



Great Winter Escapes

The Real Thing: Todos Santos, Mexico

This is the town Laguna Beach always wanted to be: a seaside artist retreat steeped in an historic Old California setting. (California's history is rooted in these small Baja California villages.) Everywhere you turn, there's a patch of antiquity waiting to be sketched: the mission church facing a centuries-old plaza, ruins of an old sugarcane mill, weather-beaten adobe walls painted in vibrant colors. "Todos Santos has a quality of light equal to Taos or the High Andes in Peru," says Jill Logan, an artist who owns one of the 15 art galleries here (more per capita than any town in Mexico). Inspired by their surroundings, this community of 4,000—including hundreds of expats—works hard to preserve them. Zoning regulations are in place to protect Todos Santos from the kind of development consuming Cabo San Lucas 43 miles to the south, while sustaining its historic appeal. A former sugar baron's mansion became the Todos Santos Inn, a chic bed-and-breakfast, while a gutted sugar warehouse was transformed into Los Adobes, serving haute Mexican food. Since this is Baja, you can always pick up traditional fish tacos at a street stand on your way out of town. The road south leads to the kind of sweeping, development-free beaches that disappeared from California decades ago: Pelicans wheel overhead, whales spout on the horizon, a sprinkling of surfers bob in the swell. The High: Check out the historic Casa de Cultura near the main plaza for artist workshops and cultural events. The Low: Even when the surf looks calm, riptides plague most beaches here.