

**Cabo San Lucus Surf Instructors Course  
May/June 2008  
By Bruce "Snake" Gabrielson**

Following weeks of cold wet weather at home in Maryland, my wife and I were really looking forward to spending 5 days in Cabo San Lucus with Ruben Cota Manriquez, Alejandro Olea Gonzalez (Alec), and members of the Baja Surf instructors Association. Ruben and Alec are owners of Costa Azule Surfboards, one of Baja's premier surf shops and surf schools. The shop is located across the street from two great breaks, The Rock and Old Mans, near San Jose on the tip of Baja. I had been invited down to present the National Surf Schools and Instructors Association (NSSIA) instructor's certification clinic to a core group of Baja's top professional surf instructors.



Arriving on Thursday, May 29, we spent the first night seeing the sights around the maul in San Jose and resting up after our long flight from Baltimore. Next morning, two instructors from Costa Azule, Aide Rosas and Hector Mendivil, showed up to take us down to the shop to meet the locals, see their breaks, catch a wave and finally on to the

resort hotel near the marina in Cabo San Lucus where we were staying. Ruben and Alec were not arriving until Friday, so the first day we stayed close to the shop area.

The Costa Azule Shop is right on the main highway to Cabo San Lucus, slightly east from Mike Doyle's art studio. I hadn't seen Mike since surf EXPO in Orlando in January, and wouldn't you know it, he just happened to be fixing his for sale sign when we drove up to check the waves out at Old Mans.

I walked over to help, little realizing that the nasty little sharp bush in front of the sign would tear uncovered skin apart. When we finished I looked down and couldn't believe I was bleeding from several micro-cuts. They don't have a shark problem in the area, but I cleaned the blood out anyway just for my piece of mind. Mike was heading out to his place in the



country, and the waves were clean and just overhead at the point, so I grabbed one of the Olea boards from the shop and headed out for a short session with the locals at Old Mans.

There are some very good local surfers starting to develop in that part of the world. On my only pervious trip in 1972, there weren't many surfers in the water, and most like myself were from the US. Now days it still isn't crowded, but there are surfers from all over the world in the area all the time. With swells hitting great breaks either on the Sea of Cortez or the Pacific side all year long, and with water temps in the 70s and air temps in the 90s consistently, I can understand how the area has evolved into a surfing hot spot and destination for many of the worlds best.



I'm getting a little too old to fight for many of the best overhead set waves that rolled through every few minutes, but still managed to grab a few long rights before heading in tired and sore but happy from the long paddles. The board I used was a 9' 6" rounded pin, perfect for the rolling point breaks waves.

It was getting later in the day by time we finished our session, so my wife and I headed back to our hotel, cleaned up, and took a stroll sight seeing in Cabo San Lucus. The town itself has changed drastically since my last visit. Now there is a modern harbor full or pricy boats, tons of new resort hotels, and plenty of great places to eat, drink, and be merry. We did the tourist things ending up at a local down town hangout for dinner.

Saturday morning Ruben, Alec and I, plus one of Alec's instructors Aide, got in an early session at the Rock before heading over to the hotel for the clinic. The Rock is slightly east of Old Mans, but still in the general area. The swell had dropped a little from the



previous day, but we each managed to get in some nice waves. There were a few inexperienced locals in the water that made me a little nervous about getting in front of them, but other then that everything went well.

Getting back to the hotel, the association's surf instructors had started arriving for their two days of classes. The NSSIA's instructor certification class is intensive, covering everything from psychology and formal educational techniques, to advanced ways to give lessons as well

as addressing both team and professional coaching skills. Normally there are both intensive classroom and extended beach sessions required depending on the experience of the students in the class. Fortunately, these were all very experienced instructors with advanced skills so parts of the clinic could be streamlined.



The first day's class lasted until 9pm in the evening, so most of us were ready for sleep and not much else when we finished Saturday night. Also, the Sunday sessions started at 9 am, and didn't end until

about 3pm. I had given my wife a credit card and told her to have fun since I was busy all day. That was a mistake. She went to a spa and thought she was spending pesos. I didn't even know until I got the bill about a week later.

Next morning early we were hard at it again, but finished on time and I was able to get in an hour relaxing at the pool before stopping for a margarita at the Hard Rock Cafe, and then attending a fiesta at the hotel. The dancers at the fiesta put on a great show plus the other entertainment was fun as well.



Monday morning Alec and two of his top instructors, Hector Mandivil and Rafael Rojas took us to one of his favorite non-crowded break on the Sea of Cortez, 9 Palms. The drive takes about an hour from his shop, and is way out in the country.

We passed cows, burrows, and some great scenery, plus renowned breaks, including Shipwrecks along the way. Shipwreck's outside break was happening, but just not consistent enough for us to stop and go out. At 9 Palms the waves were waist high and fun with only us four in the water. My wife, who is a professional sports photographer, also decided to hang on the beach and shoot a few pictures. She won't do that for me often, so I was stoked for a few shots in the water, even though the ones she took weren't clear enough to print. We all got long waves with Alec claiming to have won the session. This was debated on the way back as not everyone saw it his way.

My final evening consisted of a sunset cruise in the harbor aboard a pirate ship, the Buccaneer. We saw the famous Cabo Arch, the Sea Lion Colony, a show on the ship, and a super sunset over the town. The Snake was in form when one of the prettiest girls on the ship asked him to participate in one of the contests. How could I refuse?

Our final morning Alec drove us back to the airport in San Jose. It was a very enjoyable trip and I hope to get there again one day.

