

BAJA '01

10 DAYS, 2500 MILES & 20 YEAR OLD BIKES ON THE FORGOTTEN PENINSULA

I was running a couple of days behind schedule on my way from Kansas City to Los Angeles – by way of Michigan (but that's another story) – in order to fit the Baja Trip within my buddy Scott Nabat's vacation window. It was Labor Day, and I was still in San Francisco. But, as with any trip, plans have a way of changing. And fortunately, Scott was able to shift his window back a day which gave me time for an oil change and to fix that rear caliper that had dogged me in Michigan, then again in Utah.

Los Angeles to Cabo San Lucas – you really can't go wrong. You cross the border into Tijuana, hop on Mexico 1, ride it down to Cabo and come back on the same damn road. It's fool proof. (Hey, I made it). Ah, but here's where I recommend picking up a copy of Clement Salvadori's *Motorcycle Journeys Through Baja*. A lot of you know the name and know that he's done his share of touring – Baja included. His book comes in handy a number of ways: highlights along the ride, side trips to check out if you've got the time, where to get gas in a pinch, etc. Pick yourself up a copy, it's worth the coin.

Pretty much any bike can do the trip – street, dual-purpose, dirt. Just make sure your steed is ready for the ride. Not a lot of service shops for bikes down there. We were on a couple of older Yamaha triples. Scott was riding a '79 XS750 Special and my 850 Special is an '81. They each have a few more miles than when we got 'em, but we knew they were up to the task at hand.

DAY 1 (9-08) LA to SAN DIEGO – 140 miles

I met Scott at his place in Los Feliz relatively early on Saturday. It was an easy day, so there was no need to beat sun up. After packing the bikes, final once-overs, obligatory snapshot of departure, hugs & kisses from his girlfriend (okay, I only got a hug) and a promise that I'd bring him back in one piece; we were off. To break up the monotony of Interstate 5, we took 55 West over to Newport Beach, grabbed some lunch and picked up the PCH.

Obstacle #1

The sheer strength of my engineer booted friend had broken off the kick extension of his side stand. (This was not going to make for easy dismounts). So good ol' bailing wire and duct tape to the rescue, at least until we got it welded properly.

Arrived in San Diego late afternoon, got a room at the Comfort Inn downtown, met some friends and headed down to the Street Scene – a weekend music festival every September. One of our friends from LA, Dallan, is the guitarist for the band Berlin and got us backstage passes – yeah that's right, free beer. Other acts included Colin Hay (from Men at Work), 311, Black Crowes and the Godfather of Soul himself – James Brown.

DAY 2 (9-09) SAN DIEGO to EL ROSARIO – 265 miles

A quick stop for Mexican insurance in San Ysidro and five minutes later we were cruising cross the border and into Baja California. Ahh – Mexico. From here you've got two options: take old Mex 1 through TJ and a slower paced two-laner to Ensenada, or Mex 1-D, a four-laner toll road that still provides good scenery and is American interstate comparable. We opted for the toll

road. Be prepared for three stops at \$2.25 a pop. For the time saved and smooth pavement, it's worth the coin.

Baja has a population of approximately 2.5 million, 87% of which is above the 28th Parallel. This is called Baja California (Norte, or North, is often used to differentiate it from the southern half) and includes Baja's three largest cities – Tijuana, Mexicali and Ensenada. Baja California Sur (South) lies below the 28th Parallel and claims Baja's fourth largest city – La Paz.

About 30 miles after the second tollbooth is El Mirador (the viewpoint), a colorful rest area with, yes a view, and *banos* (bathrooms). A pleasant fellow will direct you to a parking space. Okay, not a difficult task, but he'll keep an eye on your bike. And a small tip makes for a friendly gesture.

One more toll and we rolled into Ensenada for lunch, gas and a Banamex ATM for some proper currency. As Baja's third largest city, Ensenada's main industries are tourism and fishing. It's also the starting point for the Baja 500 and 1000. The PEMEX stations are government owned and found in major cities, but only scattered sporadically between them. They contain Magna Sin in the green pump (unleaded 87) and Premium in the red (unleaded 93). I figured we were paying about 2.10 for regular and 2.40 for premium.

From here on out the road can get a little sketchy. Yes, it's paved. But the condition can run the gamut from smooth as a baby's ass to pitted like a teenager's face. One minute you're flying, the next dodging potholes. Just keep your eyes open. The lanes are more narrow than in the States, and locals (specifically truckers) have a habit of straddling the center line – particularly when cornering through the mountains. Shoulders are nonexistent, but there are plenty of turnouts/pulloffs (just not always where you'd like them to be).

The next 90 miles took us up and down and often around hills and valleys and through various small towns, learning that *topes* (speed bumps) can pop up unexpectedly – though usually marked. At the San Jacinto junction, we turned west onto a washboard dirt and sand road four miles to the Pacific revealing an old freighter, the Isla del Carmen, rusting peacefully since 1981. We contemplated setting up camp for the night, but seeing as though it was fairly early, we figured we'd make it to El Rosario.

Back on Mex 1, we had about 50 miles of flat farm communities until a military checkpoint popped up – our first. No worries, though, they waved us through. The sun began to set as I tried to convert kilometers to miles in my head while we climbed and twisted, then descended into El Rosario. (It's advised not to ride at night, or drive for that matter, due to the lack of lighting and the fact that animals find the warmth of the road a good place for a snooze).

El Rosario is a little L-shaped town with a couple of motels and restaurants, a small market and a school. As you come out of the hills, there's a PEMEX on your left (the last working station we found for the next 200 miles). In the 1960's, the town became a checkpoint for the Baja 1000. And until 1973, when the Transpeninsular Highway (Mexico 1) was completed, El Rosario was the end of the paved road. We grabbed dinner at Mama's and slept at the adjoining La Cabana motel (250 pesos for a double).

Don't let your lack of Spanish keep you away. As long as you have a few words and phrases under your belt, you'll do just fine. In the larger cities (Ensenada, Cabo and La Paz), English speaking folks can be found. In the more rural areas, a friendly disposition and at least an effort will get you through.

DAY 3 (9-10) EL ROSARIO to SAN IGNACIO – 315 miles

Winding our way out of the valley and onto yet another mesa made for some exceptionally fun riding early in the morning. Then dropping out of the hills, but with temperatures climbing, we soon entered Desierto Central (the Central Desert) and home to the exclusive Boojum Tree (*cirio* cactus) – a tall, slender cactus that can grow to 60 feet with stringy dreadlocks sprouting from the tip (reminding me of Sideshow Bob from the *Simpsons*). The scenery was absolutely stellar. Like Arizona on steroids. Immense *cardon* (tallest cacti in the world) pitch-forking their way to the heavens and tank-sized boulders piled up across the landscape.

Quick stop in Catavina – not a whole helluva lot there – but we got gas out of a drum from a guy in a blue van. Then it was lunch time down the road at Rancho San Ignacio, a little truck stop pullover with some bueno *huevos* (eggs). Across the road is a small memorial marking the completion of the Transpeninsular Highway.

Our second day into Mexico and it began to feel like a completely different time and place. It was during this section that I definitely sensed the solitude of the trip. Simpler. Slower. Unshackled by modernity. And there's no better place than the desert for soaking that up. I welcomed the change.

After an hour or so, the road began heading back towards the Pacific side and into the Vizcaino Desert, then finally to a PEMEX in Villa Jesus Maria. There's another one about 20 miles further on, right before Guerrero Negro (and, I might add, the cleanest bano in all of Baja). Now we're at the 28th Parallel and looking at a 140 ft. steel representation of an eagle (symbol of Mexico). This is where Baja California (Norte) ends and Baja California Sur begins. It is also the point of a possible time change (if not already on Daylight Savings Time).

Before the road splits – the Left continuing on Mex 1 into the desert, or Right into Guerrero Negro – you run into a military checkpoint. We were stopped and asked to present our Tourist Cards (which we didn't have), then asked to pull over and “come inside, por favor.” After a polite discussion, we were issued the cards and sent on our way.

The continuing path through the Vizcaino Desert is pretty much flat and fast for the next 90 miles. Then after climbing/twisting/snaking through a mesa you run into another checkpoint and begin a steep descent towards a spectacular date filled oasis in the valley below – San Ignacio. There's a PEMEX at the turnoff, then a mile and a half asphalt/gravel/dirt road that takes you past a scenic lagoon and a plethora of palm trees depositing you into the town square with the impressive San Ignacio Mission on your right.

The secluded town of about 4000 was founded by Spanish missionaries in the 1700's who also introduced the numerous date palms that remain today. In 1786, they utilized local volcanic stone to build the four feet thick walls of the mission that still stands.

We grabbed a room at the Hotel Posada (180 P), which is on a side street south of the square, then stretched our legs over to Rene's Restaurant and feasted on some succulent breaded calamari heavily seasoned with some gnarly garlic. Throw in some Pacifico cerveza, and it was one helluva dinner.

If time permits, and you're up for it, Rene's can set you up for a whale watching tour at the Laguna San Ignacio, or a cave tour in the Sierra de San Francisco Rock Art.

DAY 4 (9-11) SAN IGNACIO to LORETO – 175 miles

How do I even begin to write about this day – a day that’s been scorched onto our cerebral hard-drives permanently. Any motorcycle trip my friend Scott and I happened to have been taking in Mexico was completely inconsequential compared to what was happening back in the States. But, as I am in the middle of a story now, we were then, and I’ll just let the day unfold as it did.

Retracing our steps along that perfunctory pock-marked path, we jumped back onto Mex 1 heading south and began climbing back into the mesas for some more exciting riding. Near the end of 50 miles of fun, we crested a peak and got our first view of the Sea of Cortez. Simply gorgeous. Easing through yet another switchback filled, twisty-ass, fun as hell descent – affectionately called the Devil’s Grade – and then a hide & seek stretch along the coast for a spell, we entered the town of Santa Rosalia.

Interestingly enough, Santa Rosalia is more influenced by France than Spain. It seems in 1885 a French mining company, El Boleo, set up camp to reap the benefits of numerous copper deposits in the region. It stayed in business until the mines were closed in 1954. A number of years after its arrival, El Boleo bought a church (Iglesia Santa Barbara) constructed in France and designed by Alexandre Eiffel (yep, same guy as the tower). They had this unique structure, made of galvanized iron, shipped to Santa Rosalia and reassembled. It was this same holy house we were in search of when I turned a corner and...

Obstacle #2

SWAK – my clutch cable snapped. “What you do now, Kemosabe?” “No sweat, Tonto. I brought a spare.” Or did I? Turns out I had thrown a throttle cable into my saddlebag, not a clutch. Bummer. While working on the problem at hand with the temp reaching triple digits, Scott went in search of a phone to call his lady. Twenty minutes later, he returned white as a ghost. “I don’t know any other way of telling you this, man, other than to just say it, but...” IN - F__ING - SANE. You all know the feeling I’m talking about. And here we are hundreds (for Scott) and thousands (for me) of miles from home, and... No CNN. No Tom, Peter or Dan. No myriad of media mania bombarding us with stimuli overload. Just the heavy silence of a dusty corner in Santa Rosalia. Kinda makes a broken clutch cable pretty freakin’ insignificant.

Well, to make a long story short (or is it longer by now) we found a shop to do some soldering work (and welding on Scott’s side stand). Unfortunately the soldered cap snapped on the first try at the lever, but there was enough of a coagulated glob to jam into the lever crevice to make the clutch functional. Two hours down (and a ton on our minds), and we were off. I think you’ll understand we just didn’t have the heart to do any exploring at that moment.

Scott had read about an American bar in Playa Buenaventura that had satellite feed. We had to see, we had to know... We bypassed Mulege, but for some gas just south of town, and wheeled on. Just a bit further down the road, we cornered a mesa pass and were hit by a most breathtaking view of Cortez – Bahia Concepcion. I had to stop. And so I’m standing at this turnout mesmerized by this amazing blue & green and beautiful in between colors of bay radiating peace. I prayed the news was a lie. But minutes later at George’s Ole, the teeth of reality sank much too deep.

The next 50 miles were pretty much a blur, except when that cow grazing on the mountain side of a ridge we were cornering decided to bolt out in front of me and into an oncoming Pepsi truck. Speeds were pretty slow, though, so I don’t think ol’ Betsy was any worse for wear as she hoofed it down the cliff side. Which brings up the point of free range – keep your eyes peeled. There are

plenty of cattle, burros, and emaciated horses out there grazing for limited vegetation. And those nonexistent shoulders of the highway seem to be quite a popular area for a mid-day snack.

We hit Loreto at about 6 pm, gassed up and fell into the Hotel Salvatierra (200 P) right across from the PEMEX. A town about the same size as Santa Rosalia, but less dirty, holds claim to being the oldest civilized (by European standards, that is) settlement of Baja. Today, it's a sleepy little town that claims sportsfishing as its biggest tourism draw – yellowtail, snapper, white sea bass, etc.

We ran into some Australians in a VW microbus at the PEMEX station. Pegged as Americans, we were assailed by, “Have you heard the news? Have you heard the news? F___in’ insanity.” Thanks for the update. They also squawked about some hurricane headed for the Cape and a recommendation for a good bar. We took them up on the bar tip and ended up at Macaws – a restaurant/bar on the *malecon* (waterfront).

More CNN and more cerveza – a lovely combo in any country. Scott was contemplating stashing his bike in La Paz and flying back to LA. I just wanted to drink and, well... I just wasn't sure what. And I guess it didn't help hearing some untoward comments concerning the reasons behind the terrorist attacks coming from the other side of the bar. Look, regardless of the political conflagrations that one can opine as to the motives underscoring these heinous acts, the bottom line reigns that these individuals are freakin' assholes. They acted solely on an irrational base of misguided beliefs they held to a higher power. On this point we all agreed and blows were avoided. End note – it was just a f___d up day.

DAY 5 (9-12) LORETO to LA PAZ – 232 miles

7:30 in the morning and it was already in the 80's. It was looking like another hot one. We headed over to Plaza Salvatierra – a cobblestoned town square off the main drag – for another raid on the ATM. 20 miles out of town and we were winding our way up into the Sierra de la Giganta. The climb is exhilarating and allows a last look at the Sea of Cortez (until you hit La Paz). The road then settles down and opens up for a 50 mile blast to Ciudad Insuregentes. Not a whole lot happening here. The road makes a 90 degree left, and within 20/30 minutes we're in Ciudad Constitucion.

We were hankering for some wiener schnitzel at Manfred's RV Park & Restaurant but were informed that the restaurant no longer operates. Manfred, however, recommended Nuevo Dragon down the street. So here we are in the middle of Baja, and it was Chinese for brunch. Constitucion, fueled by a natural aquifer, was founded in the 1960's to service the agricultural basin of Santo Domingo Valley. With a population of 45,000 it is the second largest city in Baja Sur.

About 70 miles further we ran into some road construction that sent us off-road for a spell before returning to pavement at El Cien (“The Hundred” – so called because it is 100 km to La Paz). Then it was back to the Sierra Giganta till we met up with another checkpoint outside of La Paz.

Attempts at civilization started in the early 1500's. But it wasn't until 1829 after a hurricane leveled Loreto prompting the relocation of Baja Sur's capital to La Paz (where it remains today), that progress began. With a population close to 200,000 this city of peace (*paz*) is the largest city in the Sur and a major tourist destination for mainland Mexicans who can ferry over from either Mazatlan or Topolobampo.

As we entered the western edge of La Paz, it appeared we were being greeted by a giant sculpture of a whale's tail. But upon closer inspection, you see that it is two facing birds – the Doves of Peace. We stopped for a snapshot, then went in search of Moto Sport for a new clutch cable and some oil. Luis, a French mechanic with good English, was quite helpful.

While securing a room at the Nuevo Pekin (in keeping with our Chinese theme for the day), I saw the Honda Africa Twin cruise by. We had been leapfrogging each other for a couple of days, so I flagged him down for a chat. Turns out Marcus, a motorcyclist from Switzerland had been out for fifteen months around the world and had another fifteen to go. Talk about a road trip! To save some coin, we ended up with a three bed room with a view of the bay. And bonus – a locked underground garage for our bikes. (420 P for the triple)

After cleaning up, we strolled the waterfront and grabbed some dinner at Palapa Adriana's – the oldest operating palapa on the malecon. Road tales, cheap food, good service (and a beautiful sunset over the bay) made for a most pleasurable evening.

DAY 6 (9-13) LA PAZ to CABO SAN LUCAS – 142 miles

After getting turned around a bit, a pick-up full of locals helped us find Mex 1, and we were on our way to Cabo San Lucas. Just past San Pedro, Mexico 19 splinters off to the right. But we stayed with the 1 and began our ascent into the Sierra de la Laguna. With the deserts of Baja behind us, and the elevation increasing, we definitely got the sense of riding into greener pastures. The tropical climate greeted us heartily with each passing mile.

Unfortunately, the flip side of the tropics is the rain. And although Baja doesn't get much, when it does, September seems to be the month. Apparently I skipped this chapter in the Baja Bible and left my rain gear in LA. It only stayed with us for a half-hour or so, though, before we hit sun in San Jose del Cabo. But we were interested in the other Cabo. So we bypassed this laid-back, less hectic tourist town and navigated our way down the water laden Corridor – the 18 mile four-laner stretch between San Jose and Cabo San Lucas.

At last! 6 days and nearly 1300 miles later, we reached the end of the road – Cabo San Lucas – a bit on the soggy side, but no worse for wear. Actually, we were pretty lucky. We arrived on the tail end of a three day *chubasco* (tropical summer storm) and ahead of the unloving Hurricane Juliette.

Cabo San Lucas, famous for "Land's End" and billed as the Blue Marlin Capital of the World, has run the gamut over the last several centuries – a harbor for pirates; shipping point for bark trade; sportsfishing and canneries; and with the completion of the Transpeninsular Highway and airport in San Jose, a busy tourist spot.

We opted for the Seven Crown Hotel (550 P) right off Lazaro Cardenas before you get into the thick of things. Parked the bikes in a little covered alcove, unloaded, then went in search of food. Mariscos Mocambo, a giant thatched-roof palapa offering seafood at a reasonable price was just down the street. And if you're in the mood for good ol' American fast food, they've got a McD's and a BK, too.

For night life we couldn't pass up Cabo Wabo, rocker Sammy Hagar's bar that opened in '89. Some fun memorabilia on the walls, a good local rock band, a disgusting display of obese gringas writhing on the dance floor and several cervezas later, we moved on. Cabo has plenty of other night spots right off the main drag including Squid Roe, Giggling Marlin, Hard Rock Café. And

for the less than fully clothed establishments, you've got Twenty Showgirls and Lord Black. Around midnight, we wandered back to the hotel. Not before being offered anything and everything, for a price, by the numerous hustlers of the night. On the way to the room I did a quick check on the bikes.

Obstacle #3

About two-thirds of my gear had been lifted – camping gear, clothes and other assorted goodies. Fortunately, nothing was lost that impeded the rest of the trip. Somehow I had the good sense to unpack my tools, photo equipment and deodorant. Hey, it was my own damn fault. In all the towns along the way I had been leaving my bike mostly packed and didn't have one problem. Of course, those weren't tourist towns. So... how pissed could I be (except at myself). Chalk it up to Life Lesson Learned.

DAY 7 (9-14) CABO SAN LUCAS to CONSTITUCION – 232 miles

Basically there's one road down and the same one back. However, there are some alternate routes you can take. We left Cabo by way of Mexico 19, a refreshing 50 mile ride on the Pacific side sweeping gently up the coast towards Todos Santos. A sleepy little farming community / artist colony nestled between the foothills of the Sierra de la Laguna and the ocean, Todos Santos was once the sugarcane capital of Baja. We lunched at Shut Up Franks, gassed up at the PEMEX next door and rode Mex 19 to where it meets up with Mex 1.

From there, we retraced the road – checkpoint outside of La Paz (where they actually checked the inside of Scott's gas tank and patted me down), off-road detour and a new construction delay – on our way to Constitucion. Our evening consisted of dinner at Nuevo Dragon (did us good the first time), a stop at a local *mercado* for supplies (they had us autograph the wall), and bunking down at Manfred's RV Park (350 P). Manfred and his wife, Ida – a lovely Austrian couple – are looking to sell, though, and retire to Vera Cruz. They were pitching us pretty heavily – \$200,000 for 85 sites with electrics & water hookups and nearly 4 acres of space. Interested? I've got their business card.

DAY 8 (9-15) CONSTITUCION to GUERRERO NEGRO – 360 miles

The ride to Loreto was fairly uneventful. Not much had changed in three days. But now that we were cutting two days off our return trip, our minds were a little more set on making some time (not that we didn't still enjoy the scenery). We brunchd at Macaws on the malecon – outstanding omelets and fantastic service. Unfortunately, we were a day early for the Loreto 400 moto cross. We did get to see some riders/bikes hot-dogging in the area, though.

Riding back up the gulf side of the peninsula refreshed my memory of those beautiful blue bays, but also all the roadside crosses & shrines along the mountain passes where accidents had occurred. The unfortunate number of rusted out vehicles continues to grow – a reminder to pay attention.

From San Ignacio, again it's basically a 90 mile straight shot with a few gentle curves thrown in to break up the monotony. We were able to step it up to 80 plus on a smooth stretch and have some serious fun in the *Zona de Vados* (dip zone) – though I never did catch air. Our only stop being the checkpoint where the federales questioned us briefly.

The road to Guerrero Negro veers off to the left from Mexico 1 and within minutes we were on their main street. In our search for an ATM, we were somehow honored with a police escort (due

to this sketchy detour we couldn't figure out). But we did find our way to Pollo Rico's for some excellent smoked chicken.

Mexico's Independence Day (Diez y Seis) is celebrated on September 16. This is the day Mexico initiated its independence from Spain back in 1810. And seeing how it was the 15th and a Saturday night, we had to go check out Fiestas Patria de la Independencia – the Carnival (which was blocking part of the street and led to the earlier confusion in finding the bank). We soaked up the local flavor and enjoyed the strange looks (being the only two gringos, on bikes no less, in a smallish Mexican town). Having our fill of the festival, we retired to the Dunas Motel (200 P) for lights out, although the gaggle of girls giggling all night out in the parking lot did make it a bit difficult to concentrate on sleep.

DAY 9 (9-16) GUERRERO NEGRO to ENSENADA – 383 miles

Aha! While exiting the parking lot we ran smack dab into the middle of an Independence Day parade. (Most likely the source of the previous evening's high-pitched squeals of excitement) School age smiles and slaps on the saddlebags saluted the cyclists on their way out of town. A wave-through at the checkpoint and we were headed back into the desert.

We had a leisurely wait for lunch at Rancho Chapala, a little truck stop where we got gas from a drum out back from the maitre d'/chef/jack of all trades proprietor of the establishment. Then, as we exchanged desert for coast, we made it back to El Rosario and more welcome temperatures. Leaving the PEMEX, it was back into the hills and soon cresting a mesa with a beautiful view of the Pacific, then a pleasant ride towards San Vicente. Another gas stop and a final run to Ensenada. It was during this last stretch that I noticed my shadow off to the right and ...

Obstacle #4

The brackets securing my luggage rack had finally given up beyond repair. We dismantled the rack and back rest, bungeed them to our bikes and continued on. Fortunately, since I was relieved of so much of my gear, this didn't present much of a problem.

Being our last night on the road, we splurged on a Best Western (500 P) – complete with tv, guarded parking lot and more than the Mexican standard issue “one towel apiece” – on the touristy Ave Lopez Mateo. We got in just as the Independence festivities were winding down, grabbed some pizza at La Fabulas and hit the hay by 11 pm.

DAY 10 (9-17) ENSENADA to LOS FELIZ, USA – 234 miles

Final day, baby! And what a day. We had a wonderfully inexpensive and filling breakfast at a sidewalk café on Lopez Mateo; purchased a few duty-free items for the loved ones; packed the bikes and were off for an easy 200 mile day. Or were we?

Obstacle #5

Five to ten minutes out of Enesenada we came upon our last checkpoint (aside from the border crossing). As I was slowing up for the customary questioning, Scott was dive-bombing for the abandoned PEMEX pointing to his left foot, “Sparg, we got a problem.” Apparently, his gear shift lever had mysteriously rattled off somewhere down the road.

I doubled back for a search & rescue, but came up empty handed. Scott was already on the phone hunting down a bike shop in Ensenada when I returned. I was able to get him into neutral, then first, with a pair of vise grips; but shifting up was gonna be a bit more problematic.

As I was beginning to devise a foot loop with bailing wire, he came over with the address of Taller Baja ATV y Moto.

Alberto “Ciro” Caballero rummaged around in his parts area and reappeared with a couple of levers. I matched one up to mine, paid the bill and hit the road. We were back in business. And back on the smooth, swift toll road to Tijuana. Three tolls and a gas stop later, we hit TJ and the lines at the border. Fortunately, we were able to split lanes, dodging the street vendors, with only a few holdups. A quick check at the border, and...

Ahhh – back in America. Good roads, good gas and good fast food. Gotta love it!

Obstacle #6

Somewhere around Mission Viejo I felt my right boot slipping off the peg. I looked down to find I was bathed in oil – the source of which appeared to be the oil cap. We pulled off at the next exit for a closer inspection. Went to tighten the cap, only to find it break off in my hand. Finally had given up the ghost. Most likely due to user error (gently, Grasshopper, no need to overtighten). Debating the futility of ragging the crankcase, we opted to clean, superglue and reinsert the cap. Then I wedged a wrench between the cap and cylinder fin for a tight hold. It seemed to work. Got me all the way back to Los Feliz through some nasty late day traffic.

We pulled into Scott’s drive just as the sun was setting. Snapped the obligatory “we survived” return photo and grabbed a cold one. It was one helluva trip that’ll definitely make for some great memories. At least until the next time we get down there – but on some dual-purpose bikes so we can check out some of those side trips. There’s so much more to see. So, if you ever get the chance, the time and the desire – grab a couple weeks and hit the border. The adventure of Baja awaits you.