

Sea of Cortez

by Todd Winner

The Sea of Cortez, also known as the Gulf of California, is rich with marine life and photo opportunities. It supports nearly 900 fish varieties, 32 different marine mammals and more than 2,000 invertebrate species. The Sea of Cortez is home to wide variety of endemic species including the tiny Vaquita porpoise, the most endangered marine mammal on the planet.

There are several areas that are popular with divers including Loreto, LaPaz, Cobo Pulmo and The Midriff Islands. They all have their own unique charm and photographic treasures. Here are a few of my favorite images from the Sea of Cortez and the Nauticam gear that made it possible.

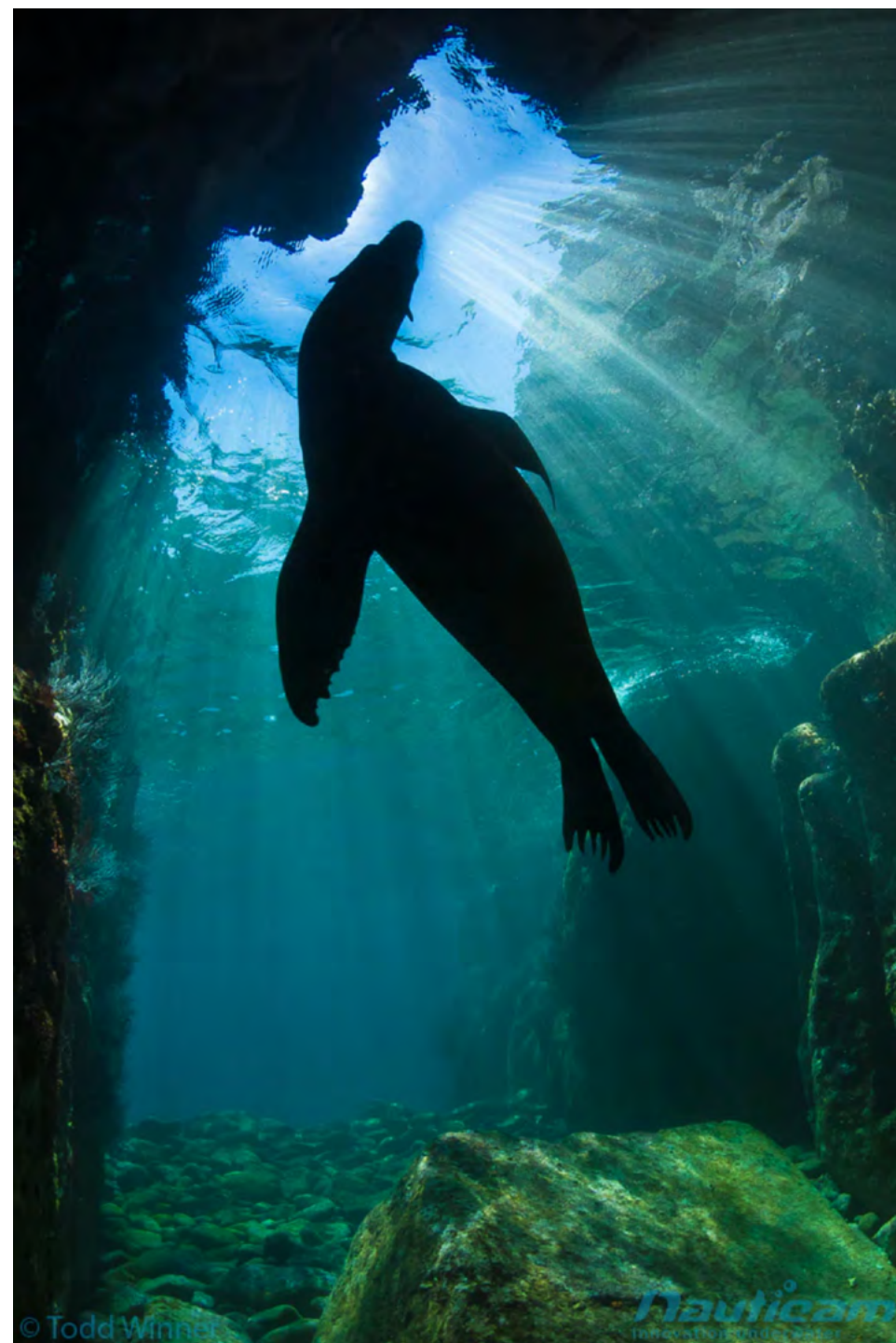
One of the reasons I keep returning to the Sea of Cortez are the extraordinary encounters. You need to spend time in the water for those unique experiences to happen. Being ready with the right equipment is the difference between getting the shot and trying to convince your friends it actually happened. I appreciate the ergonomic designs that go into Nauticam housings like the NA-5DSR. Having comfortable access



to the most commonly used controls has certainly increased the percentage of images I get to keep.

A lot of the diving is done from open panga boats. If you need to swap lenses, you'll want to do it as quickly as possible. Lens and port changes are fast and easy with

Sea lion silhouette, Canon 7D, 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye @12mm, 1/250 sec, f/14, ISO 320





Pair of juvenile Sea lions, Canon 5D Mark III, 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye with Kenko 1.4 teleconverter @ 21mm, 1/160 sec, f/8.0, ISO 160

the port locking system. The vacuum check system allows you to confirm that everything is assembled correctly before ever entering the water.

My favorite lens for wide angle in the Sea of Cortez is the Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM combined with the Nauticam 140mm optical glass fisheye port. The small size makes it much more manageable when snorkeling with the whale sharks. For macro, I prefer the EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM. It's perfect for shooting the orange throat pike blennies and blue spotted jawfish. For smaller subjects the SMC-1 gives me

up to 2.3x magnification. This is really nice for some of the tiny blennies.

I can't imagine shooting without a magnified viewfinder, both the Nauticam straight 180° and angled 45° versions offer an enlarged bright image for evaluating critical focus and composition. The 50 megapixel sensor found in the Canon 5DSR produces stunning results, but it also reveals small mistakes, like slightly out of focus subjects. I would rather be able to clearly see when the point of interest is in focus than solely rely on autofocus. Using techniques like back button focus combined with rocking



Orangethroat pikeblenny, Canon 5D Mark III, 100mm f/2.8L Macro, 1/125 sec, f/10, ISO 160

the camera back and fourth, or slightly angling the camera to make tiny adjustments, are much easier when you can see what is happening in the viewfinder.

If you ever get the opportunity to dive the Sea of Cortez, I would jump at the chance! There are just so many possibilities for interesting images with unique subjects. Just be prepared to spend a fair amount of time in the water if you wish to capture that perfect moment.



Humboldt squid, Canon 5D Mark III, 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye, 1/160 sec, f/8.0, ISO 160

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