas is an entry point to enjoy the natural beauty and rich culture of the area. There are hikes that end at waterfalls, snorkeling, and scuba diving with whales and sea lions in one of the largest and most well-preserved marine parks in the world, ideal kite-surfing conditions from December to February, and a diverse culinary scene ranging from beach-shack tacos to haute cuisine. But perhaps the most distinct aspect of the East Cape is the feeling that you have arrived at the end of the world.

Stay

Costa Palmas will soon be home to multiple lodging options, including Mexico's first Aman, Amanvari. Currently, The Four Seasons Resort & Residences Los Cabos is the first hotel project to go up. The property has everything from spacious single rooms to multi-bedroom villas that are decorated in a minimalist desert-chic aesthetic but have all the creature comforts. There are numerous restaurants, including a food truck located on the Robert Trent Jones-designed golf course and an oceanside cevicheria that serves local delicacies like chocolate clams. There's a well-appointed kids club, a sprawling spa that offers reiki and breathwork treatments, and an "Adventure Concierge" who can arrange experiences like whale shark encounters.



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Aside from Costa Palmas, there are few luxury accommodations in the East Cape but there's a robust Airbnb inventory. For those interested in being closer to the heart of the action, there is no shortage of lodging options in and around Cabo, an easy day trip to the East Cape.

Solaz, part of Marriott's Luxury Collection, recently reopened in January after renovations that added 18 new luxury suites. The OG of the area, Las Ventanas Al Paraiso, is a Rosewood property with eight swimming pools and adobe-style casita rooms. Auberge's Chileno Bay is located on one of the only swimmable beaches in Cabo—most hotels advise against swimming in the ocean because of the waves and strong current.

Eat

There's a reason that people helicopter in from Mexico City, about two hours away, to eat at James Beard Award-winning chef Nancy Silverman's Mozza Baja. Wood-fire pizzas are an anchor of the dining experience, but the menu changes depending on what's available in and around the East Cape. Mozza Baja, however, has stuck to its roots and made two of the fan favorites permanent fixtures: Nancy's chopped salad and the tagliatelle with oxtail ragu. Make sure to venture next door to Mozza and into Casena, a store that sells clothes, jewelry, and other wares that are made by Mexican artisans and designers.

Milos, the Greek restaurant that is famous for displaying fresh glistening seafood (usually caught that day) prepared simply, has its first Mexican outpost in Costa Palmas. The dramatic and glamorous space has floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Sea of Cortez. Despite the buzzy scene, the service is incredibly warm and very accommodating to families with young children. Ask the resident agave master, Ricardo Robles, for the perfect Mexican liquor or spirit pairing to go with whatever your server suggests is the freshest fish of the day.

For authentic Baja fish tacos, head to Tacos and Beer, an easygoing beach shack located in the eponymous village within Cabo Pulmo, the marine sanctuary. Here, a few steps from the water, you'll find very well-priced tacos and quesadillas. Go for the octopus, shrimp, or marlin tacos.

In the town of La Ribera, adjacent to Costa Palmas, try Providencia Restaurante Bar, which serves homestyle Mexican (vegan options upon request) in a low-key setting.

Experience

An easy 40-minute jeep ride from Ribera, Rancho Sol de Mayo is a nature preserve and camping area near the town of Santiago boasting trails to experience some of the region's wondrous landscapes, flora, and geology. (The Santa Rita hot springs are another attractive option nearby.)

Chief among the attractions is the Cañon de la Zorra (Fox Canyon) waterfall, a spectacular 30-foot cascade into a natural swimming hole that is the perfect, picturesque exclamation point after a hike through groves of tropical trees and over granite boulders in the hot sun (or skip the long hike; it's a short five-minute walk from the trailhead).

Part of the car trip to Cabo Pulmo, a national marine park home to 695 species of aquatic plants, 891 species of fish and the only living coral reef in BCS, is on a bumpy dirty road—that's intentional. According to certain locals, the UNESCO site wanted to limit the number of people who can enter this aquatic wonderland in order to keep it pristine. There are multiple ways to experience the marine park, from group tours to private charters (tour operator Aventura knows the ropes for those looking to experience Cabo Pulmo on their own boat). Depending on the time of year, you'll see whales, sea lions, sharks, sea turtles, and, if you're lucky, you'll be able to snorkel or dive with schools of thousands of jack fish, a species native to this area.

Take a day trip to Miraflores, a small town about 30 minutes from La Ribera and on the main road to the airport. The town is known for its local leatherwork shops. There are hot springs nearby. In July, the town hosts its annual dragon fruit festival. For a different retail experience, the East Cape boutiques at Costa Palma consists of three high-end stores that carry vintage-inspired jewelry and sustainable denim from the brand RE/DONE. The East Cape Co. store sells a wide range of "clean" and plant-based skin, hair care, and makeup products.