



# Sea Kayaking in Baja

An Ocean Paddling Adventure in North Western Mexico  
Article and images by Oily Sanders

Level 5 Sea Kayaking Coach Oily Sanders discovers why the Baja peninsula really is one of the best places in the world to paddle a sea kayak...

The snorkelling really is truly tremendous too, so taking a mask is essential, crystal clear waters and colourful fish everywhere

**B**aja California, a peninsula in North Western Mexico regularly comes up as one of the best ten locations to go sea kayaking. I don't really know who comes up with these lists and is very subjective. But I know I like isolation and remote places, however this time around my partner wanted a nice holiday with some friends, so for once I was out of the loop in the trip organisation, my role was to make the decisions on the sea once we were there, and so it was that the lure of the list saw us boarding a plane Baja bound...

Arriving in Loreto I knew very little, as everything had been booked, although I had previously met Ginni, albeit briefly, who runs Sea Kayak Baja, and who had an excellent fleet of Nigel Dennis sea boats.

Loreto has a nice feel to it, the people are friendly and there is a good selection of bars and restaurants to suit all pockets and the main part of the town has a very Spanish feel to it. The views are tremendous with the outlying islands and coastal mountains complementing each other.

**Getting Set**  
We had to register an itinerary with the park authorities, and luckily Ginni had come up with some good suggestions, we also had to pay for fishing permits, although I found out later you shouldn't fish from kayaks! You also have to carry all your own water and we'd planned for two litres a day due to the temperature, so the boats were reasonably full even for an eight-

day trip. We got a drop off and headed out to Carmen Island. After a short paddle we landed on the southern tip of Carmen, a good spot with commanding views. It was here we got a taste of the kind of wildlife that Baja is famous for. Pelicans feeding, turkey vultures, a pod of Orcas swimming by and even an encounter with a tarantula while cooking (one of the team was terrified by spiders so I had to keep quiet and push it away into the undergrowth.)

So it had a really isolated feel to it even though we were not that far from the mainland.

**Wild Camping**  
The sea kayak tourism that Baja enjoys has been effected by the recession just like anywhere else and the big groups of Americans being guided around the region has fallen, this was good for us as the usual campsites that are used were very quiet, we only saw one other group, and had every campsite to ourselves!

We then paddled up the east coast of Carmen and two particular campsites really stuck in my mind. One was a small sheltered beach surrounded by cliffs of fossilised seashells and the second had a couple of palm trees, an amazing view, beautiful sunsets and an encounter with a moray eel intent on having a meal of our feet!

Frigate birds circled overhead and we enjoyed the, now usual, pelican feeding displays; it was so warm we only put up the tent liner, which also acted as a barrier to the hungry mosquitoes and jiggers that came out in the evening till the sun went down.

The snorkelling really is truly tremendous too, so taking a mask is essential, crystal clear waters and colourful fish everywhere.

**Perfect Isolation**  
The weather pattern was fairly stable; but when it blows it tends to pick up for a couple of days then clear up. The coastal area was littered with hurricane debris, not from the wind, but the heavy rain that fell and washed debris down the rivers and along the coast; many of the road bridges had been washed away in an impressive display of the power of nature.

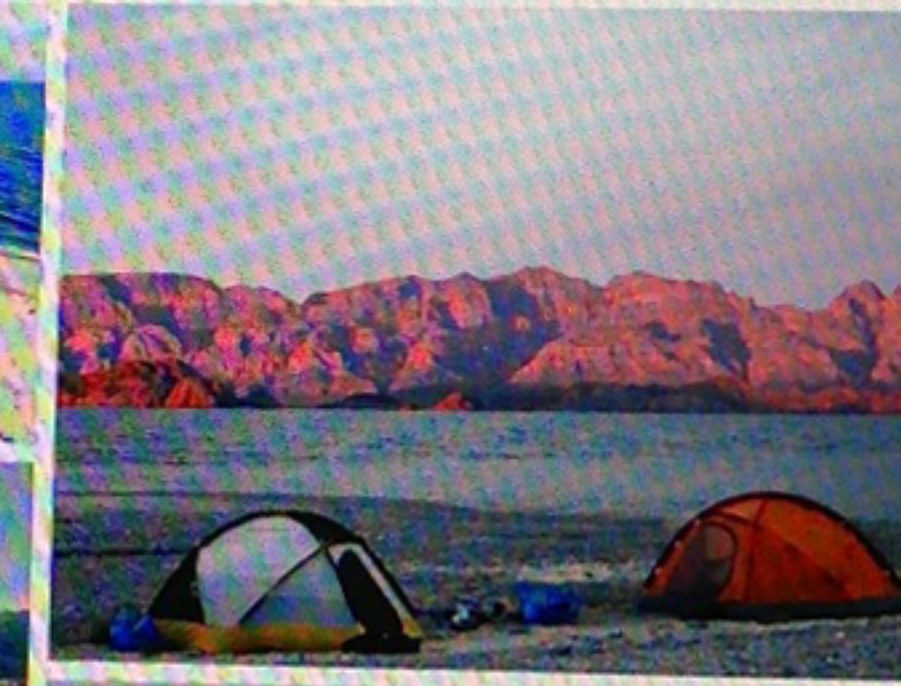
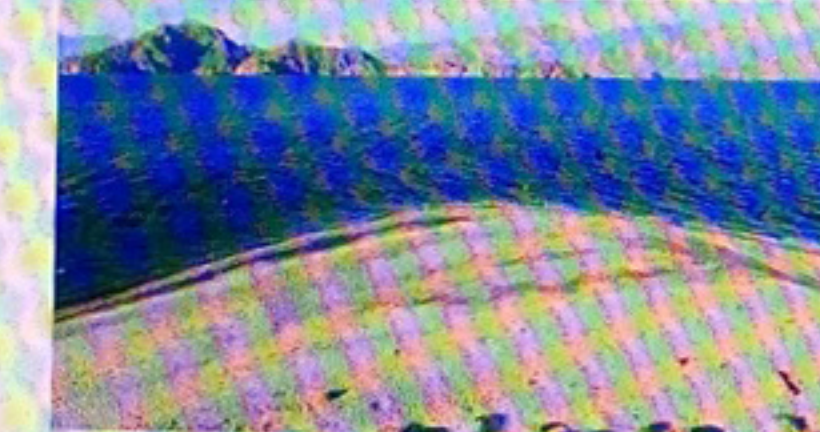
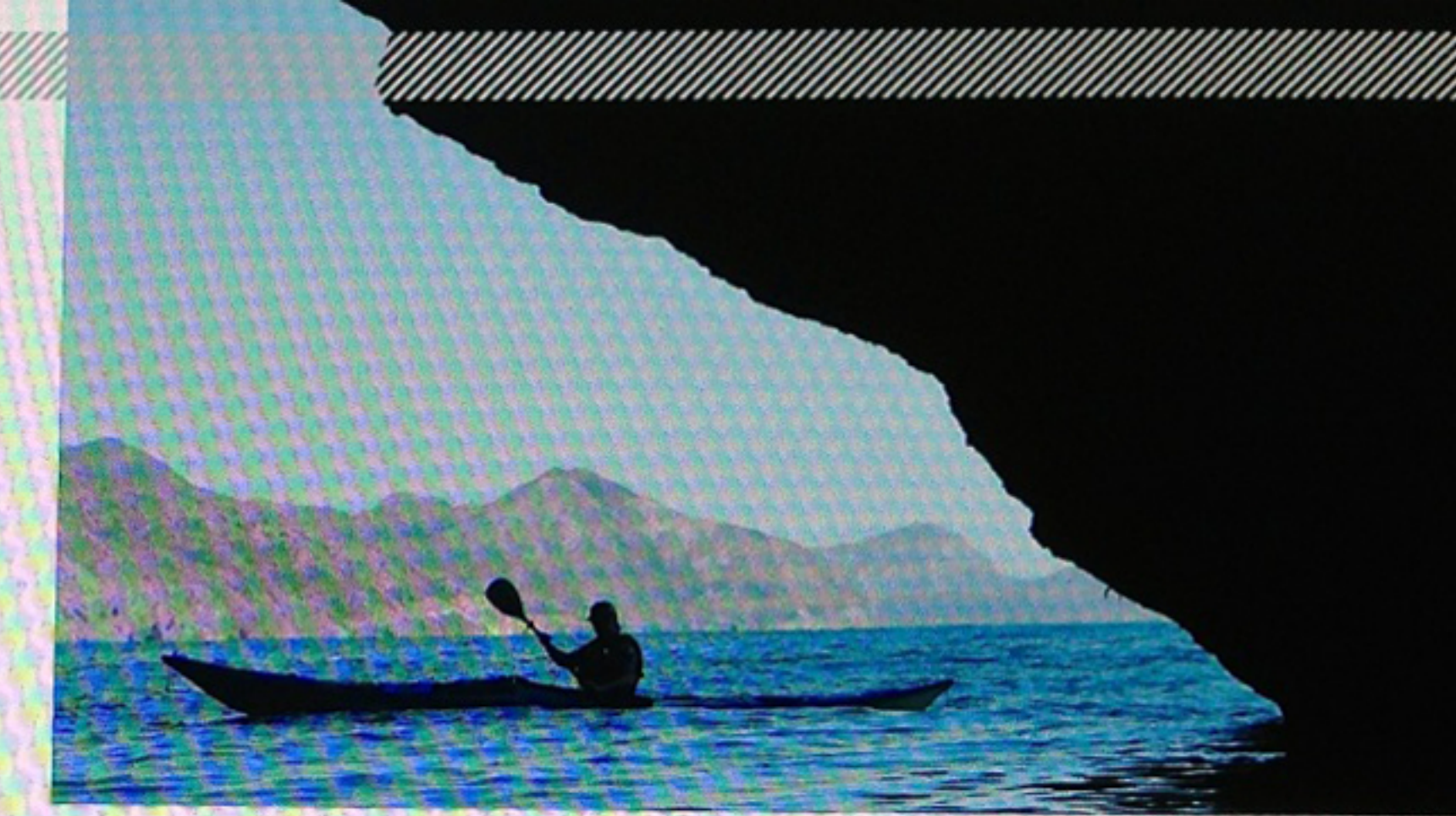
We had a few more days of isolated campsites and sandy beaches, encounters with scorpions and some fishing from the kayaks. Carmen is a private island with a hunting

**INFO**  
**Getting There**  
From the UK you need to get a flight to Los Angeles, then Alaskan Air fly down to Loreto, but be aware its not a daily flight and they do get cancelled sometimes.

**Loreto**  
A picturesque and friendly town with lots of good restaurants, seafood being a particular speciality. Great margaritas served in the main square!

**Sea Kayak Hire**  
Sea Kayak Baja has the best range of NDK boats. Their office is on the main street and they offer various packages depending on your ability and budget.

**Other Activities**  
Scuba diving and sports fishing. Local companies can offer one-day courses and arrange sports fishing trips, both of which are great, and also hiking trips and bike hire.



lodge at its northern tip. They don't mind you landing and camping, but you are not supposed to explore inland, this is because they hunt longhorn sheep, which have been introduced, and don't want the sheep to get used to humans as it would ruin the hunting!

Fresh water was an issue, but we were lucky in the fact that there was a spring on the west side of Carmen. When we found it, there was a hose with a bung in it, we took this out and the pressure was amazing. A true find, we hosed each other down, a welcome relief from the, sometimes, oppressive heat.

There was relatively little boat traffic on our trip, so it had a really isolated feel to it even though we were not that far from the mainland.

**Margarita Time**  
We had arranged a pick up from our starting point, which arrived bang on time, and we got dropped back into Loreto, for a shower, and later the awesome margaritas sold in the town! We also went on a boat fishing trip and had an



**ABOUT THE author**  
Oily, a Level 5 Sea Coach and MTC, runs his own coaching company. He combines his job of teaching and guiding others to paddle with a passion for exploration. A climber and paddler, Oily has been heading out on expeditions for over two decades, both in the mountains or on the sea. More recently Oily has been combining sea kayaking and climbing to do first ascents in Greenland. Oily always has a trip in store as it's high on desert coffee and live on solar boat adventures! For more info check out [www.rockandseadventures.co.uk](http://www.rockandseadventures.co.uk)



amazing encounter with a pod of sperm whales, we got very close and also watched them breaching in the distance. I have to say I'm not sure I would want to encounter them in a kayak!

If you want a sea kayaking break, to warm weather, stunning scenery, breathtaking wildlife and truly friendly people, then Baja lives up to its billing and really is as good a sea kayaking destination as those top ten lists say it is!

For more great sea kayaking articles, sea kayak reviews and the latest sea kayaking videos point your bow to [www.canoe-kayak.co.uk](http://www.canoe-kayak.co.uk)