

What's a Boojum?



While a Boojum may sound like a Dr. Seuss character. It is actually a very strange looking plant found almost exclusively in the Baja California peninsula.

Godfrey Sykes a professor from the University of Arizona, who found the plant in 1922 gave it the common name of Boojum. Coining the name of the mythical creature, found in far away desolate areas, from the children's book "The Hunting of the Snark" written by Lewis Carroll.

The Latin name is Fouquieriaceae columnaris and the common Spanish name is Cirio which refers to its tapered candle like form.

No matter what you call it. The Boojum has to be one of the weirdest looking plants on earth. With its trunk or "stem succulent" as it is referred to, reaching a height up to 18 meters (see Boojum pan shot) and a base up to 75 cm wide, a forest of these old giants is really something to see. They say this closely related plant to the octillio and Adam's tree can live to up to 300 years old.

The older trunks split up near the top branching off in different directions reaching for the searing sun. The Boojum's yellow white flowers form on the tips of the trunks between July and August. They look like tassles, atop an upside down hairy carrot, with the plants covering of small green leaves that form all over the plant whenever there are rains.

You will find the Boojums in rocky hillsides from along the Baja Transpennisular Highway from Catavina through the Vizcaino desert south to the Los Tres Virgines (Three Virgins) volcanic area.

You may also encounter Boojums on Isla Angel Guardia and an area south of Puerto Libertad on the mainland in the Sonoran desert. While the plant does not really produce a useful lumber or food source it does provide a great perch for the Zopilote.

"What's a Zopilote?" You say

I thought you'd never ask... I guess that's the next Baja "palabra" (word) to explore.

Hasta pronto, Jaime

BTW- If you'd like a great book on plants in the Baja California desert. Then you are looking to buy the ***Baja California Plant Field Guide*** by Norman Roberts. With over 400 plants and 285 photos for easy identification this is definitely a must have for any wannabe well informed Baja traveler library. Available with many other Baja related titles in our BajaInsider.



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