

LA CONEXIÓN MEXICANA

Escapees RV Club Chapter 8

Member of Escapees Social Network, Inc.

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Winter 2017 **¡FELIZ NAVIDAD y PROSPERO AÑO NUEVO !** Volume XXXVIII No. 4



Baja's famous Boojum Tree or Cirio waving "Welcome to Baja!" to you! Near Catavina Photo by Lin Hines

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Chapter 8 Mission Statement

Chapter 8 was organized in 1985 to:

- Expose Escapees Chapter 8 Mexican Connection members to RV travel in Mexico, its traditions, culture, scenery, food, and folklore.
- Travel South of the Border and give back more than the enriching experiences we gain, through charity donations and business patronization.
- Enable Chapter 8 members to feel comfortable to return to Mexico for future Rallies as well as their own road trip adventures.



El escritorio del redactor

Editor's Desk by Lin Hines I'd like to send out my personal best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year or Feliz Navidad y un Próspero Año Nuevo in Spanish!



The upcoming February 2018 Rally promises to be one of the best yet covering most of the interesting places in the northern half of the Baja peninsula. If you have time, continue south; there are the world class beaches of Bahía Concepcion, the fascinating towns of Santa Rosalía, Mulegé, Loreto, La Paz, Todos Santos, Los Barriles and Los Cabos. And don't forget Bahía de Los Angeles north of Guerrero Negro! Friendly people, lots of sunshine, blue skies, geological marvels, clean air & stars at night, Pacific Ocean and Sea of Cortez scenic vistas, birding, whales, whale sharks, surfing, rock climbing, cave paintings, Spanish missions, colonial towns, 10,000' mountains, great fishing, 4 wheeling, hiking, weird and wonderful endemic cactus, amazing whalewatching, excellent cerveza and vino, lobster burritos, fish tacos, gorgeous sunsets and many more superlatives! Beauty everywhere! Baja's really got it all!

There is a series of five updates from the 2018 Wagonmasters Ed and Cassandra Dennis in this issue. Lots of good information whether or not you're coming along on the Baja Rally.

—**CHAPTER 8 FEBRUARY 2018 BAJA WINE TO WHALES CARAVAN**—
**2018 RALLY REGISTRATION IS ALMOST OVER—ONLINE ONLY USING PAYPAL
AT CHAPTER 8 WEBSITE <WWW.MEXICANCONNECTION08.COM>**

Official Mexican Peso to U.S. Dollar Exchange Rate was 19.26 on 12/19/2017

SPRING ISSUE CH.8 NEWSLETTER COPY DEADLINE—APRIL 15 FIRM



Board Photo taken 2/19/2017 Missing Board Member—Orene Brown

Functionarios del Capítulo 8 *Escapees Chapter 8 Officers*

President — Jim and Cynthia Ponder wagonmasters2017@gmail.com

Immediate Past President—Orene Brown

1st VP & 2018 Wagonmasters—Ed & Cassandra Dennis wagonmaster2018@gmail.com

2nd VP & 2019 Wagonmaster—**POSITION VACANT—PLEASE VOLUNTEER!**

3rd VP & 2020 Wagonmaster—**POSITION VACANT—PLEASE VOLUNTEER!**

Treasurer—Steve Bufty ch8treasurer@gmail.com

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Membership—Maryke Hines Ch8membership@gmail.com

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Newsletter Editor — Lin Hines Chap8newsletter@gmail.com

Newsletter Layout/Graphics—Maryke Hines

Historian—**POSITION VACANT—PLEASE VOLUNTEER!**



Chapter 8 Website: www.mexicanconnection08.com

Mensaje del Presidente



Hola, Mis Amigos,

How exciting is it that the 2018 Chapter Rally to Baja Mexico starts in just 6 weeks!

Ed and Cassandra have completed their final survey trip to Ensenada and San Quintín to make the final arrangements for our great Wine to Whales adventure. Our Pre-Rally will take place at Potrero Park in San Diego County CA.

Take time to check their website at <http://www.sdparks.org/content/>

[sdparks/en/park-pages/Potrero.html](http://www.sdparks.org/content/sdparks/en/park-pages/Potrero.html)

A big part of the planning for any Rally is to make Charity contacts in the local communities that we visit to learn what special needs that the Chapter Charity Committee can address. See the detailed list in this newsletter so that we can generously meet some of the needs of the communities that we visit.

Our first stop in Mexico will be in the Baja wine country of the Guadalupe Valley. There is a saying about wine: **There is the good wine -- and there is the better wine.** I can't wait to sample Baja's best!

The remaining stops on the Rally will also be packed with fun and adventure.- Ensenada, San Quintín, Cataviña, and Guerrero Negro.

Ed and Cassandra have done a great job planning the 2018 Rally. Cassandra will be President after the Rally ends on February 24 and as of now, the Wagonmaster positions for 2019, 2020 and 2021 are vacant. As you enjoy the 2018 rally, please consider organizing and planning one of the future Rallies, especially 2019. The task will be much easier if you start now looking at maps and thinking about places that you would like to take a Rally in Mexico. You will not be alone, as Chapter 8 has a written Wagonmaster's Guide and many experienced Mexico travelers who will give you help and advice.

Please contact Jim or I at wagonmasters2017@gmail.com if you have questions. Cassandra and Ed will also be happy to talk to you on the 2018 Rally.

Cynthia and Jim Ponder



Miembros del Capítulo

News From Membership Chair Maryke Hines:

As of December 18, the Chapter 8 membership stands at 169.

Welcome to the following new members of Chapter 8, and we hope to see some of you at the 2018 Rally!

Larry McInnis & Sue Lenihan, Pete & Sherry Petrie, Jerry & Judy Funk, Jim & Kathy Jensen, Paul & Elva Dennis, Ken & Wendy Hall, Kathleen Hare, Ed & Sandi Lappin, Claude & Lynn Dixon, John & Deryn Graieg (new members from Down Under!!), Mike Davis & Lynne Dekker and Fernor Black.

All current paid-up members receive the Chapter 8 newsletters by email, before the newsletter is published on the Chapter's website. *Maryke* <chap8membership@gmail.com>

Secretary's Minute—Barb Ely

Happy Holidays to all!! Wine to Whales - February 2018 - what a great way to get into the New Year!

Chapter 8 will be looking for a replacement Secretary in February 2018. I will be at the pre-Rally at Potrero Park but will not be going on the rest of the adventure in MX.

The role of Secretary is not difficult; the benefits are many--meeting lots of terrific people, assisting wherever possible to make the Rally a great one, working with the Charity group. The Secretary is responsible for the Board meeting minutes at the pre-and-post Rally plus the General Meeting and then emailing these minutes to the rest of the Board and copies to Escapees HQ in Livingston. If you are interested, please contact me or a member of the Board.

Barb Ely <barbwely@gmail.com>



*Mensaje del Segundo Vice Presidente
y organizador de la 2019 Reunión
Second VP & 2019 Wagonmaster*

Chapter 8 is looking for dedicated volunteers to be 2nd VP or 3rd VP at the 2018 Baja Rally. If you're interested in being Wagonmaster in 2019 or 2020 and taking Chapter 8 members to your favorite place in Mexico, please contact Chapter 8 President Cynthia Ponder! We will all be thrilled to welcome you aboard and give you all the help you need for success!



Do you like RVing, Mexico and History??

If you do, you'll make a perfect Chapter 8 Historian! The Historian collects Rally materials, Board and General meeting minutes, newsletters and Rally photographs and adds them to our recently created Chapter 8 digital history files. Ed Overby, the outgoing Historian, has done a great job digitizing all available records from the Chapter's 36 year history!

We're looking for a computer literate member dedicated to maintaining and adding annually to this growing digital archive, that is an important research tool for Wagonmasters planning their Rallies. You'll be working with the Webmaster to archive much of this material for the future. If this position sounds interesting, please contact President Cynthia Ponder at <wagonmasters2017@gmail.com>



Webmaster's Input

This position is OPEN and we really need an enthusiastic person with good web, blogging (Wordpress based) and computer knowledge to take the reins and keep improving the Chapter 8 website and adding more content! The website is our main recruiting tool for new members as well as Rally participants. Contact any officer to volunteer!

EVERYBODY NEEDS A GOOD TACO!!



Mensaje del Tesorero

The Treasurer Speaks!

The Treasurer wishes everyone in Chapter 8 and on the upcoming 2018 Baja Wine to Whales Rally a very Merry Christmas and a great New Year! To those going on the Rally, it will be a trip of a lifetime! Savor every moment!

Your Humble Treasurer, Steve Bufty



Algunas Palabras en Español

Let's Speak Spanish!

by Señora Maryke Hines



English:

Merry Christmas

Happy (prosperous) New Year

Holidays

Christmas Eve

The children

Boys and girls

Pets

Permit

Exchange rate

Español:

Feliz Navidad

Próspero Año Nuevo

Vacaciones, Días Festivos

Nochebuena

Los niños

Muchachos y muchachas

Mascotas

Permiso

Tipo de Cambio

Mensaje de la Directora de los Capítulos de los Escapees Message from Escapees Inc. Chapter/BOF Director



Good morning, Escapees friends,

As I type this I am reminded of a comment that I recently heard made by another in a crowd. "2017 hasn't been anything special."

I've given thought to this comment and I have a reply to such sentiments... I would concede that 2017 has been much like the years before it in that it has been filled with births and deaths, joy and pain, wars and famines like have occurred since time began. That vague fact would do little to set the year Two Thousand Seventeen apart from its predecessors. However, I would submit that "special" years are not made by the time period itself, but by individuals involved in the moments that the sum of which come together to form unforgettable instants. So, as we draw closer to saying adieu to 2017 and welcome 2018, I would like to bestow these wishes upon you...

I wish for each day of the New Year to come upon you like an unopened gift. Whether you are the personality type that rips open a present in eager anticipation or the one that carefully pulls away the wrappings with thoughtful appreciation, I hope that each new morn arrives with renewed expectation to the recipient.

I wish for bright eyes and keen attention awaiting those surprises that are just around the next bend, and to capture each moment with the same thrill as a child viewing a shooting star. I wish for a legacy of stories to be left behind of your adventures and spirit.

And finally, I wish for each of you to have hearts full of life. Because life is not about riches, but living richly. I send each of you love and warmth for the New Year. Lockie

Lockie Sailer

Chapter/BOF Director

Escapees RV Club

870-754-1263

www.escapees.com/fun/chapters



Get ready for some great **WHALEWATCHING** on the 2018 Rally! Scammon's Lagoon in Guerrero Negro is the place in the middle of Baja! Will you get to touch and maybe kiss a very friendly baby Grey Whale? Come along on the 2018 Rally and find out!! It's truly an amazing experience that you'll never forget!





Ed & Cassandra Dennis

Congratulations you are on the Wine to Whales Baja Caravan!

Here's the latest news from your Wagonmasters



The Adventure Begins...

Hey there fellow Wine-to-Whales Caravanners...

We are absolutely thrilled with the enthusiasm and number of rigs ready to roll into Baja with us in February 2018. From every perspective... this is going to be one fun-tastic adventure! We are about to head out for our third trip along the entire Caravan route making sure that every last detail is ready for your arrival at each of the six very interestingly different venues. We will also check with the Mexican authorities as to any changes in border crossing regulations that would affect our caravanners. The secret to Chapter 8's success is that we are all volunteers... and that is what builds camaraderie, makes a better experience and makes a great travel value.

If you have any special needs, questions or comments regarding the Caravan, be sure to let us know. Our phone numbers and email addresses are at the end of this letter. However, if there is something you would like us to check out on our last scouting trip to Baja, be sure to send us an email as soon as possible. After this last scouting trip, we will update everyone.

So far it looks like we will have about 40 or so rigs with 85 or so folks along for the adventure. For safety and convenience, the Caravan will be divided into travel groups of 6-7 rigs with a Group Leader and Tail Gunner for each group. There is still some room for a few more rigs, so if you have some friends interested, now is the time to get in on the action. There will be a quarter page announcement of the Wine to Whales Baja Caravan in the January issue of the Escapee magazine to potentially replace anyone who needs to cancel. December 5, 2017 is the last day in which one can cancel and get all their money back (except for the non-refundable administration fee). Since this is a non-profit organization, Chapter 8 must pay campgrounds, events, and food services in advance for each reservation. Thus, late cancellations are not guaranteed refunds.

As soon as individual travel groups are formed, you will be notified of your Group Leader and Tail Gunner. Usually, we give the name and contact information of the people in each group to the Group Leader so the Group Leader can answer questions and disseminate information. If for any reason you do not want your name and contact information shared with fellow Caravanners, please let us know at your earliest convenience.

Your Group Leader will be contacting you with more details about the Caravan and collecting information as to jacket sizes, food preferences, tour options, specific charity needs, etc.

Once again, we are so thrilled that you joined our merry Wine-to-Whales Baja Caravan... and may you enjoy a safe and happy Holiday Season!

Ed & Cassandra

Chapter 8 Wagonmasters 2018

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408-603-0699 kassandra@ekdennis.com

Wine to Whales Baja Caravan Report:

1. ARCO & BP Open in Baja
2. Road Paving & Shoulders
3. Mexican Border Updates
4. More Pre-Caravan News

Hola Amigos... As usual, a few slots have opened up due to unavoidable cancellations and we have saved some for those who respond to the Chapter 8 Caravan Ad in the January-February Escapees Magazine. As Wagonmasters 2018, we have just completed our last scouting trip before the Wine to Whales Baja Caravan begins its February 4th 22-day adventure.

We were thrilled to see that the new ARCO & BP stations mentioned in the last Chapter 8 Newsletter are open with top tier fuel and Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel for all rigs. New paving and wider shoulders on Highway 3 (Tecate to Ensenada) is completed. Newly paved sections and shoulders south of Ensenada on Highway 1 have added to the delight of those with larger RVs and "toads."

The Mexican Border Inspectors are more strongly enforcing Mexican regulations that prohibit the importation of fresh meats, fruits & vegetables, any gas or diesel not in the vehicles fuel tank, or more than 3 liters of alcoholic beverages. As to border crossing questions, we have met with Mexican government authorities and arranged for written approval from Mexican Customs that all vehicles in the Wine to Whales Caravan are cleared for travel in all of the Baja peninsula.

On revisiting the Valle de Guadalupe (Mexico's wine country) we have found additional places to visit and things to do in the free time available. Prices are rising as this area is rapidly becoming a prime destination for Mexican and International tourists. It is not likely that future tours will be able to enjoy this area as economically as Wine to Whales Baja Caravanners can this time!

The optional Ensenada City Tour continues to be expanded in value and substance. We scheduled our tour when cruise ship crowds would not be in port. We selected an independent English speaking licensed tour guide, driver and modern 53 seat bus in order to add cultural and culinary experiences not found on the standard tours commonly available in Mexico's second busiest port.

The Homeowners Association located in the Pabloff family's La Jolla Beach Camp area has opened their facilities along with their support for many of our social and charitable activities. Our preferred local restaurant will have a special breakfast for Caravanners in addition to their live music, economically priced organic entrees and gourmet pizza (available for campground delivery).

Due to popular demand, we have searched many locations for a second beach camp along the Baja ocean dunes (south of San Quintin & north of Catavina's scenic mountain wonderland). We have found a site with hot showers, dump stations and a few electric outlets... nestled in the ocean front dunes. We will now leave San Quintin a day earlier to enjoy handmade tamales on the beach.



Ed & Kassandra

We are absolutely thrilled with the number of rigs and participant enthusiasm! To all our Mexican Connection Amigos... a Safe & Happy Holiday Season!

Ed & Kassandra Dennis

Wagonmasters 2018, Chapter 8, Escapees RV Club
ed@ekdennis.com, kassandra@ekdennis.com



Our Sprinter Van fueling up with USLD at BP in Ensenada, Mexico



Latest Baja Caravan Questions ANSWERED

Hola Amigos...

The proof that all the research, planning, scouting trips and negotiations were worthwhile is reflected for the adventurous group of SKP's who have joined us for the Wine to Whales Baja Caravan. We reached the minimum number of rigs a while ago... but we still have room for a few more. So we are publishing some of the questions we have received where all our Chapter 8 Members can share in these helpful Whales Tales:

Is it better to use Cash or Credit Cards in Mexico?

Most of Mexico operates primarily as a "cash economy" so paying in Pesos generally gets you the lowest price. The closer you are to the U.S. Border, the more you can use U.S. Dollars. Prices marked can be a bit confusing since the official symbol for Dollars (\$) is the same for Pesos! Up to \$10,000 USD may be taken into Mexico. A good exchange rate can be had on the U.S. side of the border in Tecate. Credit & Debit Cards provide another way to get a good exchange rate in Mexico at ATMs. Usually, you pay a small service fee of a few dollars rather than having an unfavorable exchange rate applied.

What is the best way to Potrero County Park from San Diego (CA) or Yuma (AZ)?

The Town of Potrero is in San Diego County on State Hwy 94 which starts in San Diego and ends at its junction with I8. Hwy 94 is a two-lane road, narrow at times, that winds through scenic mountainous areas. Although our rig is 65' long (motorhome & toad), we had no difficulty making the trip in either direction. Potrero County Park is 2 miles north of Potrero. Add an extra hour to arrive early. Larger rigs use I8 from either direction to Old Hwy 80 South, Right on Church Road, then Right on Hwy 94 to Potrero.

Is the rumor that some Pickups and Campers have been turned away at the Border true?

Most vehicle Border Entry Problems have been due to misinterpretations of a 2015 Regulation applying to commercial vehicles. Even though Customs Officials in Tecate agreed that we did not need a TIP and that our Caravan vehicles meet the Baja rules, we went a step further. We met with a top Baja Government Tourism Official who agreed to get a clarifying letter from Mexican Customs and have someone from his office meet our Caravan at the border to assist each of our rigs to lawfully pass through. He reminded us that "Green Angels" are available to help travelers at no charge along Baja's major roads.

My RV has some low hanging drain pipes, will that be a problem on the Caravan route?

After travelling the Caravan Route three times, the "Topes" (speed bumps) along the route are fewer and less high than we have experienced in other parts of Mexico. On this route, you will find a series of white lines across the road on your side to alert you to slow down... for a curve or "Tiny Tope" ahead.

Where can we find RV Solar help on the way to the Potrero Park gathering place?

Having a roof full of solar gives us a Baja advantage. We also use a portable 200w unit that easily clips to a battery bank and folds for storage. A 100w solar panel, 12v deep cycle battery and small inverter powers most CPAPs all night. In Quartzsite (AZ), such units are available at January's "Big Tent Show" and "Solar Bill" has been helping RVers in Quartzsite for 30 years. Starlight Solar in Yuma built our system and are very helpful. Solar equipped rigs (who use generators sparingly) will be grouped together.

What are the rules for running a generator?

Most Caravan sites have "quiet hours" restrictions on running generators. Some of our Caravan venues have additional electricity available. In most cases, we have rented all the camping space available and have more discretion for generator use. We strongly recommend using a "Genturi" by which directs exhaust from internal generators up above your rig instead of toward your neighbor. The system breaks down into sections for storage and can be quickly put in place.

Everyone who joined the Caravan have email updates...

Ed & Kassandra Chapter 8 Wagonmasters 2018



Wine to Whales Baja Caravan

***We Had to Rent a Bigger Bus...
So There Are More Seats on Our
Fabulous Two-Day Ensenada Tour!***

Eat, Drink & Be Merry as You Discover
More Baja: Art, Culture & History...
Fascinating "Mini-Museum" Visits
Stroll the Harbor & Fish Market
Shop Downtown & Farmers Market
"Off the Beaten Path" Gourmet Lunch
Scenic Wine & Cheese Tasting Elegance
Enjoy a Margarita where it was invented!
Fun filled Adventure with None of the Driving!

So many signed up for the optional Ensenada Area Tour that we had to rent a bigger (53 seat) bus with a few more seats available.

As Wagonmasters, we created this tour by picking an English speaking tour guide (Sofia), bus driver (Gabriel) and demanding a modern bus... then added each tour event from those we had personally visited.

To get the most value, the tour begins all day Friday and resumes all day Monday to avoid Cruise Ship crowds. With all the extras we have included, the original Chapter 8 bargain price is still only \$65 per seat!

If you want to get in on this fun filled, hassle free, Baja cosmopolitan experience, contact us by cell/text at 408-603-0600 or email us at wagonmaster2018@gmail.com while you can!

Kassandra & Ed, Wagonmasters 2018



Charity Committee & Charity Team Members Reveal

Where Do Our Donations Go?

By Jerry & Judy Funk

Hola Amigos... In 38 years of Chapter 8 rallies, every rally has been different, but the adventurous spirit, volunteerism and zest for helping newbies enjoy south of the border adventures is essentially the same. More recently, Mexican Connection Members have opened their hearts, storage lockers and wallets to provide charity in pueblos along the way.

Members donate... and a happy chain reaction begins... in those who join the Charity Team... in local groups that get the right stuff to the right recipients... and back to the original donors who made it all possible! The **Charity Committee** is a group of five Chapter 8



Members especially picked to lead our Charity effort. The **Charity Team** is made up of Caravan Members willing to help in visiting charity sites, prepare Silent Auction exhibits, act as "Vannas" displaying auction items, auctioneers who "persuade" the bidders to ump up their bids, and 50/50 Ticket sellers who raise 50% for Charity and 50% to be raffled off to Lucky Winners. "In-kind" Donors can buy much needed supplies in Mexico (at stores like Sam's, Costco, Walmart, Home Depot, Office Depot, etc.) that match the needs of Charity Committee certified local charities.

As was done at the last Rally in San Felipe, approved charities were invited to speak to Caravanners to explain how their organization improves the lives of those who receive their aid. Charity Team members will separate items (walkers, canes, toys, school supplies, non-perishable food, etc.) for distribution of "in-kind" donations to special need recipients along the 500-mile Caravan.

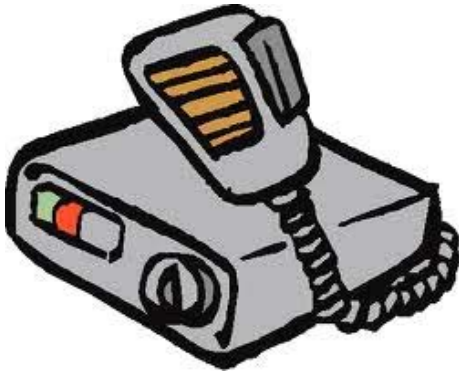


The money raised at the Silent Auction and the always fun-filled live-action Auction are not only a highlight of the Caravan... they are the "Cash Cows" that pour forth the "milk of human kindness" from an eclectic array of unusual items: "oldies but goodies," novelties, festive wine & food baskets, handmade crafts, unusual RV gadgets, new or "nearly new" items that are no longer needed by the donor. All auction items purchased in Mexico also benefit the local economy as well. Cash donations allows the Committee to buy materials volunteers need to repair things to improve standards of living in schools, shelters, and orphanages.

Donations are the source of soccer ball smiles by day and warm blankets on cold nights. Obsolete (but functional) laptops and tablets north of the border transform Third World Students into All World Contributors south of the border. The warm hearted, industrious people of Mexico deserve a chance to be what they can be... and well-placed donations provide that chance. Our Charity efforts provide the spark to motivate a generation of children to raise their expectations of what life can hold for them. The Mexican Connection provides cost effective adventures for members on the Caravan... and a way for members at home to participate with in-kind or cash contributions to turn a youngster's uncertain future into a newfound path of personal accomplishment.

Our Mexican Connection has built a reputation for fostering better relations between those living north and south of the border... which makes building better rally and caravan opportunities in future years easier. Everyone is invited to hear Charity presentations and participate in Charity evaluation visits. This is an excellent opportunity to experience firsthand a part of Mexico that few outsiders ever get to see... and could easily become your personal Caravan highlight. Some of the most rewarding and memorable aspects of our trips to Mexico have been as members of either the Charity Committee or Charity Team. Additional recommendations of needed donation items can be found in past Chapter 8 Newsletters and the Charity Section of our website, mexicanconnection08.com. The Joy of Charity makes everyone smile!





CB Radio Systems, a Mexican Connection Essential...Why???

by Pete Petrie

We all travel around the US without requiring the Citizen Band (CB) radios since we have our GPS, cell phones and Google Maps... thanks to the multitude of cell phone towers across America. But a large group of RVs travelling in a country like Mexico may find that cell towers are few and far between the more interesting places in Baja. With our CB radios, each rig has the capability to send and receive messages without the need for cell towers or GPS references. So, the purpose of this article is to provide a very basic description of CB radio systems and why they can be our best third world country travelling friend.

The Chapter 8 Parking Chairperson and Wagonmasters divide the 40+ rig Caravan into smaller groups to ensure safe and timely travel to each destination along the Caravan route. Each group will have a Group Leader and Tail Gunner (the first and last vehicle in each group) with the other RVs safely between. Groups can vary in size but usually are six to seven RVs. A group will be a mixture of RVs (trailers, fifth wheels, truck campers, Class A, B and C motorhomes) sufficiently spread out so that regular traffic can pass safely.

Getting the groups to each travel day's destination in a safe and timely manner is assured by timely and meaningful communication with every RV in the group. Communications can include updates on road conditions, approaching turns, topes (speed bumps), vehicle problems, fast approaching vehicles from the rear and approaching safe rest areas along the way. Since U.S. cell phones tend to be unreliable in Mexico, all communications while traveling in the group are more reliably using our CB radios. Since the Wine to Whales Baja Caravan has six fascinating Mexican venues... your CB radio will be your special link every mile of way to Guerrero Negro... and on the way back should you chose to join other Caravanners on the popular scenic routes back to the border.

While CB radios were more a fad quite a few years ago, today they are a vital link to know what is ahead (or coming up from behind) when exploring the scenic wonders of the Baja. You still can hear the truckers using them on the Interstates and a few of us RVers travelling off the beaten track. Some new to Chapter 8 have requested information on the basic composition of CB radio systems. A basic system is comprised of a CB radio, antenna, antenna mount, and coaxial cable. A brief description of each follows:

CB radio – All CB radios are limited by FCC regulations to 4 watts of transmitting power... no matter how much you pay for the radio... they all put out the same amount of power. Most CB radios come with a microphone, mounting bracket and power cord that plugs into 12 volts. A second choice is to buy a handheld CB radio which can be powered by batteries (some have an external power cord for a 12v. accessory port/cigarette lighter). The handheld CB radio has a small walkie-talkie type antenna limiting the range of the radio... so to meet Mexican Connection requirements, handheld CB radios must also have an exterior antenna to safely reach others in your group. Once spread out along the travel route, it is common for each RV in a travel group to relay a message received to the next RV.

Cont'd next page—>

Antenna – Without your antenna your radio can't receive or send messages. Since all CB radios are limited to 4 watts of power, the type and tuning of your antenna becomes the most critical aspect of superior communication. Most CB antennas use the metal on your vehicle as a “ground plane” that reflects the signal on to your antenna. Those of us with fiberglass rigs need to buy an “NGB” (No Ground Plane) antenna which uses a special length coaxial cable to supply the ground plane effect to a corresponding fiberglass antenna. Like the radio you have several types of antennas to choose from, the fiberglass antenna comes in several different lengths (3, 4 & 5 feet are the most common), the whip antenna (usually the tallest of the antennas) and the magnetic mount antenna. The best antenna is the one that best suits your CB and rig.

Antenna mount – You will need a mount to attach your antenna to the outside of the vehicle. With the magnetic mount antennas, the base of the antenna doubles as the antenna mount and the metallic surface becomes the ground plane. While metal surfaces give the best antenna reflectance, serviceably mounts can be attached on either side of a glass window or with a cable into the interior of the RV to the coaxial cable attached to the CB radio.

Coaxial (coax) Cable – This is the cable that connects your radio to your antenna. If you are using a magnetic mount antenna the coax cable is included with the antenna mount. CB radio coax usually comes in the common length of 18 feet. If you have extra cable don't cut it off, instead wrap it in a figure 8 and stow it security. This is especially important if you are using a NGP (No Ground Plane) antenna in a fiberglass rig. Cutting a coax cable can result in a CB radio that cannot be properly tuned. Once you put your CB radio system together, you will need to properly adjust your antenna to your vehicle. This process is called antenna tuning using a SWR meter. Some CB radios come with the SWR meter as part of the unit, most of the radios will require a separate SWR meter for tuning. Failing to tune your antenna may result in poor system performance. When the Caravan gets together at Potrero Campground, a SWR meter will be available for your use in tuning your antenna... along with the voice of experience from fellow SKPs. It is important to have all the basic CB radio parts installed and working when you arrive for there are no CB stores in the scenic Potrero hills.

I hope this article provides a better understanding of a CB radio system. If you have any questions, please email me at petrieae@earthlink.net. I will try to answer your questions. I am not a professional installer or engineer, just a member of the Mexican Connection who has used our CB radio to communicate in Mexico for many happy and safe expeditions.

2018 CARNAVAL IN ENSENADA —FEBRUARY 8-13, 2018



The 2018 Baja Wine to Whales Rally will have a chance to see Ensenada's big Carnival Celebration and at least one parade. The floats, color, enthusiasm is really spectacular!

So You Are Thinking About Bringing Your Pet To Baja!

by Sherry Pavlich



Technically, an International Health Certificate is required for all cats or dogs traveling with you to Mexico. This is a certificate issued by your veterinarian that must be on letterhead and issued within 10 DAYS before you are entering Mexico. It must include the following information:

1. The date and expiration of most recent rabies vaccination;
2. The owners name and address;
3. A description of the pet: species, age & sex;
4. That the pet has been examined and is free of contagious diseases;
5. And the veterinarian's license number.

In addition to the health certificate, dogs must also have a certificate showing they have had a rabies vaccination that is current and was issued at least 30 days prior to entry in Mexico.

Both dogs and cats are required to have proof from the veterinarian that the cat or dog is free from internal and external parasites, (tapeworms and ticks), and has been treated against these in the past six months.

Cats do not require vaccination paperwork, but will be subject to visual inspection at point of entry. Do not be surprised if a customs agent wants to see your dog(s) also.

You must present the original health certificate and a copy of the rabies certificate at your point of entry. Once you have presented the above information, an Animal Health Import Certificate will be issued to you for your pet(s).

We also recommend bringing proof of ownership such as registration paperwork with you. All pets are subject to inspection at ports of entry into Mexico and back into the U.S. and may be subject to further inspection if they appear ill.

Pets under the age of three months, (that haven't had all their vaccinations), are unfortunately not permitted to travel with you to Mexico.

To ensure that your pet enjoys our caravan also, please plan on taking their regular pet food with you, and any medications they might need. Do not assume the same brands will be available even in Ensenada. Please ask your Veterinarian about Heartworm protection, if your pet is not taking a medication to prevent that, since that disease is transferred by mosquitos. Bring an extra leash with you and do not let your pet drink unpurified water, or interact with local dogs who might not be vaccinated. That said, it should be a terrific adventure for us and our 4 legged friends!

Newsletter Story Submissions Invited! We're looking for stories for future issues! Stories or anecdotes related to a Chapter 8 Rally, activities, stores, restaurants you discovered in the host Mexican town, maybe a museum, getting your RV repaired or painted, renting a 4x4 or the great chicken barbeque place! A humorous story would be great and a couple photographs to enliven your story encouraged! Please email <Chap8newsletter@gmail.com>



— **Recent fuel prices**—Magna-16.6 pesos/L; Diesel 17.45 pesos/L

— **Mexican FMM** (tourist permit) prices usually go up on January 1.

— **Motorhomes TIP**—Temporary Import Permit—some border officials are asking for these in Baja when it used to be only required on the mainland. Just in case, have with you: your passport and copies; your FMM & copies; your motorhome registration and title copies only & if a lienholder, you need a letter from lienholder granting permission to take rig to Mexico. TIPs are usually good for 10 years and cost about \$50 US.

—The long-awaited new 6th edition (2017) of Mike and Terry Church's *Traveler's Guide to Camping Mexico's Baja*, the definitive road and camping guide to Baja is now available. Baja RVers need this guidebook! \$18.95 @ Amazon.

—The other new book is Jennifer Kramer's *Moon Baja Travel Guide* (2017) \$14.95 @ Amazon

—Did you know Baja's Highway 1, the Carretera Transpeninsular Benito Juarez or Transpeninsular Highway, 1711 KM/ 1063 miles long from the US border to Cabo San Lucas first opened in 1973? A VW bus carried a friend & me down Baja a week after the road opened—adventure!

Dias Feriados / Mexican National Holidays/Observances—Winter

Dec. 24—Noche Buena—Christmas Eve

Dec. 25—Día de Natividad—Christmas Day—National Holiday (NH)

Dec. 28—Día de los Santos Inocentes—Innocent Saints Day—practical jokes day!

Dec. 31—New Year's Eve—celebrations in town squares!

Jan. 1—Año Nuevo--New Year's Day (NH)

Jan. 6—Día de Los Reyes Magos—Epiphany

Feb. 2—Día de la Candelaria—Candle Masa—sweet tamales served!

Feb. 5—Día de la Constitución—Constitution Day—Mexico's 1917 Constitution (NH)

Feb. 14 —Día del Amor y Amistad—Valentine's Day

Feb. 19—Día del Ejercito—Army Day

Feb. 24—Día de la Bandera—Flag Day

Mar. 18—Anniversario de la Expropiación Petrolera—Mexican oil nationalized in 1930s

Mar. 21—Cumpleaños de Benito Juarez—Mexico's first & most revered President (NH)

Mar. 29, 30 & Apr. 1—Semana de Pascua—Easter Week —Thursday & Good Friday (NH)

Apr. 21—Heroica Defensa de Veracruz—Heroes defending after U.S. occupation in 1914!

A “REAL BAJA” GEM--San Ignacio, Baja California Sur

by Lin Hines

The small village of San Ignacio—population 700—92 miles south of Guerrero Negro or 567 miles from the U.S. border, is an amazing, historic place



filled with surprises! San Ignacio sits in a wide valley surrounded by lava flows from the nearby extinct Tres Vírgenes volcano and a lot of cactus. It certainly doesn't look like much when passing on Highway 1, but the large mounted grey whale skeleton at the intersection into town will give you a clue! Take the road into town and you'll shortly be in an incredible oasis in the desert with a large palm “forest” with over 100,000 date palm trees filling the valley floor, originally planted by the padres in the 1700s along with wine grapes,



oranges, corn, figs, olives and more. Year round water flows from springs and forms a large lagoon next to the road and irrigates the palms and crops. The town center is less than a mile from the highway and will carry you back to the 1700s origin of this beautiful village with its traditional Spanish colonial plaza, grand mission church,

adobe architecture and friendly people. San Ignacio is one of my favorite places and could be yours too!



Mission San Ignacio de Kadakaaman was founded in 1728 by Jesuit padres at the large Cochimi Indian village. The massive stone mission church with 4' thick volcanic rock walls was completed in 1786 by Dominican padres and used until 1840 when Mexico secularized the missions and

San Ignacio became a parish church and has been well kept up ever since. Be sure to go inside and be amazed by the main altar with gold leaf retablos and richly decorated walls. The mission sits on a classic colonial plaza shaded by 6 huge Indian laurel trees along with colonial-era adobe homes and buildings. The plaza is the center



of village social activities and fiestas like St. Ignacio's 24 hour Birthday Fiesta held in July and the annual Date Harvest Fiesta on July 31.



The free Museo de Pinturas Rupestres de San Ignacio run by INAH (Mexican federal government anthropology and history agency) just to the left of the church has a large scale replica of the world famous 500' long Cueva Pintada cave painting with giant 12' high persons painted in red and black plus many of the common desert animals including birds, whales and turtles along with Ignacio history exhibits. Permits and guide information must be obtained here to visit a few of the more than 400

cave painting sites comprising a UNESCO World Heritage site in the nearby San Francisco de la Sierra mountains. These cave paintings have been dated from 2000 to 5000 years old! All but one cave painting site require a several day mule trip into the pristine mountain wilderness guided by local rancheros with a lifetime of knowledge of the caves and area. It's on my bucket list!

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The village of San Ignacio is often regarded as “sleepy” and businesses are sometimes closed on warm days in the afternoon for “siesta” but the place is hopping between December and April when whalewatching season is on at Laguna San Ignacio, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. It’s also part of El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, established in 1988, Latin America’s largest wildlife sanctuary. Like the town, Laguna San Ignacio is undeveloped, with less than 100 residents who are mostly fishermen, then whalewatch guides in season. No condos, hotel, RV parks although there are several primitive whalewatch camps with overnight tent, eating and sanitary facilities right on the water. The lagoon is about 16 miles long and 5 miles wide and is shallow, warm and calm, the ideal birthing conditions for gray whales with no orca predators.

Gray whales do one of the longest mammal migrations—a 10,000 mile round trip from the Bering Sea to Baja’s lagoon and back! In one of our stays here in Whale Camp for several nights, we could hear the whales breathing and blowing a short distance away, from our tent!

The first friendly gray whale was discovered here in Laguna San Ignacio in winter 1972 by local fisherman Pachito Mayoral when a gray whale approached his panga repeatedly. Remember the grey whales had been hunted nearly to extinction earlier in the 1860s and were called “devil fish” for their fierce attacks on the whalers so the local fishermen feared deadly encounters. However this whale came under and up to Pachito’s panga, brought its head up to Pachito and allowed itself to be touched repeatedly without any sign of aggression! After telling and showing his fisherman friends about friendlies, Pachito pioneered panga-based whalewatching tours for visitors! And Laguna San Ignacio remains the home of the most numerous friendly gray whales! Most visitors on these 22’ panga trips are fortunate enough to have both adult and baby grey whales swim up to the boat and allow visitors



tors to “pet” them while looking into their eyes and seeing their baleen. The whales definitely seem to enjoy the contact and regularly mother whales swim under the babies and lift them up to get acquainted with people. It is an absolutely thrilling experience to have a 45’ long 40 ton mother whale swim to the boat for her own turn with the turistas then push her 18’ baby over to visit you! Generally people book a whalewatch tour in town on the plaza from one of the 3-4 vendors and are driven out in vans the 40 miles west of town to Laguna San Ignacio. Laguna San Ignacio is one of the 3 gray whale birthing lagoons for the eastern Pacific gray whale. The other 2 are Guerrero Negro Scammon’s Lagoon and Puerto Adolfo Lopez Mateos on Bahía Magdalena south. It’s one of those experiences of a lifetime!

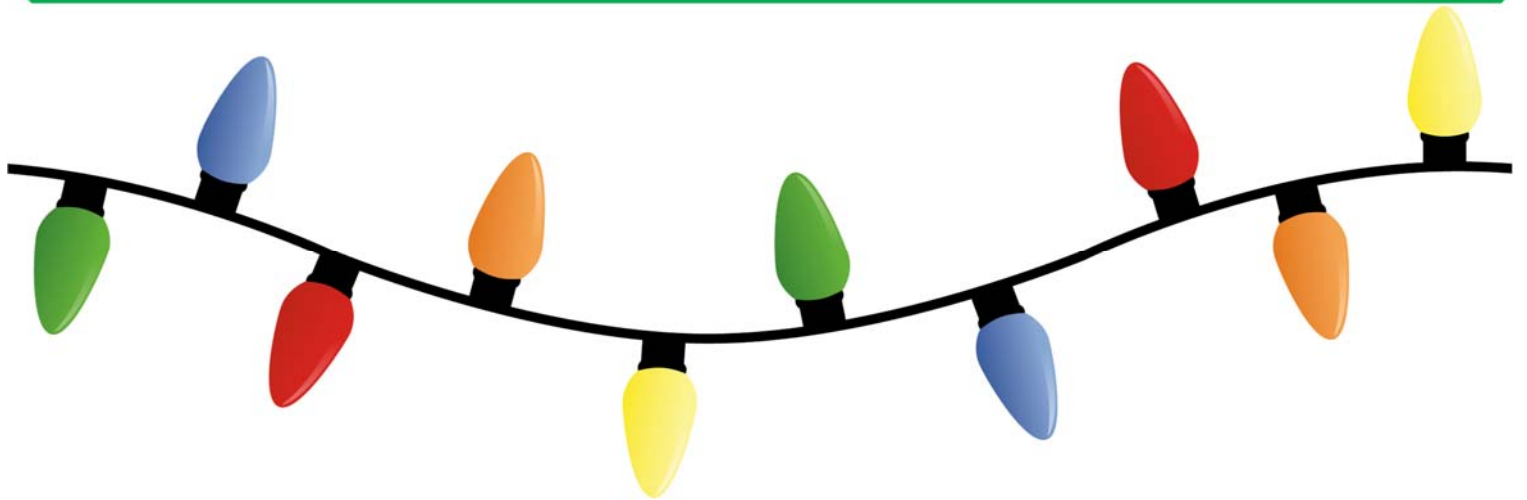
There are several RV parks in San Ignacio including several small ones in the palm groves. Beware of backing into a palm tree when parking there; I have experience! The best is Rice and Beans, a combination small hotel, a good restaurant and bar and 29 RV hookup spaces. There are 3 hotels now, several small B&Bs and 3-4 small cafes and a taco stand on the plaza. A large Pemex, bus terminal and a vehicle repair shop out on the highway, several small grocery shops with hardware etc. near the plaza.



If you’re interested in history, Casa Leree, a historic family home just off the plaza has a terrific garden and the wonderful San Ignacio historical photo archive of 940 photographs plus has books in English, artisan carvings and leatherwork for sale and a free town and trail map.



There’s lots more to discover simply by wandering around the village, maybe buy a date cake, a couple tacos or check out tours of the area at Kuyima on the Plaza. San Ignacio makes a great overnight or longer stop after a long trip down the Baja Peninsula! It’s Old Mexico at its best! I highly recommend it!



*Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!*