

SIERRA SAN FRANCISCO – DO-IT-YOURSELF ROCK ART - IN SANTA TERESA CANYON

General Information- best season October through May; vehicle with high clearance to access villages (4WD not needed); take food and water with you; some Spanish is very helpful; use minimum impact desert travel techniques (see LeaveNoTrace.org)

<http://www.lnt.org/programs/lnt7/index.html> ;

You must contact the Mexican department of History and Anthropology first in order to arrange for an overnight or extended visit to the rock art. Jesus Atondo in the office in San Ignacio speaks English and can help set up a tour. Two or three others in the office understand and can also help with arrangements. See contact info on final page.

Travel - Driving from San Diego: On Mexico Highway 1 - drive to the town of San Ignacio, about 550 miles south of the Tijuana border. Contact Discover Baja Travel club, become a member, and have access to great road and travel info and driving insurance. www.discoverbaja.com

If you live in Loreto... drive north to San Ignacio, check in at the INAH office, drive to the sierra San Francisco, and meet your guides and mounts. A little Spanish is helpful, but if you have visited before and want to re-visit or extend your range... you know, the guides are very good. If you have had a guide before and want to hire one of your favorites, you may do so. See chart below for more info.

Flying: to Loreto, from Los Angeles or San Diego / Tijuana - then ... rent a vehicle, hire a taxi or take a bus north to San Ignacio about 4 hours. From San Ignacio you can drive or hire a taxi van and go to either village (San Francisco de la Sierra, or, Santa Marta*) to view a protected rock art “gallery” on a day trip, or to access the trailheads for an extended camping visit. *Call INAH office or Kuyima for info on day trips to Santa Martha.

See information www.SierraSanFrancisco.com for good information on the village and overnight stays and for a phone number to call in the village (Spanish needed) to speak with Yadira or her family about road conditions, and to set up a short tour - though calling direct to the INAH office in San Ignacio is the best choice. (# below)

3 or 4 Day Trek - the best trip for minimum amount of time, visit 2 major sites (La Pintada and Las Flechas) and access to a possible 6 other sites.

From San Ignacio - check in at INAH office, drive 2 hours to San Francisco de la Sierra, sign in with the local INAH coordinator at the Hostal Buenaventura, meet guides and pack animals/riding animals, hike 3 to 5 hours to camp, spend a day or two visiting sites. Rugged and steep trails take you down into Santa Teresa Canyon where camping sites are designated and water is available but needs to be treated. Highly suggested to plan at least 4 days in order to visit several sites plus your day in and a day out again.

VERY IMPORTANT INFO BEFORE YOU GO –

The trail is steep and rugged, and slippery with loose rock in places. Canyon bottom and trails to the caves are also very rocky and good hike boots are needed – plus ability to balance. Some people choose to ride a mule part time and hike part time. It is about 3 hours of rough rocky trail just to arrive at your first night's camp... another hour if you decide to camp farther down canyon. You need 3 to 4 hours of daylight to safely reach canyon bottom, make camp, etc..

Whatever you choose, hike or ride or both, your guides are there to help you get off and on your mount, help with information about trails, and will have best current info on camps and weather and timing as you travel. Take advantage of their knowledge and let them know what you need.

No campfires are permitted at canyon campsites, take all personal camping gear, cooking gear, and enough food to share with guides. Cost comes to about \$95 US per person per day for fees, guide, pack animal, and riding animal (varies with size of group and # of animals desired or needed for gear) BUT - may not include your travel expense, or cost of food. Best to have some Spanish language ability.

You may **not** ask for a specific guide unless you have already been on a prior trip with him. There is a guide roll and to keep things fair they will work out who is going to be on a trip according to the system they have designed. (this is a rule set up by the group of guides themselves, and

though there are a few folks in the sierra who may tell you that you can ask for them directly... if you have not been on a prior trip with that person as your guide, it is not fair to the other 30+ families who are waiting for their chance at leading a tour)

That said, the roll is also set up so that if the guide whose number is “up” is not available, he may appoint another to work in his place. In that case, they share the income 50/50, so it is very important that if your guide has been of very good service, that you tip him well ! All tips belong to him or are shared by the number of guides on your trip.

The number of guides depends on group size and # of riding and pack animals needed for the group. 1 guide x 2 or 3 guests, depending on number of riding animals and pack animals needed.

General Chart:

1 guest hiking = 1 guide, his mule, 1 donkey (minimum - sometimes a guide will bring along an extra riding animal for emergency... or if the guide might judge that you might not make the grade hiking) Trust your guide and pay for the extra animal !

1 guest riding = 1 guide, his mule, your mule, one or two donkeys

2 guests hiking – 1 guide, his mule, one extra mule, 2 donkeys or 3 depending on your amount of gear, his amount of gear, and # of days on the trail.

General rule is - 1 guide with a total of 6 animals for 1 to 3 guests. More than 3 guests, or more than 6 animals = 2 guides. (more than 12 animals or more than 6 guests requires 3 guides) ETC.

2+ guides are great to have. One works with helping people on the trail, the other herds donkeys and unloads / loads gear onto animals. Or - one can accompany hikers to the rock art sites while the other works with the animals in camp. If the group wants to split (1 person returns to camp while 1 or 2 others wish to see another site then one of the guides can help with splitting the group of hikers/riders)

As of 2017 you must pay \$250 peso for each guide and each animal on the trip. (check the peso exchange rates – in Fall 2017 it is about 17 or 17.5 to 1 dollar) So consider: (for one guest hiking) guide, his mule, one donkey = \$750 pesos per day (plus possibly the “extra” ride animal or pack-donkey could equal up to \$1250 pesos per day – plus a good tip = \$75 dollars per day plus food for 2, another \$20 per day or about \$95 per day.

Some folks on budget might try to get by on \$65 per day, but consider that your guide may have had to work for a day rounding up animals to be ready for you, and some need to **ride a day or more** to meet you at the trailhead.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO KEEP TO YOUR PLAN, AND NOT CANCEL LAST MINUTE – OR – TO LET INAH KNOW OF ANY CHANGE IN YOUR SCHEDULE SEVERAL DAYS IN ADVANCE.

Contact the San Ignacio INAH office direct –it is best to give a 2 days notice minimum if arranging a 3- 4 day trip into Santa Teresa Canyon to view Cueva Pintada / Cueva de Las Flechas, and a possible 5 more. Call from US 011 52 615 154-0222 or keey_75@hotmail.com for Jesus Atondo, via email

Fees - as of fall 2017 (approx \$50 pesos per day per camera on tour ; approx \$65 pesos per guest on trip) To be paid at the INAH office between the church and the museum in the town of San Ignacio... or if you are driving from the north down, you may pay for permits in the village of San Francisco de la Sierra with the INAH coordinator (currently Yadira Arce Ojeda) at the Buenaventura Hostal.

The turnoff for the sierra SF, is at km marker # 117 on the highway between the town of Vizcaino and San Ignacio.

More links to good info to pre-plan your tour – hotels, etc.

<http://www.kuyima.com/where/sanignacio.html>

(updates – Casa Leree no longer offers rooms for rent, but is a great place to visit just off the town square; also note that the Hotel La Huerta phone number is 154-0116)

Tour Agencies -

Saddling South - Trudi Angell, - 30 years traveling the peninsula by mule and trail, offers multi-day pack trips.

tourloreto@aol.com www.SaddlingSouth.com

Kuyima.com / Fischer Tours - Tour operators located near or on the town square in San Ignacio offer day trips and multi-day trips to rock art sites.