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San Jose del Cabo

Resting at the tip of the Baja Peninsula are the sparkling resorts of Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo, known as "the capes," or Los Cabos (Lows-KAH-bows) in Spanish.

Once used as a frequent provision stop for pirates awaiting passage of the Manila Galleons, Los Cabos is today headed for resort stardom. In the last ten years it has evolved from a sleepy hide-away for recluse fishermen and yacht owners, into one of Mexico's most popular resort destinations. This is due largely to improved road and air access, and heavy investment by FONATUR (the government's agency in charge of new resort development) and the private sector.

Los Cabos differs in many respects from its Mexican Riviera counterparts. Because of its geographic separation and isolation from mainland Mexico, Los Cabos' visitor industry grew up with closer ties to the U.S. (mostly California) than to the rest of Mexico. A conspicuous "north-of-the-border" atmosphere and attitude give the area an appealing cultural duality. American products fill store shelves, dollars are the preferred currency, U.S.-made cars are everywhere, and resort development (until recently) has been dominated by North American enterprises. Nonetheless, there is no denying the resort's strong Mexico-by-the-sea ambiance.

It is also unique in its striking desert landscape, dry climate, and "great outdoors" unspoiled beauty. Visitors are surrounded by a dramatic coupling of endless cactus desert, backed by vermilion mountains, and bordered by miles of white sandy beach and clear, azure waters.

The resort is one of Mexico' largest in terms of its layout. Basically there are three areas of concentration. San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas anchor the area's resort strip. The two towns are separated by the Corridor region, a heavenly stretch of lovely beaches, sprinkled with much of the area's new resort development.

San Jose del Cabo is a pleasant city of meandering streets, lush palm groves, and the languid pace of a colonial village. The area was first visited by Cortés himself in 1535. But it was missionary zeal, not conquistadors, that first brought European civilization to San José. A Jesuit mission was built in 1730 to indoctrinate the Pericu Indians of the region. In the nineteenth century San José slowly evolved into a modest center of commerce for passing ships. Today it is a town of 24,000 people that has a handsome Municipal Palace, charming courtyard restaurants, shops, boutiques, and a lovely tropical estuary. The atmosphere here is subdued compared with the more rowdy town of Cabo San Lucas.



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