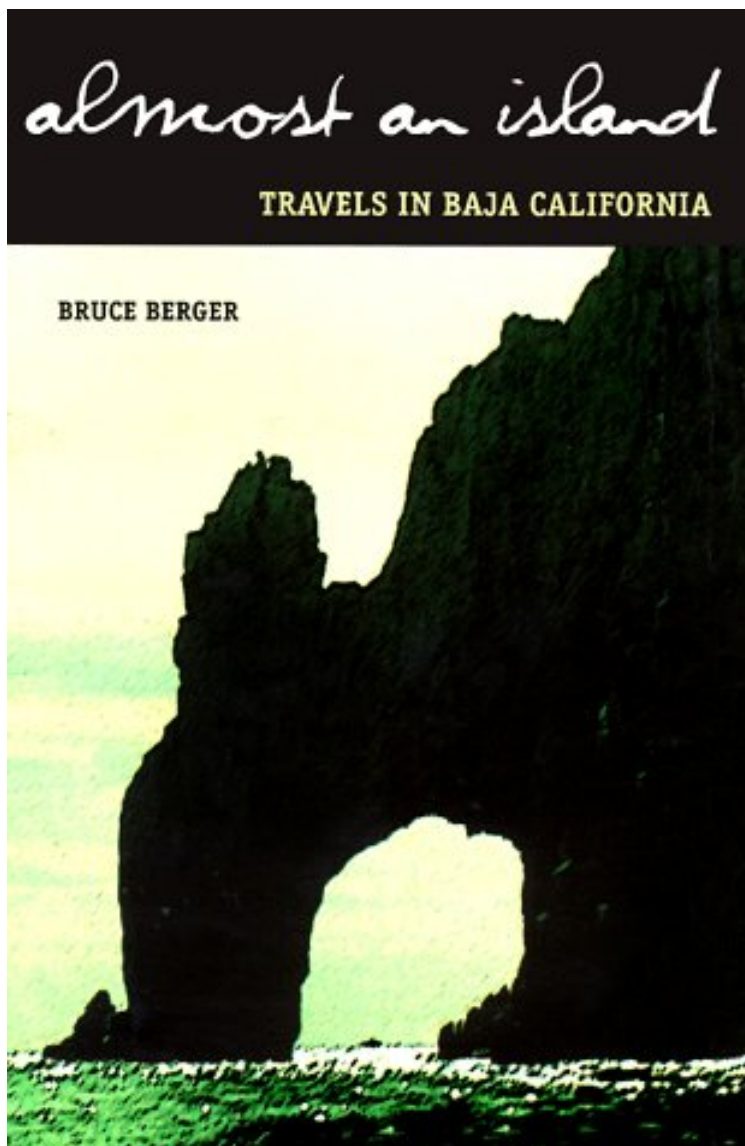


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## Almost an Island: Travels in Baja California

*Bruce Berger*

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**Bruce Berger : Almost an Island: Travels in Baja California** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Almost an Island: Travels in Baja California:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. recommend 1 improvement but otherwise great book By johanna Marais We recently visited Baja for the first time and wanted to read more about the region to educate ourselves since we are going back later in the year to visit again. Bruce's writing style not only makes for an easy, humorous read but is really informative in terms of the various Baja regions/main towns and fascinating characters that made this

peninsula their home. We also loved his descriptions of the variety of landscapes, both coastal and the interior. This book is also semi-biographical in nature and Bruce's various funny accounts of mechanical breakdowns and other mis-adventures while travelling in Baja kept us engaged. This book can be enhanced by adding a few basic maps so that when Bruce describes a certain region/city/trip the reader can easily orientate him/herself. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A fine read, even for those not going there. By Robert N. Jenkins Having spent much of 30 years visiting and then living in Baja California Sur, Bruce Berger did us all a favor by mixing insight, curiosity and gentle good humor to reflect on the region. Berger also offers a smart take on the early European history of the areas, then moves to the later 20th century and the impact of in-migration and tourist development measured against the communal eccentricities of a place that had its own charm. You might even be envious of Berger's experiences and acquaintances. Consequently, the book is entertaining reading. It might even put a visit to the peninsula on your wish list. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Perfect for my holiday. By S. Smith It supplied me with the information I was hoping for before and during my trip to Baja! Factual and entertaining. I like to have the history and information about where I'm going to visit for the first time, this book was it!

Long frequented by pirates and haunted by pariahs, Baja California has become a favorite destination for whale watchers, hikers, and scuba divers. For Bruce Berger it has been more. In *Almost an Island*, he takes readers beyond the Baja of guidebooks and offers a wildly entertaining look at the real Baja California. Eight hundred miles long, Baja California is the remotest region of the Sonoran desert, a land of volcanic cliffs, glistening beaches, fantastical boojum trees, and some of the greatest primitive murals in the Western Hemisphere. In *Almost an Island*, Berger recounts tales from his three decades in this extraordinary place, enriching his account with the peninsula's history, its politics, and its probable future. Rendering a striking panorama of this land so close to the United States, so famous, and so little known. Readers will meet a cast of characters as eccentric as the place itself: Brandy, who ranges the desert in a sand buggy while breathing from an oxygen tank; Katie, the chanteuse; nuns illegally raising pigs. They will encounter the tourist madness of a total eclipse, the story of the heir to an oasis, a musical Mata Hari, rare pronghorn antelope, and a pet tarantula. In prose as glittering as this desert engulfed by the sea, *Almost an Island* is a fascinating journey into the human heart of a spectacular land.

From Publishers Weekly While the natural marvels of the 800-mile-long Mexican peninsula called Baja California are not scanted in this freewheeling exploration, it's the human inhabitants that underscore its uniqueness. Berger, award-winning author of *The Telling Distance* (1990), erstwhile piano player ready for adventure, chronicles his three-decade love affair with this timeless landscape of desert, lagoons, caves and remote ranges, as well as the people of its cities and towns. One of those cities is LaPaz in Baja California Sur, to which a third of the book is devoted. ("LaPaz was one of those places that bored the tourist while whispering to a struck minority: here you must live.") As a resident foreigner whose affection does not close his eyes to contemporary societal evils, Berger is an objective observer. As a "specialist in the state of Baja California," he treats the reader to a pithy history of the upper and lower peninsula, with views of the Spanish colonizers, the controversial missionaries, especially the Jesuits, and the ongoing flinty relationship of the U.S. and this Mexican territory. Berger the raconteur entertains as he cautions against the intrusions made possible by paved roads and highways. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Berger, a Western States Book Award Winner for *The Telling Distance* (Univ. of Arizona, 1990), lived and traveled in Baja, CA, for three decades. Here he paints a vivid picture of this unique place he refers to as "almost an island." In a fight to protect this shrinking wilderness, he covers the history of the native peoples, the invasion of the Spaniards, modern-day tourists, contemporary settlements, and the everyday life of the permanent and transient residents of the peninsula. He also charts how the 20th century has finally caught up with Baja; as tourism flourishes, the rich history disappears. More homage to a once-wild corner of the North American continent than guidebook, this is recommended for public and academic libraries. Sandra Knowles, Univ. of South Carolina Sch. of Medicine Lib., Columbia Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Writing with the grace of nightfall, Berger knits a handful of chance encounters together with cultural and natural history to produce a crystalline, indiosyncratic portrait of Baja." Kirkus s "Relaxed and amiable in tone . . . Lyrical." New York Times Book "An engrossing journal of fast-paced change." San Diego Union-Tribune "...The answer is Bruce Berger, a poet and writer of personal essays that bring desert towns and distant arroyos to life, that cross wires with physics, that describe the arts and the quirky characters of our own species." --Bloomsbury