

ENSENADA



Why we love Ensenada

- Its abundant activities, from wine-tasting to whale-spotting.
- Its dazzling restaurants at every price point.
- And did we mention the sunsets?

Alfonso Susarrey had a simple dream: Buy a 15-foot skiff. That humble boat would allow him to take visitors out into the waters of Ensenada, Mexico, his home. In 1960, he made this dream a reality. He'd take just two guests out at a time to share in the pleasures of fresh sea air, bobbing waves, and a local catch.

Over the next 60 years, Susarrey and his son Sergio watched from their vessel as Ensenada flourished and evolved, wrapping around the bay. Today, the younger Susarrey still offers visitors the chance to tap into the joys of sunshine and saltwater on hugely popular tours. But now that's just a fragment of what this area can offer.



Sergio Susarrey

"Ensenada is getting more well-known as an important culinary center. People come out for the wine country, and many visitors come for sportfishing," Susarrey says. That means if you're visiting in a group, everyone can pursue their own definition of paradise.

Susarrey agrees. "That's what I love," he says about the area's diverse attractions. "Maybe you take a ride down to the beach, explore along the boardwalk, relax at the hotels, there's plenty of good dining." He pauses for a moment and simply adds, "It's a very lovable city."

If you fall for Ensenada, you'll have plenty of company. It's the perfect place to keep your whole squad happy, offering everything from cultural outings to natural wonders. However you spend your day, make time to indulge in freshly caught seafood by the waterfront, which is still as dreamy as when the elder Susarrey first set sail.

—[Stacey Leasca](#), *SoCal's Senior WeekENDER Guide*

Map of the area



1. Sergio's Sport Fishing
2. Mercado de Mariscos
3. Museo de Historia
4. Cantina Hussongs
5. La Guerrerense
6. Boules
7. Raw Oyster Bar
8. Tacos Mi Ranchito El Fenix
9. Torre Lucerna Hotel
10. La Villa de Adelina
11. Punta Morro

Things to do



Santo Tomas Winery

Need something to entertain every whim? Find an activity for all kinds of travelers below.

Oenophiles, sip on varietals at [Santo Tomas Winery](#): Just a few miles drive outside the center of town, Bodegas de Santo Tomás offers visitors the chance to sip and savor expertly grown grapes. For more than 130 years, the vintners at Santo Tomas winery have worked the land to bring people a taste of Mother Nature's bounty. Their work shines through in premium cabernet, Syrah, chardonnay, and even the vineyard's own artisanal olive oils.

Wildlife aficionados, spot whales with [Sergio's Sport Fishing](#): Ensenada's position along the Pacific coast of Baja California makes it the perfect place to head out and spot ocean wildlife in migration. From December through April, hop aboard a whale-watching trip with Sergio's Sport Fishing to see how many gray whales you can count as these stunning marine mammals make their way to Alaska and back again. (And you thought you had a long commute!)



Mercado de Mariscos (L), La Bufadora (R)

Foodies, shop the local merchants at [Mercado de Mariscos](#): Since the 1950s, Mercado de Mariscos (also known as Mercado Negro or "black market") has served local families for all their seafood needs. But these days, travelers also swing by to experience the thrill of the daily catch and the hum of the marketplace bustle. Purchase tuna, marlin, horse mackerel, white fish, sole, shark, or other catches straight from the people who reeled it in that day.

Culture vultures, take in regional history at the [Museo de Historia](#): The Ensenada History Museum may be small in stature, but it's big in heart. Its mission to promote local historical heritage is evident through its exhibitions, including the "Indigenous people of Baja California," "European Missionaries and Explorers," and an entire room dedicated to mining in Real del Castillo. Visitors can head in for a group tour or wander around to unearth a deeper level of Ensenada's story.

Nature lovers, seek out the geological wonder of [La Bufadora](#): A few miles south of the center of Ensenada sits a glorious natural wonder that could give Old Faithful some competition. Considered the second-largest marine geyser in the world, La Bufadora—or "the blowhole"—roquets water out of a submerged cave upwards about 100 feet in the air. The result is liquid fireworks. Don't worry about timing your visit for one of its explosive moments, as the blowhole tends to erupt about every 20 seconds.

Spots to eat and drink



Raw Oyster Bar

Picky eaters in your group? Ensenada has dishes for every taste.

For the ultimate street food, [La Guerrense](#): Blame Anthony Bourdain for the line here. This cart and restaurant has been in operation since 1960, but after Bourdain dubbed the cart's tostadas one of the best in the world on his show "No Reservations," the crowds kept coming. Still, delights like sea snail ceviche, sea urchin, and codfish tostadas are worth it. And once you try Sabina Bandera creations, you may agree with Bourdain when he called her "a genius."

For upscale dining, [Boules](#): For a special evening out in Ensenada, snag a reservation at Boules, a super-charming breezy spot attached to the Contra wine shop. But good luck trying to narrow down your order. The entire menu is full of show-stopping dishes—all the more reason to come with a group, so you can sample a bit of everything. Start by ordering a seafood risotto, flank state tacos, and yellowtail sashimi. Pair it with a local bottle of wine (or two) for good measure.



Boules (L), Cantina Hussongs (R)

For the original margarita, [Cantina Hussongs](#): Story time: Back in the late 1800s John Hussong made his way to Ensenada as part of the gold rush. But as it turned out, his fame wouldn't come from mining but from margaritas. After inheriting a bar from a traveling friend, he took over as owner. Decades later in 1941, bartender Don Carlos Orozco mixed up tequila, damiana, and lime served over ice in a salt-rimmed glass. The infamous drink is now the stuff of legend, and Hussong's name is forever connected to the delicious concoction.

For a quick seafood snack, [Raw Oyster Bar](#): Forget your standard shells-on-shaved-ice oyster bar. Chef Melissa Navarro is concocting something singular here, changing everyone's perceptions of what oysters can be. Her menu includes battered oysters in squid ink, oyster croquettes, and classic oyster shots. For anyone feeling a bit more peckish, Navarro also offers heftier meals like grilled octopus queso tacos, tostadas, and more.

For a tried-and-true Baja fish taco, [Tacos Mi Ranchito El Fenix](#): The casual roadside restaurant Tacos Mi Ranchito is hiding a major secret—it's got the best Baja-style fish tacos for miles around. Unpretentious and unencumbered, Mi Ranchito crafts a Baja fish taco with the perfect crunch on the outside and a soft and tender inside. Warning: This will ruin you for all other Baja-style fish tacos, but it's still worth every bite.

Places to stay



Encuentro Guadalupe

Find a place to stay that meets every budget and travel criteria.

For boutique lovers, [La Villa de Adelina](#): Book a stay at La Villa de Adelina for some undivided personal attention. The bed-and-breakfast comes with just four bedrooms that will make visitors feel like they are sleeping over at a dear friend's home—if that friend attended to your every whim and desire. The B&B is also available for complete rent-outs, in case you want to bring your entire family along.

For luxury devotees, [Punta Morro](#): Want to soak in the good life in Ensenada? Book an overnight at Punta Morro. This oceanfront hotel piles on the lavish amenities: suites with balconies overlooking the bay, a fine-dining restaurant serving lobster enchiladas, a spa offering massages in an oceanfront gazebo, plus oodles more. And, because it's located just a few minutes from the center of town, the location makes a great launchpad to visit nearby points of interest.

For budget seekers, [Torre Lucerna Hotel](#): Ensenada's magnificent surroundings are priceless. But a stay here doesn't have to cost a fortune. Book a room at Torre Lucerna Hotel for under \$200, where mountain and ocean views abound. The comfortable hotel comes with a rooftop pool and bar, both of which are worthy of a sunset visit for a dip or a sip.



Punta Morro (L), La Villa del Valle (R)

For eco aficionados, [Encuentro Guadalupe](#): "Unique" doesn't do justice to Encuentro Guadalupe. The hotel, located in the nearby Guadalupe Valley, invites visitors to spend the night in an eco-loft, a boxy enclosure of steel, glass, and wood that's lifted off the ground on metal stilts. Each unit comes with crisp white bedding, shining concrete floors, and windows that open up to the surrounding landscape. The lofts also have a private terrace, ideal for stargazing all night long. But guests are still welcome to access the hotel's common spaces, if they want to come back down to earth to mingle.

For major locavores, [La Villa del Valle](#): Just 15 minutes from the coast at Ensenada sits La Villa del Valle, a small luxury property surrounded by its own mini complex on 70 acres of land. Together with the inn, guests can explore a winery and a world-class restaurant, Corazón de Tierra, that uses ingredients from its own organic vegetable garden. All this reflects La Villa de Valle's values, honoring locally made foods, wines, and even beauty products. Yes, the lavender fields surrounding the hotel aren't just ornamental, they're used in the Baja Botanica bath products.

Getting there

Getting to Ensenada from downtown Los Angeles is pretty straightforward. Hop on the I-5 S to the I-805 S until you hit the border. After passing the checkpoint, head to Av. Vía Rápida Pte. in Zona Urbana Rio Tijuana, Tijuana, México. Take the exit toward Aeropuerto/Rosarito from Av. Vía Rápida Pte then merge onto Tijuana-Ensenada/México-1D and keep going until you reach your destination. The whole thing takes around four hours with traffic. Don't forget your passport and a little cash as this is a toll road.

Listen to

For a longish drive like this, you're going to need something gripping to pass the time. The podcast "[Tales from Baja](#)" delivers. Hosts Adriana and Dominic introduce listeners to a new local every episode, from winery owners to restaurateurs to local bands. Download a few episodes and watch the miles fly by. You may even find yourself plotting a pitstop to visit a few of the show's subjects.

Weekend plans. Shared.

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