



Take a Two-Nation Vacation

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During tight economic times travel abroad seems out of reach, but with some careful planning, there's a way to achieve a 2-for-1: San Diego, California and Rosarito, Mexico.

San Diego has long been considered a favorite vacation spot, and with good reason. The area abounds with great food, culture, beaches and activities.

Balboa Park was originally built for the first U.S. World's Fair, the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. If you're into photography, you'll find some great examples of mission architecture on beautifully landscaped grounds. You can walk or bike around the park, choose one of the 25 museums and attractions, see a play, ride a carousel, or just enjoy the street performers.

Close to San Diego is La Jolla, a Mediterranean-style beach town perched atop steep cliffs flanking the ocean. You can walk from one end of the beach to the cove which hosts live seals basking in the sun. Snorkel in the crystal clear turquoise waters, wade in the tide pools, surf the waves, or kayak into one of the seven sea caves are other options.

Across from the beach are a variety of boutique shops and trendy restaurants. Not to be missed is Alfonso's, a family-owned authentic Mexican restaurant which serves pitchers of high-octane margaritas with a menu of delectable cuisine snatched straight from the family vaults.

Old Town is another place to spend a pleasurable afternoon taking in California history either with a tour or just explore on your own. Fiesta de Reyes is a vibrant plaza designed to look like old Mexico including a festive mariachi band. There's a sheriff's museum, stagecoach museum, and the "haunted" Whaley House, built on the site of the Old Town gallows, reported to be home to the spirit of Yankee Jim Robinson, who was hung from the gallows in 1852. You will also find a variety of charming restaurants where you can grab a taco and a Corona.

The Catamaran Resort & Spa on the Mission Bay across from the beach is within walking distance to many activities, restaurants and shopping. The tropical design of the hotel and lush, well-kept gardens yield an Asian feel to the resort.

Just an hour's drive south of San Diego are the white sandy beaches of Rosarito, a friendly, laid-back beach town in Baja, Mexico. Nonviolent Rosario, which has suffered unfairly from the reputation of mainland Mexico's troubled border cities, is a bargain and reemerging in tourists' radar.

There is no place better to stay than the historic and charming Rosarito Beach Hotel. Entering the foyer of this reasonably-priced gem is like stepping into a magical world of days gone by. This resort was made popular mid-century as a retreat that catered to Mexican presidents and Hollywood stars, and the little beach town grew around it. Most rooms have an ocean view, and there's great dining at Azteca, a lounge, a Mexican floorshow, and spa. The hotel also offers a "Fast Pass" for their guests, for priority border lane crossing back to the U.S.



Activities include spectacular sunsets at the pier, surfing, paddle-boarding, horseback-riding, and bargaining in the open air markets of Mercado de Artesanias.

A stop at the small fishing village of Puerto Nuevo, just south of Rosarito is a must. Boasting 30 restaurants and shops, it claims to serve more lobsters than anyplace in the world. Puerto Nuevo II is owned by one of the founding families of the village and the lobster preparation here is a science – perfect texture, drenched in butter and served with homemade tortillas whose heavenly aroma permeates the establishment and beyond.