



LORETO: UN PUEBLO MAGICO

Established more than 300 years ago, Loreto sits between the foothills of the Sierra La Giganta Mountains and the shores of the Parque Nacional Bahía de Loreto (or Bay of Loreto National Park). Its cultural heritage and historic past, together with the spectacular, yet fragile, landscapes and natural resources that surround it, make Loreto a magical place.



Loreto's People and Culture

Loreto was the first capital of the Californias. Its rich architecture has been preserved throughout the town center and Baja's modern history- from Spanish colonization to the present time- can be seen on every corner. Cave paintings and other evidence of the region's first civilizations have been found in the desert surrounding Loreto, predating Spanish conquistadores. The heart of Baja's rancharo culture can also be found in the region surrounding Loreto. Today, the town of Loreto and surrounding villages are home to an active and proud citizenry dedicated to preserving their past and building the best for the future.

Loreto's Natural Resources

Eighty percent of Loreto's economy depends on the sea. It represents food, jobs and income from the tourism industry. Created in 1996, the Parque Nacional Bahía de Loreto, recently recognized as an UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers the opportunity to study and protect the marine species found off the coast of Loreto. The park provides sanctuary for sardines, dorado, sea bass, rooster fish, tuna, billfish and other species that were once abundant in the waters of the Sea of Cortez. Blue, gray, fin and humpback whales are among the regions largest visitors, as well as sea lions, spinner and bottlenose dolphins, rays, sea turtles and many species of sea birds. The surrounding mountains and desert are not only home to a plethora of endemic plant species, reptiles, birds and even large mammals, but also provide fresh water, the lifeblood of the region. Continued overexploitation will not only impact the surrounding population centers, but also the ecosystems that depend on this water source.



Environmental Threats to the Region

In the 1960's the land adjacent to the Bay of Loreto was identified for 'tourism development,' a process that is now fully under way. Loreto citizens have taken an active role in planning development and following lines of action that will transform Loreto into a sustainable destination. However, much needs to be done to ensure this sustainable development is maintained.

Future development plans are in place for coastal resorts inside the Marine Park, an even larger development planned north of Loreto and another large project in Ensenada Blanca to the south. These projects have inspired and attracted capital to build even more resort developments in the surrounding areas of the municipality of Loreto and just outside of the declared protected areas of the Parque Nacional Bahía de Loreto. These projects must account for the limitations of existing fresh water resources, waste disposal infrastructure, electricity and other unforeseen impacts. If they do not, irreversible problems for the Loreto community and surrounding environs could arise, including irreversible damage to Loreto's fragile ecosystems and endangered species, as well as social problems as a result of the rapid growth.

tell us what you want to do for the ocean, we will take care of the rest



Sustainable Solutions

A healthy, well-educated and economically stable community of Loreto is a key factor in achieving long-term sustainability in the region. This can only be achieved through promoting sustainable economic growth and cultivating civil society through the support of local non-profits focused on engaging and educating Loretanos around issues of sustainable development: natural resource protection, cultural heritage preservation, economic stability and enduring aesthetics. The Ocean Foundation is currently supporting **two opportunities** in and around Loreto, to ensure future economic and environmental sustainability, as well as social viability of the region.

Loreto Bay Foundation

In 2004, The Ocean Foundation helped set up the Loreto Bay Foundation to ensure sustainable development and to invest 1% of gross sales of real estate in the Villages of Loreto back into the community of Loreto. From 2005-2008 the Foundation received nearly \$1.2 million dollars from sales, as well as additional gifts from individual donors. The development has since been sold, halting revenues into the Foundation. However, there is a strong demand by Loreto residents to see the Foundation revived and its work continued.

The Ocean Foundation is currently working to revive the Loreto Bay Foundation via a destination-wide fundraising plan. There are current discussions with Grupo Carso, the current owners of the development, to ensure their commitment to its revival, as well as the implementation of a voluntary donation program, whereby \$1 per person per night would be added to each room charge in Loreto. The revenues from this voluntary program would be put into the Foundation to provide grants to the community of Loreto and the National Park.

About The Ocean Foundation

The Ocean Foundation is a non-profit, public, international foundation based in Washington, DC. It is **the** community foundation for the ocean, established in 2002 to support, strengthen, and promote organizations dedicated to reversing the trend of destruction of ocean environments around the world. The Ocean Foundation works with donors who care about our coasts and oceans to provide financial resources to marine conservation initiatives through its five lines of business: committee and donor advised funds; field of interest grantmaking funds; fiscal sponsorship funds, which serve as a global cooperative of shared services and ideas of over 40 marine conservation projects; and consulting services and the Ocean Leadership Fund.