



FEAR AND FRIENDSHIP ON THE BAJA DIVIDE

ROUTE
BAJA DIVIDE

LOCATION
UNITED STATES
AND MEXICO

→ JUST BEFORE 8 a.m. on January 2, 2017, Chris Goodman left a small bag containing a T-shirt and a pair of jeans at reception in his downtown San Diego hostel. Attached was a short note saying that he would be back to collect it in nine weeks' time. Then he rolled his bike out onto the street and pedaled down to the waterfront to meet up with 100 strangers.

Nine months before, an open invitation was published to anyone who wanted to join a "group start" and ride the newly created Baja Divide route. Nicholas Carmen and Lael Wilcox had pulled the 2,700-kilometer (1,678-mile) route together in 2016 and wanted to generate some interest when the website went live.

That group had been drawn by tales of beaches and cacti, rich birria and spicy fish tacos, endless dirt trails and epic coastal views. The route connects the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez, running from San Diego to the very tip of the peninsula. It passes through historic Spanish mission sites lush with shade and water, remote ranchos and fishing villages, bustling highway towns, and every major mountain range in Baja California on miles and miles of beautiful backcountry desert tracks.

Standing at the edge of the group, Chris felt a pang of nerves. Despite his experience, he had never ridden in a big group before, and never in a country where the terrain, culture, →