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Newsletter Mexico

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Baja California

Almost an Island

Welcome to Tijuana

Rain is pouring. The road ahead is in a terrible condition, spilt oil causes it to be really slippery. Heavy traffic is rushing by. To get off the road would mean to fall off the bike, because of the steep drop to the right. We are suffering going up a massive hill, our rear wheel has almost lost its grip. Just behind us is one of the busiest borders of the world: San Diego, USA to Tijuana, Mexico. It was no problem at all to get into Mexico, the tortilla curtain is pretty easy to cross in this direction.

Since we left the States we entered a new world: Signs in Spanish and really old cars on the road. Littered streets with people who are shouting things we cannot understand. Loud music spills out of the houses, most of the area is a big slum. Houses half built are filled with homeless people seeking shelter from the rain. On the right hand side it looks even worse. The border to the US reminded us of the German wall before the reunion. There are only a few metres between us and the border and we are uncomfortably close to highly nervous dubious people, who are waiting on their mobiles to get their signal from a "coyote" to cross the border illegally when the US border patrol is out of sight.

A police siren is coming closer quickly. Oh no, they are coming to get us. We stop and ask us briefly whether it is true that the police in Tijuana are so corrupt that they had to bring the military in. A very young friendly policemen greets us and introduces himself as "supervisor of the tourist police", who is here to protect tourists from criminals in the name of the mayor. "You cannot cycle here, look around, it is really dangerous!". "We had noticed (what a joke), but that is the only highway going South". "Ok, then we will give you an escort, we stay very close to you".

Before we continue our slow crawl up the mountain (we don't want to know what they think about German cyclists) they take the data from our passports "just in case". That does not calm us down – just in case what? Anyway, we have a police car behind us, so we should be safe. Nevertheless our hearts disagree – we must be in real danger if we need an escort.

Half an hour later our friendly escort waves us good-bye and the border disappears in our mirror. Later the rain stops and we arrive at our guarded hotel. We close the door and feel relieved. It just can get better!



Camping on the Baja California

Kilometre marker 89 on the road from El Rosario to Catavina. That means we have struggled 89 km against a headwind in mountainous terrain. In half an hour the sun will go down, so we are looking for a campground. There, a barely visible sign reads: "RV Park and Loncheria, stay as long as you like". A roughly sealed place with old tyres around it, a small house bent by storms and a littered backyard do not look like a romantic get-away under the stars.

In the minute we arrive we are greeted by three aggressive dogs. They must be thinking: "Great, something big to chase and eat". We quickly get off the bike and the beasts recognise regretfully that we are humans after all and change their minds. They start licking our salty legs with growing passion. Which tickles, by the way!! A very old man comes out of his Loncheria. "Can we camp out here?" "Si, claro, put your tent up right behind my house so I can watch over you!" "And where are the bathrooms?" "There, you see the outhouse?" He points at a tiny ramshackle wood hut where the door is latched by a rusty nail. Wow, a pit toilet full of flies, no water.

We look for a tidy spot on the ground and install our tent. Sitting on a small pile of rock we eat crumbled white bread and tuna out of the tin while the dogs sit around and beg for food with wide eyes. It doesn't matter, we have made it for the day, we

have something to eat, and watching the sunset over a desert full of cacti gets surprisingly romantic. Our host wishes us friendly "Buenas Noches" and confirms once again that he will watch over us.

On the Transpeninsular

During our tour on Highway 1 several interesting places to stay were waiting for us. After the discouraging start in Tijuana we soon reached Ensenada, the center for tourism in the north. While sipping Margaritas at the traditional Hussong Bar listening to the songs of the Mariachi the first Mexico feeling started to come upon us.

The next few days were marked by much too heavy traffic on the narrow road. But we had the choice of very inexpensive hotels in rather ugly villages where we preferred sleeping in our sleeping bags to using the beds. In short time we realized that the Baja is absolutely not flat, but very hilly. After a perfect downhill we reached the small town of El Rosario, whose main attraction since the 50's is the famous lobster burrito of the family restaurant "Mama Espinosa". The small and (despite it's fame) still down to earth facility offers one of the best cuisines on the peninsular. Well, not surprising, when we get offered yummy food we will stay for a while, but that was also because our beloved laptop broke and we had to find a solution for that. Ever tried buying a laptop on the Internet in the U.S. from a Mexican server using a German credit card? We wouldn't recommend it! After four days at the lovely Baja Cactus Hotel we entered the central desert, and we could not get enough of the impressive cacti there, reaching out to us with their





Mexico with a Spanish language course. Our hotel was called “Baja Paradise” and our time there really felt like that.

And now?

We spent three wonderful months in Mexico. Now we will return once again to the USA to fulfill another dream of ours: cycling down Highway No. 1 from San Francisco to Los Angeles. On the way to SF we will definitely visit Yosemite and the Napa Valley. And then we will continue onwards.



Buena Suerte,

Julia y Stefan

arm like shapes. Finally the traffic slowed down, Julia did not have to check the traffic the whole time in her rear view mirror any more and our Baja Dream could begin. As a compensation we had to carry a lot of extra water and food. We often had to cover more than 100 kilometres before arriving at a crossing in the desert where there would be only one taco stand to buy some food.

The next highlight: whale watching. With small fishing boats we were shipped into a lagoon full of friendly whales. The grey giants circled our boat and even let us touch them. One feels very small in the presence of a (nearly) 15 metre long and 34 ton heavy whale!

In the date palm oasis of San Ignacio we spent the night in a yurt at the namesake B&B and enjoyed the first bookstop after leaving Ensenada at Juanitas Casa Lere. We would have loved to stay longer but because of Easter everybody was fully booked. Then while staying in the town of Mulege whose motto is “No bad days in Mulege” it happened, we got stuck there, lived in Clementine’s B&B and Casitas and got infected by the laid back lifestyle in this nice little community. It was hard leaving it, but soon we arrived at the city of Loreto, a hub for the outdoor enthusiasts. After that we reached the end of civilisation, once again we had to cross mountains and desert, 350 lonely kilometres. The final highlight: our 6 Euro room made of cement on the backyard of a truck stop. After that, we reached La Paz, centre of the South. Mediterranean flair directly at the sea. After a tour to the tourist centres in Los Cabos and once again a lot of traffic, a wonderful and new experience for us – a fishing trip in Los Barilles. We came back to La Paz over sandy backroads and ended our tour in

Montezumas Revenge...

Fortunately Montezuma’s Revenge did not get us. We bought water in 5 litre tanks, beer in sixpacks or even in a one litre bottle and indulged in the healthy culinary highlights of Baja:

For lunch – if possible – Quesadilla, soft tortilla filled with cheese, Burritos (the same, but normally filled with meat) or Tacos, made from flour or corn, we liked it most with Carne Arrachera (marinated beef filet) or fish. In addition to that you get hot sauces, lemons and Guacamole (Avocado-Cream) nicely decorated. And beans!! Morning, midday and evening. If you are a vegetarian you can eat Chiles Rellenos, mild chilies filled with cheese. If you eat an Antijote like this for lunch, you already like to have another one for dinner. You can get real steaks as well, and lots of fish filets, especially Dorado which is very tasty. And if everything fails, you can get a Hamburguesa, a burger, but even those are somehow tastier than at home.



“The very air here is miraculous, and outlines of reality change with the moment. The sky sucks up the land and disgorges it. A dream hangs over the whole region, a brooding kind of hallucination.”

(J. Steinbeck - Log from the Sea of Cortez)

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