

Photo Itinerary...

## The Landscapes of Cabo Pulmo

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When someone asks me to name my favorite place to photograph abroad, I usually rattle off three or four locations, fully aware that I did not exactly answer the question. I have come to realize that my “favorite place” is not so much a place, but a type of location. Although I enjoy photographing the usual icons as much as the next photographer, I prefer places that are a little off the beaten path and under-photographed, where I can capture the beauty of nature without previously-taken images popping into my mind. Cabo Pulmo, in Mexico’s state of Baja California Sur (BCS), is one such place.

Cabo Pulmo (“Pulmo” being a corrupted version of the local Guaiacuro word for “where the mountain runs into the sea”) is a sleepy village on the Sea of Cortez. To the East, directly before the village, is the Bahía Pulmo (Pulmo Bay), with the sea just beyond. To the West, within walking distance, is the Sierra de La Laguna (The Lagoon Mountain Range). The mountains here are covered with cacti forests. Botanically speaking, this area’s desert lands belong to the Sonoran Desert, which extends across northwestern Mexico into parts of southeastern California and southern Arizona. The combination of ocean, cacti deserts, beaches and spectacular rock formations make this little-visited area a perfect location for superb landscape photography.



### Equipment

To capture the grand landscape of ocean and sky, bring your wide-to-normal zoom lens. If you want to isolate certain portions of the landscape (a silhouette of a cactus against a colorful sky, for example), bring your longer focal length lenses. A polarizer will also be useful if the day dawns clear and you wish to darken the sky a bit, and don’t forget a split neutral density filter to knock down the lighter skies of early morning and later afternoon. If you visit during the spring (March-April), also bring a macro lens for close ups of cacti flowers. And if you are a large-format enthusiast, bring the big camera with you. This area’s sunrises and vast expanses practically beg for the more contemplative, big-format treatment. Bring more film than you think you will need; quality film is hard to find even in Los Cabos and BCS’ capital, La Paz.



### Subjects

Exploring the beaches near Cabo Pulmo can be as easy as walking out of your bungalow and heading north or south. To the north is the cape itself, and to the south are some rock formations that can be used as a foreground in your composition. Early in the morning, as the tide recedes, the many holes in these rocks will be filled with water, yet another compositional element you can use to your advantage.

The desert to the west can also be explored on foot. Ask at the Cabo Pulmo Beach Resort for the local trail that starts about 15 minutes from the hotel. The five-mile loop takes you through a beautiful cacti forest as you climb the gently sloping trail to the crest

of the hike (which I named "Pulmo Pass"); here you will be rewarded with spectacular views of the Sea of Cortez. If you are an early riser, try to climb to "Pulmo Pass" before sunrise (it should take less than one hour), and enjoy the sun's daily spectacle from this vantage point.

Between Cabo Pulmo and the next village to the South, Los Frailes (The Friars), there are also some beautiful and secluded beaches with surreal rock formations. There are no signs to these beaches, so you may have to drive down a sandy path or two before you find one to your liking. The unmarked beaches are best explored by car, and the roads are passable even in a regular rental car.

### **If you go...**

Cabo Pulmo is about two hours by car from the Los Cabos International Airport (where you are likely to arrive). The village consists of a few houses, a hotel, a couple of dive shops and a handful of restaurants (eat dinner at Nancy's). If you intend to spend a night or two in Cabo Pulmo (and you should), the Cabo Pulmo Beach Resort offers 32 solar-powered bungalows with kitchens from \$75 per night/double (November-April). The hotel also offers scuba diving, snorkeling, and kayaking trips, and has equipment for rent. (For more information visit [www.remotegetaways.com/cpbr.htm](http://www.remotegetaways.com/cpbr.htm)). You will encounter the best weather from November through April. On the way to Cabo Pulmo, make sure to stop at a grocery store and stock up on food and drink for your stay, as the available sources of provisions are skimpy.



### *About the images...*

- Cactus - EOS3 with Canon 16-35 wide angle zoom lens; Tiffen 812 filter and circular polarizer; .4 sec. @f16.
- Rocks, ocean and sky - EOS3 with Canon 28-135 zoom lens; Tiffen 812 filter; Lee 2-stop split neutral density filter; 1 sec. @ f8.
- Rocks, beach, butte and sky - Pentax 645NII medium format camera with Pentax 45-85 FA zoom lens (@ 60mm); Tiffen 812 (warming filter); 1/4 sec. @ f22.

*Editor's Note* - Efraín M. Padró resides in Denver, Colorado and operates a part-time freelance writing/photography business called Padró Images. Be sure to visit his web site at [www.padroimages.com](http://www.padroimages.com).

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