

The Complete "Little Big Sur" Users Guide



WHAT IS "LITTLE BIG SUR?"

"Little Big Sur" (LBS) is our palapa in the jungle about two hours south of Puerto Vallarta in a small community called Los Chonchos. It is only accessible by water taxi from a beach town called Boca de Tomatlan (about 45 minutes south of Puerto Vallarta by land taxi). LBS is totally off the grid, but has electricity, full kitchen, full bathroom and enough room to sleep anywhere from 2-8 people.

You will be visiting a place of paradoxes. LBS is miles away from anything, yet you'll be able to see civilization at night. You'll be living OUTSIDE, affected directly by the weather, insects, animals, ocean, and flora; but you'll have ice, electricity, and indoor plumbing. After the first 30 minutes on the water taxi towards LBS, you'll think, *"What have I gotten myself into?"* After the first 30 minutes at LBS, you'll be thinking, *"Oh, this could be good."* If you're like us, you'll be worrying that there's nothing to do out here, but you won't be bored for one minute.

Because LBS is in a remote location, one has to cart in food and everyday supplies. For this reason, we recommend staying the previous night in Puerto Vallarta to do your shopping and then catching the next day's water taxi.

This Users Guide will make more sense once you're there.

UNIQUE "AMENITIES" THAT MAKE LBS SPECIAL

There are about a dozen palapas for rent in Los Chonchos, each different and special in their own light. LBS stands out in many ways, including:

- It's by far the biggest and therefore sleeps anywhere from 6 – 8 people
- It has a full kitchen including a full-size stove and solar-powered refrigerator/freezer
- It has sufficient electricity to charge just about anything
- It is fully stocked in terms of dishes, utensils, etc. Often times, there is food and beverage in the "Honor Cooler"
- Snorkeling equipment
- Because we're high on the point overlooking the Bay, it's very private

GETTING TO PUERTO VALLARTA AND THE AIRPORT

Many airlines fly to Puerto Vallarta either directly or indirectly. Indirect flights via Phoenix (the best alternative), Dallas, Guadalajara (a great little airport) or Mexico City are all available. Prices range widely by season and we recommend booking as far ahead as possible.

PV's airport is modern and compact. You'll go through Immigration first and then walk to baggage claim, pick up your luggage and go through Customs. All luggage is X-Rayed at Customs. If you are one of the unlucky ones and get a red light at Customs, your bags will be searched. This is not a big deal as we've literally brought in tons of stuff to PV and only once paid a 100 Peso fine. If bringing in new items, we suggest taking them out of their boxes and keep your receipts.

Once past Customs, just walk through the doors *and keep going despite a bunch of official looking folks aggressively trying to get your attention*. They are all time-share salespeople. Just ignore them or tell them you live here. Go out the door on the right and look for taxi director.

If you're staying at our Corona Adobe B&B, tell the taxi driver "Corner of Corona and Miramar in El Centro." Ask what the cost is ahead of time (there are no meters on taxis, rather they charge by zone). Fare is about 300 Pesos.

STAYING IN PUERTO VALLARTA BEFORE GOING TO LBS

Our House Manager, Tomas, has a pick-up service that includes the following: (1) Pick up from the airport and shopping for food/drink to take to LBS (see below): \$85.00, (2) Pick up the next day and take to Boca, where you pick up the water taxi (see below); (3) Pre-arrange pick up from the Boca pier and take you back to PV (\$45) or straight to (\$65)

Most everything you eat and drink needs to be brought in with you to LBS. LBS has a fully operational kitchen and solar refrigerator. All kitchen utensils are included and some basic condiments maybe there. etc. Things to bring out to LBS might include:

- All things you will want to drink: soft drinks, booze, water, juices, cocktail mixers, etc.
- All things to eat three meals a day (eggs, butter, bread, main courses, etc. etc.)
- Any spices that you must have
- Ice is always a good idea
- Snacks
- Personal HBAs
- Some form of music
- Lighter(s)

- Flashlight(s)
- Fishing pole
- Binoculars
- Books and magazines to read

The closest full-service market in Puerto Vallarta is Ley's, which is on the main road into town. Here's a link to all supermarkets in PV: http://www.puertovallarta.net/fast_facts/puerto-vallarta-supermarkets-groceries.php

It's easy to get around in Puerto Vallarta as there are taxis everywhere. Tell the driver where you want to go and always ask what the cost will be before getting in.

There are many things to do in Puerto Vallarta. Go to <http://www.coronaadobe.com> for some ideas.

GETTING TO BOCA DE TOMATLAN AND THE WATER TAXI RIDE TO LOS CHONCHOS

The first step is a 45-minute land taxi from Puerto Vallarta to a beach town called Boca de Tomatlan south of PV (referred to as "Boca"). Flag a taxi and tell them you're going to Boca (the charge should be around 250 Pesos).



Picture: The taxi loading at the Boca pier. It can sometimes get crowded. The good news is that the more people in the boat, the smoother the ride. ALWAYS SIT AS FAR BACK AS POSSIBLE. Cost is now \$130 Pesos per person each way.

The morning taxi leaves at 9:00AM. You should be in the land taxi from PV on the way to Boca no later than 8:00AM.

Once you arrive in Boca, tell the driver to drop you off at the pier (there's only one, but its way to the right as you drive down the hill). There is only one water taxi that goes to Los Chonchos and its called "Nayeli IV." You load onto the water taxi at the platforms at the end of the pier. You can pay one of the locals (at least 50 Pesos depending on how much luggage you have) to help you cart your stuff to the end of the pier.

At 9:00AM (or 3:00PM in the afternoon) they start to load the taxi. The taxi drivers and/or the local helpers will load your belongings. Sit as far back in the taxi as you can for a smoother ride. This should cost about 130 pesos.

The water taxi ride hugs the shore going south and the view is spectacular, with the jungle & mountains coming right to the water's edge. The taxi stops at little villages along the way and you'll be amazed that people of all ages and states of health climb in and out of the boat. This should give you encouragement that you, too, can do it.



Picture: Unloading the taxi on the beach at Chonchos.

LANDING ON THE BEACH AT LOS CHONCHOS

We unload the taxi from the front. Which means that once you get close to Chonchos, you'll move toward the bow and get ready to jump off the boat into the surf.

Off-loading hints to keep in mind. (1) You will jump/slide off the boat in the surf. You will get wet. Everything in your pockets may get wet. Anything that you value should be put in a Ziploc bag – wallets, passports, watches, etc., etc. We've never lost anything to the water, but we've seen it happen. So, just assume it's a Normandy-style landing. (2) The driver and his helper will signal you when to jump off. (3) Don't carry anything when you jump off, or else you'll probably lose your balance. Once in the surf, there will be people to help take stuff off the boat.

Finally, we don't recommend bringing nice suitcases. Preferred luggage is an old duffel bag that has wheels so you can pull it up the hill, rather than carry it.

Once onto the beach, you'll be greeted by Chileno, Gabriel, or Igor and taken up to Little Big Sur. LBS is high on the cliff overlooking the bay, about 400 yards from the landing beach.

THE WEATHER AND WHAT TO WEAR

The official season in PV is from November-May with the weather usually in the 80s during the days. It sometimes gets a bit windy/chilly at night, especially in the Feb-March timeframe. Since we're in effect living/sleeping outside, one "dresses" for the weather.

Shorts and a swimsuit, no long pants are required. Bring a couple of tops– t-shirts, a long-sleeve t-shirt, and a fleece jacket/vest for night

Shoes are the hardest to figure out. Flip-flops are the shoe of choice in PV and once at LBS. You'll probably want to bring a hiking sandal – something that's open, has straps and is waterproof on the boat from Boca. Flip flops don't work for hiking.

THE INTERNET AND PHONE SERVICE

The Internet is not working as of this writing (12/16). Our Blackberry works sporadically there, but one has to walk around to find a strong signal. Same thing with a cell phone - you should plan on being disconnected FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD WHILE YOU'RE THERE.

SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS

There are three beds and two couches. There is a spare blowup bed under the bed in the Master. Only the Master bedroom has walls. The Master has a Queen and there is a Queen size air bed outside on the lower deck. You may need to plug bed in to by plugging it into the wall socket and pushing the inflate button. This has the best view and ocean sounds, but is totally outside, yet protected by mosquito nets. Bundle up. There is a big couch in the living room and another smaller couch on the outside deck that is large enough for sleeping.

There is also a sleeping loft (right).



The living room. "Dining room" is straight ahead

WHERE TO FIND STUFF IN LBS

All kitchen related items are in...the kitchen. Pots, pans, dishes are in the cabinets along the oven. Cleaning supplies and towels are in the center island.

Sheets and bedding should be set up, but if they aren't or you want clean sheets, there are plenty of sheets of all kinds in credenza in the Master. The Guest Closet in the master bedroom is the closet closest to the ocean and has snorkeling equipment and other household items are there as well.

ENTERTAINMENT

There's no TV, VHS or DVD player. Bring a computer if you want to watch movies and stuff off that. If you have a favorite DVD, bring it. There are plenty of wall sockets. There are games and puzzles in the first closet in the bedroom.

DAYTIME ACTIVITIES

The number one activity is lying around and reading. We have a lot of books and magazines, but we suggest you bring reading material of your own. You'll probably hike around some. You can go swimming and snorkeling (we have snorkeling equipment). We also have a two-person kayak (the blue one on the landing beach). And, of course, there's lot's of fishing so bring a pole if you're a fisherman/woman.

The locals use a line and some bait thrown into the surf. You may not believe us, but you won't be bored.



The primary outdoor activity at Little Big Sur is laying on the outside bed and watching whales. We spotted whales every day, with the record being 50 in a day.



LBS front yard

GOING TO CHIMO, A NEARBY FISHING VILLAGE FOR THE DAY

The nearest (only) village is Chimo, about a two-mile hike south from Chonchos. This is a good day trip. Pick-up the trail at the end of the Big Beach (which is south of Chonchos) and just follow it. It's a scenic walk that goes up a couple of hills and along some pretty deep ruts. But, if mules can do it, so can you. (you can also catch the taxi either way as the last taxi stop is Chimo). There is one place to eat – not fancy—in Chimo and if you ask around, there's always fresh fish to bring back. There's a very basic bodega for essentials (like more beer).

THE KITCHEN AND COOKING

In most ways, this is your standard kitchen, except it has no Microwave. And it's outside so the wind can blow the flames out of the burners. It's a good idea not to leave food out at night. Equipment includes oven, range and solar refrigerator. All the pots and pans you'll probably need are also there. There's full electricity, but we've never used a plug-in appliance except for a blender. We have lots of light. Drinking the water is fine.



“Open air kitchen.” The most important feature? The solar-powered always-making-ice refrigerator.

To turn on the gas if the gas is not on, go to the back of the palapa (toward the jungle) and find the blue propane tank.

To light the stove, turn the gas on and light it with a match or lighter.

THE “HONOR COOLER”

We have a large white plastic cooler in the dining room area that we keep non-perishables (mostly drinks of one kind or another) for your convenience if you run out of things. We have a price list in a zip lock bag that we'd appreciate you using. Here's the combination to the lock. It goes right, left, right. Please re-lock when leaving.

THE RESTAURANTE DE CHONCHOS

There is now a new restaurant in Chonchos , close to the landing beach that serves a basic breakfast, lunch and dinner. You must let Alphonse know ahead of time when you plan on visiting.

A FEW GENERAL RULES

- Don't walk around at night in your bare feet. Always wear open toe shoes (like flip flops). While most of the things you might step on are harmless, one – a scorpion – is not. They like closed-toe shoes, etc.
- Don't go sticking your hand in places you can't see.
- Never put toilet paper down the toilet (this goes for most of Mexico, not just LBS.) There will be a trash bag for used paper.
- There is no medical help there. We have some basic first aid stuff. Avoid deck edges when drinking.

WATER AND ELECTRICITY

Water is provided by a natural spring a couple of miles away in the mountains. We don't hesitate to drink it, but if you're unsure then bring drinking water or use our water-filtered pitcher. Occasionally, the water stops because a mule has stepped on the water line causing a leak or our water tank has run empty. Either way, go down the hill toward the landing beach and find Gabriel, Ruben or Igor.

We are off the grid and therefore electricity is from solar panels and batteries. The supply of electricity should be enough (when there's been lots of sun) to power you through the night. But, it's always a good idea reduce your power use as much as possible and to turn off lights when going to bed at night to save electricity.

If the electricity is not on (which it should be), go the bathroom closet and look on the wall inside that is closest to the kitchen. There will be two switches – the refrigerator (which should be on) and the wall sockets (see picture below). Once on, you'll be able to plug in anywhere in the house.



The refrigerator is solar-powered and is a bit temperamental. Appliances don't like living in the jungle and the refrigerator is a bit worn as a result. Moreover, it is dependent on having sun. We try to tune it up every season, but it may not be working at optimum capacity. They take quite a bit of work to tune them perfectly, so if its not cold, I would suggest not turning the dials, etc. It's worked adequately for ten years and suspect it will be fine when you're there.

None the less, its always good to bring ice. Or, you can order ice from one of the workmen that will be delivered the next day. There is a large cooler that blocks of ice can be stored in

Hot water is sometimes sporadic and takes a bit of time to get there.

GETTING BACK TO THE AIRPORT

It's possible to catch a plane out the same day you leave LBS, but it's difficult. You'll need a late afternoon flight (from 4:00PM+) so you can catch the water taxi the same day. Here's a rough guide for planning purposes:

- Catch the taxi (11-11:30AM) to Boca
- Water ride (1 hour)
- Unload, find a taxi/private car at Boca (30 minutes) there's not always a yellow taxi around. Either pay someone to drive you or if you have the time, there's a bus to pv. You catch the bus at the top of the road coming into Boca.
- Taxi ride to Old Town PV (45 minutes)
- Taxi ride to airport from Old Town (another 30 minutes)

PACKING UP AND CATCHING THE WATER TAXI

Check out time is usually in the morning in time for you to catch the morning taxi. All perishable food should be given to neighbors or Gabriel. It would be good to wash all your dishes and put them away. If you've used the snorkeling equipment, please wash the sand out of them.

Water taxis back to the mainland run twice a day (*about 11:00 AM and about 5:00PM.*) These times can vary by as much as an hour – if you miss the taxi, you'll have to wait hours for the next.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS & CONTACT INFORMATION

- Contact info:
 - Owner: Karen Rutherford: Karen@laicorp.com; 322.00.3490 (Mexican cell); 323.854.2539 (US Cell)
 - Owner: Fred Walti: fred@laicorp.com; 323.854.3332 (US cell. Will work anywhere)
 - General Manger: Ruben. Mexican cell is: 322.180.7328
 - Greeter/general helpers: Igor, Gabriel and Chileno (they work for tips and only Igor speaks English)

Finally, don't be afraid to ask other palapa owners or guests for help. We've all been there the first time.



