



2020 Baja Adventure Rally Bulletin #4: Rally Updates

Kassandra Dennis, Wagonmaster

January 16, 2019



Hola compañeros Aventureros y Aventureras de la Baja!
Hello Fellow Adventurers of the Baja!



Pavilion, Potrero Country Park

We are writing this while camping in the desert in Quartzsite, AZ. I know many of you are parked nearby at the Escapees Boomerville location and some of you are in the process of heading to the southwest for the start of our Rally on Feb. 12th.

Ed and I just recently returned from our last pre-rally scouting trip to Mexico! What an adventure it was. Potrero Park was beautiful as ever, there is so much to explore around Potrero County Park. It is surrounded by natural beauty and green scenery, a train museum and

wine tasting nearby. Also, if you just choose to relax in the tranquility of the area for a couple of days before the start of the rally, you won't be disappointed. Potrero Park has 50 amp (yup, newly upgraded!) plus water sites and an excellent dump station. Hot showers are available at the bathhouse. **If you choose to arrive a few days early, send us an email so we know to expect you. Please make your own early-bird reservations through Potrero County Park.** There is a Big Rig friendly fuel station nearby (in Campo on Hwy 94) and a couple of convenience stores with decent selections.

The contrast of the negative US media reports regarding violence, safety and border crossings into Mexico was mind-boggling to the actual live experience Ed and I had! **We felt very safe the entire trip, saw plenty of other RVers from the US and Canada, and plenty of tourists in Ensenada and further south.** Ensenada is currently up to 5 cruise ships arriving per week, one more than last year. We drove at night multiple times and the only thing to watch out for was poor lighting, an occasional horse or cow in a rural area or people walking along the street to their homes. People were courteous and helpful wherever we went, happy to see the tourists and the boost to their local economy. As always, many smiling faces greeted us and waved at us when we were driving by in our RV!

This time we had the smoothest **Border Crossing** going into Mexico and coming back to the U.S. Going in has always been easy, the only item that was checked this time was our **registration and our VIN number**, and the reassurance from us that **we did not have guns or any kind of ammunition with us**. This took all but a couple of minutes. Our fellow Chapter 8 friend from last year's rally, Christy, met up with us at Potrero Park and she had the same border crossing experience (traveling with a dog). Our refrigerator still had plenty of fruits and veggies in it plus meats, etc. It was not stuffed to the max, but certainly had items in it that



Zoológico Parque del Niño

"technically" are on the do not bring list. So far, they have never given us a hard time if the amounts seemed reasonable (moderate). The same with alcohol, we had more than the recommended limit but a moderate amount. Please do not bring cases of wine or beer as that would go beyond the moderate amount and you might have to pay a hefty tax. Three liters of liquor or beer and up to six liters of wine are duty free per person. Plus remember, our first stop in Mexico is in the beautiful wine country and you will have ample opportunity to stock up. Some local craft breweries are also hopping up here and there.



La Jolla Beach Sand Castle

On the way **back to the U.S.**, we made sure to check wait times for the U.S. border crossing via our border app and chose a Sunday morning for a very short 20 minute wait. It can take up to several hours during rush

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hour. The U.S. agents came into the rig and checked our passports and refrigerator (pretty customary), asked if we had purchased anything while in Mexico (gifts), if we had fresh fruit and vegetables, pork, chicken or fresh eggs with us, (which we did not) and how much alcohol we had with us (the limit is: one liter of alcohol duty free per person)... and on we went back into the U.S. We will go over what is allowed and what not to bring back to the U.S. toward the end of the rally in Ensenada, so you don't need to worry about this now.

As you might realize by now, **going into Mexico is really very easy.**

A friendly and respectful attitude is always appreciated at any border crossing and goes a long way! A couple of words in Spanish also make people feel respected, just like an "Hola" (hello), "Muchas gracias" (thank you very much), etc.



Chapter 8 Beachfront Camping at La Jolla

We will hand out a list of about 40 easy to remember **Spanish** words at the rally registration at Potrero park and most likely have the whole group walk through these, on pronunciation etc. We also have several Spanish speaking individuals attending the rally. If all else fails, a smile and some hand signs or a simple drawing if necessary, can go a very long way in a foreign country. Many of our attendees also use google translate on their phones. However, be aware that

not all people we encounter on this rally can read.

The **roads** were beautifully paved with shoulders just about all the way from near the Tecate Border Crossing to the Ocean near Ensenada. The only pot-holes on our 1,400 mile roundtrip scouting in Baja Mexico were in Ensenada due to big city traffic. **For those planning on travelling further south of Ensenada**, we have wonderful news. Roads have been mostly freshly paved! While still narrow and often without shoulder, roads are in good to excellent shape! **We will share more of this with you toward the end of the actual Rally** and answer any questions you might have on fuel availability (great), campgrounds, etc. for those going on the **add-on trips** further east to San Felipe or south to pet the whales on the Pacific Coast and across the Baja to the Playas of the Sea of Cortez.

Our second stop was at the **Zoológico Parque del Niño** (the zoo) in the **Valle de Guadalupe** (Guadalupe wine valley) and the staff greeted us again with cheer. The little town has an expanded large supermarket and the whole wine country area seemed spruced up for Christmas. The only item we were having a difficult time finding was

distilled water, so if you have a sleep apnea machine or any other need for distilled water, please bring enough from the U.S. Yes, this was a surprise to us as well and after visiting several supermarkets and pharmacies we realized that this item is only



Hook Ups at Potrero Park



Exotic Animal Rescue Zoo



Zoológico Parque del Niño: Camping in the heart of Baja's Wine Country

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available in bigger cities in Mexico. We will have our Valentine dinner here and a "Behind the Scenes Zoo Tour" the next day where we can interact with the animals, zookeepers and learn from the veterinarian what it takes to keep the animals healthy and happy! The animals were all in great health and what a joy it was to hear the lion roar in the early a.m. knowing we were just camped a hundred yards away! We also will have plenty of free time here to explore the area on our own, visit the wine museum or one of the highly rated restaurants. We found a beautiful winery and scheduled a **wine tour** plus a **premium wine tasting** for our group. We will also have **tapas** created by our own chef for all to enjoy!



Add On Adventure: San Felipe Seaside



Add On Adventure: Whales!

Our third stop was at **La Jolla Beach Camp** where we have currently all available Beach front sites reserved, plus some sites with 15 amp electric in second row. On our first day we will get **fresh drinking water (reverse osmosis) delivered to be pumped into our rigs and have a pump out scheduled** for those not wanting to use the dump station.

We will have two more opportunities for freshwater fill and dump during our 7 night stay at La Jolla Beach Camp. We made reservations for our **Welcome and Farewell dinners, the all day city bus tour with tour guide and an evening of live theater performance (in English) in the adjoining 99 seat theater!** We will also have a free day to explore the area on your own and a four wheelers off road outing opportunity for those with such vehicles and a more adventurous in spirit!



Add On Adventure: Salty Whale of a Tale

We have several people not bringing a toad (Class B motorhomes) and as always, we will coordinate and **encourage carpooling as we go along.**

Our location for the **in-kind donation items** has been secured and will allow for ample space to sort out items and set up a **food bank.** We can also have socials in the same venue should the weather require it, as we have rented the party room for our entire stay.

Ed and I visited the **hands-on charity location, Casa**



Add On Adventure: South Baja Beaches

de Abuelos, and were pleased to see this wonderful project take shape. Our group will dedicate one day to this project with help, such as the painting the interior walls and more depending on our attendee skill sets.

Many **happy memories** were created last year helping with a hands-on charity project. This also gives us an opportunity to learn more about the culture. We have a good blend of fun and touristy items on our itinerary sprinkled with a gentle mix of charity and good will throughout. We are hoping that all attendees will enjoy the **wonderful camaraderie such an event creates and the opportunity for new friendships.** Not to mention

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the many things we learn about a different culture and possibly looking at life from a different perspective. As in any third world country, you will see some wonderful and inspiring things and some things that still need attention (such as recycling and trash collection). However the friendly nature of Mexican people and the general beauty of our surroundings will more than make up for this.

I promised to tell you more about the **mandatory FMM card**. While Ed and I applied for this tourist card on-line shortly before crossing the border, we encountered a few surprises with it and at this time we would like to recommend NOT pursuing the on-line version. If you have already done this, not to worry, but be advised that you must take your online printout, and have it validated at the same place where you would get an FMM card in person. After careful consideration it was determined to once again **get our FMM card in person during our one day visit to Tecate** (our second day at Potrero Park).



Our wine tasting tapas begin at Calimax!

We will all split up into our travel groups of about 5—6 rigs per group and go to the border office and pick them up in person. We once again will combine this with a visit to the lovely town of Tecate, it's famous bakery, Tecate brewery, and enjoy a Tecate taco lunch there before returning to our campground in Potrero. The Tecate visit will take about 5 - 6 hours, we can coordinate with pet sitting if necessary, as our groups will be leaving in 30 minute intervals. **Please send me an email if your pets cannot be left alone for a six hour period.**



Charity is a Heart & Hands Harmony

We will have \$30.00 in pesos available for each rig to purchase during the rally registration process. This will help you purchase a meal or trinket etc. in Tecate before having the opportunity to visit an ATM/change house with your Group Leader at the border. You can change cash dollars to cash pesos or use a debit or credit card for a cash withdrawal at the **ATMs (please remember to bring your pin number!)**. Please do bring some extra cash dollars along in your travels as **Mexico**

is a cash economy. **Do not expect to pay with debit/credit cards.** While credit or debit cards may be used in some places, many will not accept them. Generally, you also get the very best prices paying in pesos. Some meals (such as two Welcome and one Farewell dinner) are included, others are on your own. Camping is fully paid and so are the outings, such as the zoo tour, theater performances, Ensenada bus tour, one premium wine tasting, rally jackets, etc.

Please also allow for personal expenses such as eating out, drinks, souvenirs, fuel, etc. and for some fun bidding at the Charity Auction! **Fuel** was readily available by Pemex, BP, Chevron and ARCO stations, #2 diesel fuel along with regular and premium Top Tier gasoline is imported from the U.S.A.

You will most likely receive the **detailed Rally Itinerary** at Potrero Park during registration or via email before the rally starts. The same goes for the **Final Attendee Roster with photos**. As we had a couple of changes, it will be sent to you closer to the rally start date to make it most accurate.



La Jolla Theater Chapter 8 Charity Auction

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One last reminder, as our chapter is not a political or religious organization, **please leave all political paraphernalia (hats, shirts, flags, pins, bumper stickers, etc.) at home to be revisited upon your return.** This allows for best group harmony and an opportunity to have an open mind and learn something new from the country and people we are visiting. Who knows you might surprise yourself! I have learned something in all my travels to foreign countries, some of it I brought back with me to implement here in the U.S. and other times I was grateful for how good I had it back home. **Either way it was a win. Being open minded to trying a new food or a few words of a different language, different road signals and learning about a different culture can be quite the adventure.** If you were not interested in experiencing something new, you probably would not have signed up for this trip... However, it is nice to be able to do all this within a **safe and comforting environment surrounded by your rally friends!**



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Rascal & Scamp looking for a Baja Chihuahua

There has been a very recent update for those of you with **pets**. The new regulations only require proof of being current with the necessary shots. **The pet health certificate is no longer required.** However, one of our Board Members travelled to the Lukeville border today to verify this change in person and the border personnel were still handing out the old and outdated brochures... they did acknowledge (after some prodding) hearing of the new requirements...

We are currently looking for **Parking Team volunteers** who are willing to step up and arrive at Potrero Park one day early (Feb. 10th) to meet with the Parking

Chairpersons. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering. We are looking for about 5 rigs total. Remember this is for early risers... as you will be travel group #1. Reservations have already been made at Potrero Park for the Parking Crew for this.

We are also looking for a few good folks as **Tail Gunners** for our Veteran Group Leaders. Let me know if you are interested in stepping up to this volunteer opportunity. **After all, we are a non-profit Escapees RV Club chapter coming together as volunteers to learn, grow and celebrate together!**

Our entire Chapter 8 Mexican Connection Board of volunteers has been working hard all year to put this fabulous and fun rally together. We look forward to meeting you all around noon for our Potrero County Park **Welcome Dinner.**

See you there!

Kassandra

Wagonmaster
2020 Baja Adventure Rally
Escapees RV Club, Chapter 8
The Mexican Connection



Baja Taste Adventure: Shrimp Tacos

