The California Rock Art Foundation is pleased to announce limited openings on three trips scheduled for March 2020 in Baja California, Mexico. In collaboration with our partners at Saddling South, we have organized three extraordinary trips into the Sierra San Francisco in the heart of the Great Mural Rock Painting Tradition.

1. Santa Marta – March 1-8*
2. Santa Teresa – March 12-19*
3. San Gregorio – March 22-29*

Each trip will visit a different canyon system within the Sierra San Francisco, and each trip will offer our guests a unique experience with separate itineraries. Santa Teresa hosts some of the most famous and intact Great Murals sites such as Cueva Pintada and Las Flechas, while the excursions in Santa Marta area into the Arroyo de Parral will bring you to remote sites including Serpiente and Supernova. The trip into San Gregorio offers a unique rancho experience with some lesser known painted sites in the Sierra de San Francisco.

We travel to these remote locations riding on mules, while a pack train of burros carry our gear into the canyon. Each trip involves visits to the nearby ranchos and visits to some of the most spectacular rock art in the world - incredible painted rock shelters in the rugged mountain wilderness – known to some as the Grand Canyon of Baja, Mexico. Each trip has a space for just six people and so we are looking for 18 fellow travelers to fill these limited space, once-in-a-lifetime tours.

Bring a friend or come solo! These trips are tons of fun, very social, and offer a unique and remarkable experience of spectacular rock art, world class vistas and scenery, exceptional archaeology, and local vaquero culture.
All trips depart from Loreto, a coastal town located on the Sea of Cortez. Travel to the canyon sites requires riding astride mules and walking on steep, rocky terrain, along exposed canyon trails. Participants should be in good physical condition to attend. First time rider? No problem! The mules are sure footed and not easily spooked. This is truly an extraordinary adventure!

The trips are run by our partners at Saddling South, a guiding company in Loreto and is directed by Trudi Angell, and her daughter, Olivia. Trudi was a graduate of one of the first National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), Baja courses in 1976, and subsequently worked for the school and kayaked the coast for the next 7 years. Trudi developed Saddling South in order to offer extraordinary tours into very remote regions throughout the Baja peninsula. Each trip is led by local vaqueros (cowboys) who are very knowledgeable and intimately acquainted with the landforms, geography, flora, and fauna of the Sierra.

All trips will be accompanied by a California Rock Art Foundation Liaison who will field discussions regarding archaeology, photography, Native Baja Cochimi ethnography and history, Spanish contact, indigenous religion, interpretations and the age of the paintings. This trip is open to adventure seekers, history enthusiasts, photographers, archaeologists, explorers and those looking for a truly remarkable excursions into some one the most beautiful and dramatic country in all Mexico.

Experiencing the paintings firsthand is both captivating and overwhelming - leaving one with more questions than answers. After the trip, we recommend whale-watching in San Ignacio; or a stay in Loreto to explore the town and shop, and take a short boat trip out to the beautiful volcanic island of Coronado for a snorkel tour or visit mission San Javier.

Cost: $2850 per person, $2650 per CRAF member ($200 discount) – Includes all meals, ground transportation (within Baja), hotels, camping gear, guide fees, etc. Travel to Loreto is not included. If you would like to attend more than one trip, we can negotiate a discounted rate.

If you are interested in attending this trip please contact Trudi Angell at tourloreto@aol.com

*Dates and itinerary are subject to change

Are food and lodging included? All meals are included unless you choose a breakfast-on-your-own option a time or two in towns. Hotel lodging (typically before and after each trip) is also included as well
as arrangements while camping. Please specify if you have any dietary restrictions. Feel free to bring your own drinks (wine, tequila, etc.) and if you would like to bring special trail snacks along, please do. We do not have quality protein bars in Mexico, so please consider bringing some in addition to a few personal trail snacks for the saddle bags such as granola bars, jerky, dried fruit, etc. Other snacks and drinks can be picked up at grocery stores in Loreto and elsewhere on the way. For the most part, the menu will consist of traditional Mexican dishes (camping style) prepared in the field. Coffee and breakfast will be prepared in the morning, with snacks during the heat of the day, and a hearty dinner each evening by the campfire.

**What to expect and/or be aware of:** March weather should be 70s to 80s during the day and 40s to 50s at night. But as we all know, the weather can be rather unpredictable, so we should prepare for extremes including 90s during the day and 30s at night. Our party will be led by a long line of burros, which haul the kitchen – (stove, fuel, tables, chairs, pots/pans, etc.), food, water, camping supplies, and all our personal gear. We will follow on mules – and travel caravan style on steep meandering canyon trails with breathtaking views of the vistas and palm oases of the Sierra. The riding can at times be rough and tiring, and we recommend only folks who are in decent shape to come on this trip. The Santa Marta/Parral Canyon trip in particular will be physically taxing. We will filter water from natural springs as we move through the canyon. Travelers insurance is recommended.

### Recommended Gear
- Sleeping Bag – 40 deg min (available upon request)
- Sleeping Pad – small, inflatable: Therm-a-Rest (available upon request)
- Towel / Toiletries – biodegradable soap
- Clothes for 8 days – pack extra light!
- Rain Jacket/Sweatshirt
- Hiking Boots
- Water Bottles (x2)
- Hat – w/ brim
- Sunscreen / Sunglasses
- Headlamp / Flashlight
- Medication
- Long pants for riding

### Optional/Other
- Personal Tent – Small (REI Half Dome tents are provided)
- Hammock – can substitute for tent
- Notebook and Pen
- Binoculars
- Small Musical Instrument
- Trekking Poles
- Bandana
- Half Chaps
Santa Marta: Cueva Serpiente & More (March 1-8)
Arroyo del Parral / Sierra de San Francisco

Highlights – Cueva Serpiente, El Palmarito, Super Nova (La Clarita), Mono Alto, Natividad, Corralito, and the seldom visited petroglyph field of La Higuerita. Cultural and natural history taught by local guides as you travel the spectacular desert outback. We visit the Ranchos in Santa Marta.

This trip is recommended for intermediate riders with good hiking ability. Long days of riding on steep, exposed trails. Primitive camping. Santa Teresa and San Gregorio will be less strenuous.

Day 1 - Meet in Loreto at the airport. Transfer to San Ignacio. Four hours driving, Snacks included. Dinner in the town plaza with views of the old Spanish Mission. Hotel overnight in San Ignacio.

Day 2 - After breakfast at the hotel we will head for Rancho Santa Marta to meet the mules and our guides. Depending on the trip logistics, either today or the final trip day we will visit El Palmarito, a famous and easily accessible Great Mural site.

Day 3 – Full day ride over rugged ridges and in a remote section of Arroyo Parral. El Serpiente lies in the canyon bottom and boasts one of the most enigmatic mural paintings; an 18-foot-long serpent with deer horns. Many other animated paintings surround the main art, yet there is very little over-painting on the main subject. It is truly a well-preserved site with a story to tell.

Days 4 – 6 - We’ll visit several painting sites and petroglyph fields in the edges of the Sierra. See the list above. Traveling across high desert mesas and into deep canyons, we get a glimpse into the lifestyle of the ranching families who live on the fringe. An old casa, once inhabited by Chema Arce and his family is along our route, and a view of the surprising pockets of life and livelihood that once supported many of the Arce clan within this mountain range abound.

Day 7: Travel out of the canyon and back to Rancho Santa Marta. Drive to San Ignacio or Santa Rosalía. Overnight in Hotel. Dinner and drinks.

Day 8 – From our Hotel we will get you to the airport in Loreto. Depending on departure times and our final ride day on Day 7, we’ll stay in San Ignacio or possibly drive south a bit to a different hotel a little closer to Loreto.

(Consider staying north to visit Laguna San Ignacio - Baja’s best whale watching destination w/ comfortable camps, or plan a rest day or two in Loreto )
Santa Teresa Canyon – Cueva Pintada & More (March 12-19)
Sierra de San Francisco

Highlights - World Heritage sites of iconic Great Mural Rock Art. Cuevas (Caves) – Santa Teresa I, Santa Teresa II, Pintada (Gardiner’s Cave), Las Flechas, Soledad, Musicos, Boca de San Julio, Piedra de Cuey, among others. Trip includes visit to a petroglyph field in the area of Mulegé, Piedras Pintas. Cultural and natural history taught by local guides as you travel on mule-back and on foot as we journey on the spectacular canyon trails. Plus hear traditional lore, learn about vaquero lifestyle, and other Baja trail treasures.

Day 1 – Arrive Loreto, Baja California Sur - We will meet you at the airport and shuttle in a taxi van to Santa Rosalia and our first night hotel. Dinner in a small restaurant along the way.

Day 2 – Today we’ll drive to the trail head in the heart of rock art country in Baja. San Francisco de la Sierra, a small mountain village – is the jumping-off point for some of the best of Baja’s rock art sites. We’ll meet our mules and trail guides at a small ranch near the trail head. It’s safe to park cars and we return to the same ranchito on the final day. The first trail day, it’s about three hours of trail time, but takes most of the day to arrive in our first camp site at Santa Teresa ranch garden. Set up camp and maybe have an evening introduction to our guides. Learning stories of their lives in the Sierra.

Days 2-5 - In the following days we walk and ride to several vivid and varied rock art sites - Cueva Pintada, Cueva de Las Flechas, Boca de San Julio, Los Músicos, and more. We’ll have a chance to swim in pristine refreshing pools, ponder a petroglyph, relax under the palms, and meditate on the ancient cultures and inhabitants of the remote gorge. Local cowboy guides add to the experience with local lore and stories. On the last night, nestled deep in Santa Teresa canyon, we’ll camp next to a ranch garden full of citrus and vegetables for an outback family’s daily use. On the final day’s ride up and out of the canyon we end up back at our vehicles in the village of San Francisco de la Sierra. On Day 5 we return to San Ignacio for an overnight in a hotel and an end-of-trip-dinner in town.

Day 6 – A leisurely morning to explore the town, with breakfast on your own if you like. Today we travel south to Mulegé and check into the Hotel Serenidad. There will be a stop or two on the way and dinner included at the hotel.

Day 7 - We’ll have much of the morning and mid-day to visit the Piedras Pintas site, an amazing array of thousands of petroglyphs over a large span of volcanic boulders. Like a treasure hunt! We return in the afternoon to Loreto and an ocean-view hotel.

Day 8 – Time to get to know Loreto a bit before catching your flight back. Guides or tour representatives will be there to arrange for transportation to your flight.
San Gregorio Ranch and Rock Art (March 22-29)

Sierra de San Francisco

Highlights - World Heritage sites of prime Mural Rock Art. Cuevas – San Gregorio I & II, La Palma, El Borrego and Boca de San Casimiro among others. Cultural and natural History taught by local guides as you travel the spectacular desert outback. Ranch visits. Plus a glimpse into the lifestyle of locals, traditional singing, music, and other trail rhythms. The documentary Corazón Vaquero: The Heart of the Cowboy focuses on Rancho San Gregorio and will give you a good idea of the area. Watch it here

Day 1 - Arrival Loreto. Trudi Angell or a Saddling South representative will meet you at the airport and help you transfer to a van for town. In Loreto on Day 1, the hotel night is included.

Day 2 - After breakfast at the hotel we drive north to San Ignacio, with views to Conception Bay, a drive through Mulege, and a visit to Santa Rosalia, the famous old copper mining town. We pass by the base of the majestic volcanos of the Tres Virgenes along the way and enter the central Baja ecosystem with unique endemic plants. Overnight in the town of San Ignacio, the jumping-off point, for the best of Baja’s rock art sites.

Day 3 - After breakfast we’ll check in at the San Ignacio cultural center office, and then head to the Sierra San Francisco. It’s about a two hour drive up to the small mountain village, jumping-off point for the best of Baja’s rock art sites. Today we meet our local guides, mules and pack-burros and head up the trail for a great adventure. First camp destination involves about 2 hours on the trail, riding or hiking. It’s a gorgeous route with views and cactus garden scenery. Camp on Mesa Soledad.

Day 4 - Three trail hours today, dropping into San Gregorio canyon, delivers us into a sweet garden camp across the arroyo from Rancho San Gregorio. Orange trees and date palms offer shade, and a small stream of running water refreshes our camp. This is a wonderful base for 2-3 nights as we explore the archeological sites and meet the families there. In the afternoon we may visit San Gregorio 1 & 2.

Day 5 - A layover day today (no packing of tents or gear) we can opt to ride or hike to three more of the world famous sites in the area. In the evening there should be plenty of time to visit the neighbors, two Arce Arce families that live on the slopes across the canyon, a short distance from our camp.

Day 6 - In the morning we can be in slow mode for breaking camp, get in some last minute visits to more art or the small schoolhouse that serves five of the lovely ranch children, or catch up on your journals over a cup of Chema’s famous campfire coffee. By evening we will be back up on the mesa again, in place to have a short ride to the road head by mid-day on the final day. (Alternate is to spend another whole day and ride out on Day 7)

Day 7 - Final trail day... after arriving in the village of San Francisco de la Sierra and back to our taxi van, we say goodbye to guides and mules and arrive in San Ignacio by evening for an end-of-trip dinner and hotel overnight. Depending on timing we may overnight in San Ignacio or in a town farther down the peninsula closer to Loreto.

Day 8 - In the morning, travel back to Loreto, in time to catch your return flight.