



# The Best Reason to Extend Your Stay in San Diego

*Thanks to a growing number of hip tour companies operating in Baja California, it's now easier than ever to explore the region's restaurants, markets, street food, breweries, wine country, and festivals on a side trip from San Diego. The best way in? Turista Libre, journalist Derrik Chinn's company that takes travelers to hyper-local spots in Tijuana and Valle de Guadalupe.*

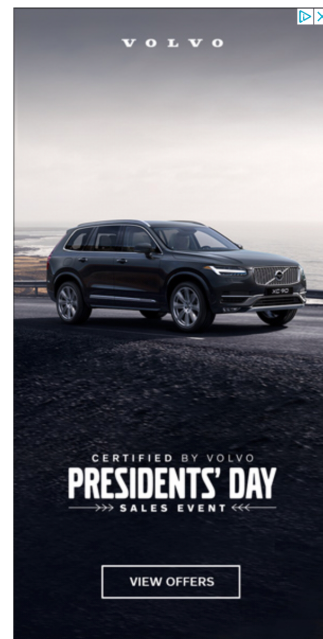
BY ARCHANA RAM  
May 27, 2015



Turista Libre trips meet on the San Diego side of the border, and a literal walk through revolving doors takes visitors—everyone from San Diegans to Europeans to expats living in Mexico—into Tijuana for *lucha libre* wrestling matches, baseball games, food tours, and more. “People are coming with a more open mind,” Chinn says. “They’re adapting to the city, and that’s what you should do with any travel.” On a six-hour street food tour—an easy day trip from San Diego—hungry explorers skip lines and language barriers to feast on tacos, tortas, tostadas, and a history lesson or two.




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To shuttle his groups through town, Chinn purchased a former American school bus-turned-Tijuana city bus driven by local husband and wife Benjamin and Pilar. “It’s an added touch of authenticity,” Chinn says. “And they’re like family to me.” Between the food pit stops, Chinn pours liberal shots of Espolon agave tequila for willing takers.

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The tour begins with a stop at Tortas Washmobile, a food truck that has been doling out Mexican-style sandwiches since 1964. “Tijuana is just 125 years old,” says Chinn. “For someone to be open since 1964 is a big deal.” As the moniker might indicate, locals would eat their tortas—often for breakfast—while getting their cars cleaned at the adjacent car wash. For the namesake dish, juicy meat is grilled on the spot and stuffed between two pieces of toasted bread with tomatoes, onions, and hot sauce.

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cooked shrimp, snail, octopus, avocado, a “black sauce” similar to Worcester sauce, V8, and lime juice. It’s a traditional Sinaloa take on the dish. “If there’s one thing Sinaloa does well, it’s seafood,” Chinn says.



Across the street from Mariscos El Paisa is Tijuana’s oldest open-air market, Mercado Hidalgo. Open since 1955, the bustling space boasts 80 stores, all run by families. There’s even a chapel within the market to host *quinceañera* celebrations for the daughters of the families.



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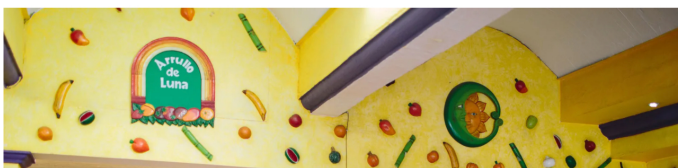
At Mercado Hidalgo, shoppers will find fresh coconut water, produce, cheese, piñatas, and more sourced from all 31 states in Mexico.



The fourth stop is a prime example of Chinn's penchant for off-the-beaten-path finds. Located in the quiet southwestern section of the city, Tacos La Gloria is a spacious taqueria known for its carne asada and *adobada* (spicy pork).



The town of La Gloria was once a busy midway point between Tijuana and the seaside town of Rosarito, but once the city built a separate freeway, La Gloria became decidedly more quiet. Development continues, but it's still common to see locals on horseback.



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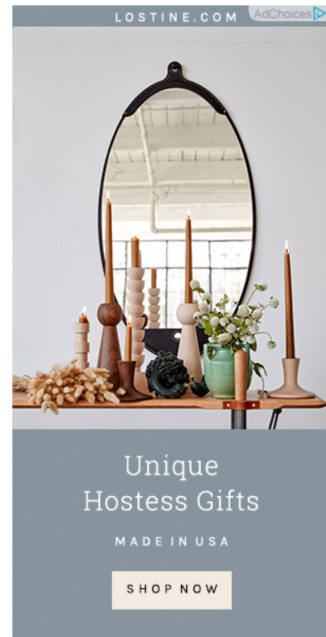


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After a trifecta of tortas, tostadas, and tacos, it's time for dessert. The artisanal ice cream chain Tepoznieves originated in Tepoztlán, a small town outside Mexico City, and counts Tijuana as its only location in northern Mexico. The colorful shop offers 80 different flavors, which range from the traditional to novel, like queso, horchata, and *elote*, or corn.

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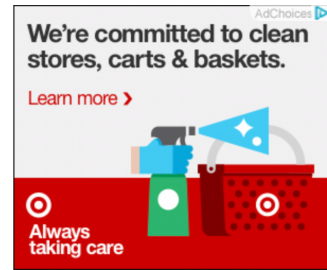
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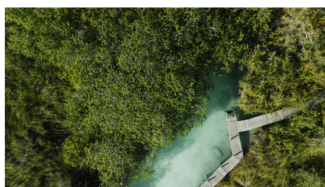
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At Tepoznieves, Chinn advises visitors to venture out of their ice-cream comfort zone when it comes to flavors. As he puts it, "Go for two you know you'll love and be brave about one."



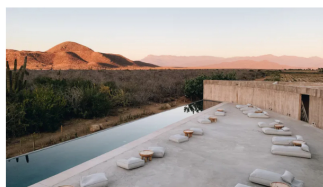
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