



Discovering Our Planet Together



The Great Gray Whales of Baja

Make Giant Friendships at Sea off Mexico's Baja Peninsula



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Trip Details:

Days:
6 Days

Price:
From \$4595
(+ Air)

Physical Requirements:
Easy

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Every winter, hundreds of Pacific gray whales return to their traditional breeding and birthing grounds in sheltered San Ignacio Lagoon on Mexico's Baja Peninsula. Their 6,000-mile migration from Alaska's Bering Sea to the warm waters of Baja's Pacific lagoons is the longest mammal migration on Earth. Nearly hunted to extinction in the past, these gentle giants have made a dramatic comeback. Friendly and engaging, they are often intrigued with humans, swimming right up to our open boats. We may see mothers "showing off" their babies, and our small groups frequently interact with them at close range. The whales entertain us with breaching and spy-hopping, and we sometimes observe mating behavior as well. When you come with us to Mexico to see them, you'll be forever spoiled for whale watching, because it doesn't get any better than this!

Trip Highlights

On six separate small-group skiff excursions, witness the spring finale of the gray whales' annual migration from Alaska to Baja

Overnight in solitude in private "whale cabanas" at our camp on the shore of San Ignacio Lagoon, far removed from any other visitors

With two naturalist Expedition Leaders, explore the salt flats and saguaro-studded Vizcaino Desert wilderness, a UN Biosphere Reserve



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Itinerary At A Glance

- Day 1**
Loreto, Mexico
- Day 2**
Loreto / San Ignacio Lagoon
- Days 3 & 4**
Whale Watching in El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve
- Day 5**
Whale Watching / Loreto
- Day 6**
Loreto / Depart

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Itinerary

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Day 1: Loreto, Mexico

Our whale-watching tour begins upon arrival in the small coastal town of Loreto, where we make a short transfer from the airport to our hotel in the heart of the historic center. Colonial Loreto was founded by the Spanish in 1697 and is the oldest permanent settlement on the Baja California peninsula, as well as the site of the region's first Jesuit mission. Peaceful Loreto offers fine beaches, reef snorkeling, nearby islands to discover, and excellent hiking in the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains that backdrop the town. This evening we gather for dinner and a preview of our time with the magnificent gray whales of Baja.





Day 2: Loreto / San Ignacio Lagoon

Driving across the spine of narrow Baja California to the Pacific Ocean today, we follow the scenic Sea of Cortez coastline northward before turning west to traverse a dramatic landscape of arid mountains dotted with saguaros. At the sleepy colonial village of San Ignacio, we transfer into smaller vans for the remainder of the trip to the coast, arriving in time for dinner. Our “whale cabana” accommodations at the edge of San Ignacio Lagoon are a special feature of our trip. Secluded on a quiet stretch of rocky beach, the cabanas are well-built thatched structures, rustic but inviting, each with two beds and a window overlooking the bay. Ecological shower facilities and toilets are shared, though an en suite toilet is provided for nighttime use. While basic, these are the best remote lodgings available, offering the opportunity to experience the wilderness of the Vizcaino Desert, a 6-million-acre UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, in genuine comfort.

Days 3 & 4: Whale Watching in El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve

Whales have been revered as mystical creatures by many cultures, and an intimate encounter with them is a dream realized for wildlife lovers. Gray whales make the world's longest mammal migration, traveling 10,000-12,000 miles annually between their summer feeding grounds in the cold Arctic waters of Alaska's Bering Sea to reach their sheltered winter calving lagoons in Baja. Our Expedition Leader and local guides provide expert interpretation about their remarkable journey and their fascinating range of behaviors, which we'll hope to witness at close range.



We watch the whales from motorized open skiffs that allow an unimpeded view. We may see them breach, spy-hop or glide up close to present their backs for a scratch. In general, we spend two hours whale-watching per excursion and make two excursions per day (due to conservation regulations, these numbers may vary, depending on the total number of boats on the water at a given time), with a total of six whale-watching excursions during our stay. Numerous whales enter this particular lagoon, and our maneuverable small boats allow us to get incredibly close. Naturally, we are very sensitive to the animals' demeanor before approaching, and our skiff drivers are experts at positioning the boats to maximize our encounters with the whales without disturbing them. We may see males competing for females, young adults playing, and mothers protecting and teaching their calves, perhaps the most endearing of all our encounters. Babies, which are 14 to 16 feet at birth and gain 50 pounds a day as they grow, sometimes come within arm's length of our boats. Once they reach full maturity, they will weigh 30-40 tons and reach 50-60 feet long.

Ashore, we participate in other activities such as birdwatching, exploring the vast, empty beaches and salt flats, and taking naturalist-led hikes during which we may find fossils, bones and shells. If weather and tides cooperate, we may also explore the local mangrove estuaries.



Day 5: Whale Watching / Loreto

After a final chance to spend time with the whales, we depart San Ignacio by road, crossing the rugged Sierra de la Giganta Mountains once more to return to Loreto. We arrive in time for dinner and a final evening together in this charming, laid-back coastal town.

Day 6: Loreto / Depart

Our whale-watching trip comes to a close as we transfer to the airport for flights home. Or, you may choose to spend an extra day in Loreto to explore this historic town and beautiful, little-developed coastal region.



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Accommodation Details:

La Mision

The Whale Cabanas

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/central-america/whales-of-baja/accommodations/

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Accommodations

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La Mision

Amid a rich tapestry of old Spanish mission heritage and authentic Mexican culture, La Mision offers gracious harborfront accommodations in Loreto, the first capital of the Californias.



The Whale Cabanas

Featuring 10 small and simple raised thatched-roof cabanas set directly on Baja's San Ignacio Lagoon, this eco-camp delivers a secluded experience where guests are enveloped by the desert wilderness.



Come Eye to Eye with Whales from Our Open Skiffs

Many whale-watching tours—off Boston or Maui, for example—take place on large commercial boats where you have to strain to see around guests crowding the rail, and if you do spot a whale, it's likely you'll glimpse only a tail or a spout of spray on the horizon. Our Baja whale experience couldn't be more different! We foray into the whales' world at close range, with frequent, intimate encounters the norm. Here's what makes this trip a better "whale of an adventure" than the others:

1 We Make SIX Separate Whale-Watching Excursions

Typically, we'll spend two hours on each whale-watching excursion (times are strictly regulated by marine reserve regulations) and make two excursions per day, for a total of six whale encounters during our six-day trip.

2 Our Small Groups Get You Much Closer to Whales

The open skiffs we use hold just 8–10 guests and sit low on the water, putting you practically at eye level with the whales. If a whale approaches us, everyone gets a great look. Small groups also mean more personalized interactions with our guides, with plenty of opportunities for conversation about the whales' behavior and their habitat.

3 Our Small Skiffs are More Maneuverable, for Better Viewing

There's simply nothing as exhilarating as close proximity to a huge gray whale. Imagine the photographic opportunities as you come within arm's length of these charismatic cetaceans! Your skiff driver is an expert at positioning the boat to maximize your encounters with the whales without disturbing them. Young whales tend to be especially curious, and mothers sometimes like to "show off" their calves by bringing them alongside our boats.

4 Stay in Unique Accommodations Secluded in Nature

Our private "whale camp" lies within the protected confines of El Vizcaino UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. With lodgings located on a quiet stretch of shoreline right on the lagoon's edge, we get you as close as possible to these gentle giants without being in the water yourself! We stay in rustic but comfortable private thatched cabanas, backed by a vast expanse of desert, where a sense of nature's peace is palpable. The Vizcaino ecosystem contains thousands of endemic species—plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. The dark, starry nights alone are worth the stay.



5 The Whale Camp is Ours Alone

Not only do we enjoy exceptional proximity to San Ignacio Lagoon, but genuine privacy, too. No one else besides our small group will be staying in our camp's enclave of 10 shoreside cabanas and a dining palapa, since we reserve it for our exclusive use. We'll have this natural space all to ourselves to birdwatch, hike, beachcomb and explore the rare mangrove estuaries, stark salt flats and desert dunes.

6 Travel with an Experienced Expedition Leader—Plus the Best Local Guides!

The NHA Expedition Leaders who guide this trip have more than 20 years' experience leading nature adventures in Mexico. In addition, they receive special training and resources from WWF scientists. As an added benefit, top local guides also join us, ensuring the perfect mix of insider insights and attentive personal service.

7 Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding Whale Watching Adventure

With Natural Habitat Adventures, you receive our exclusive guarantee that clearly states that we will meet the high expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company.

8 Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey

We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

9 Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner

Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our small-group nature adventures, World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental conservation organization, has named Natural Habitat Adventures its worldwide travel partner—a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!





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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From \$4595
(+ Air)

Location:

Group Size:
Limited to 18
Travelers

Physical Requirements:
Easy

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Dates, Pricing & Info

Make Giant Friendships at Sea off Mexico's Baja Peninsula

2021 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 9, 2021	Feb 14, 2021	
Feb 15, 2021	Feb 20, 2021	p>Pair with our Ultimate Baja Whale Expedition /p>
Feb 21, 2021	Feb 26, 2021	
Feb 27, 2021	Mar 4, 2021	



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Pricing

2021 Prices

Trip Price
\$4595 to \$4795



Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$895. to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.

Deposit: \$500 per person

Other Notes: Prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars.

Group Size

Limited to 18 Travelers

A very important feature of our whale-watching tours is the limited group size, as whale encounters are best experienced with fewer travelers for a more intimate nature experience. On this eco-travel adventure, we have exclusive use of our private waterfront camp. We divide our group into smaller numbers for whale-watching excursions, with each boat generally accommodating eight to nine guests.

Included

Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s) and local guides, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, some alcoholic beverages, most gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry and internet, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

Physical Requirements

Easy

This adventure is not strenuous and does not require a high degree of physical fitness, however you must be able to walk unassisted for a minimum of one-half mile in order to participate in this trip. Some of our group meals are a short walk from the hotel and an alternate means of transportation is unavailable. You must be able to walk up and down stairs, wade through shallow water to step in and out of the excursion skiffs, and sit on bench seats for long periods of time while whale watching. Depending on weather and sea conditions, boat excursions to the whales can be rough, bumpy and wet. Winds may be strong, water may spray into the boat, and temperatures may be cold. Optional hikes will also be available, and in order to participate in these, you must be able to walk unassisted for



at least one mile. All activities are completely optional, and travelers should only participate in those activities with which they feel comfortable. If you are concerned with your personal physical capabilities with regard to the demands of this trip, please contact our office for further details, in addition to your own physician for his or her opinion.

Important Information About This Trip

This trip offers the closest possible whale encounters and is a must for lovers of marine wildlife. Please be aware that flights to and from Loreto, our start and finish point, are often very limited. We strongly advise signing up for this trip as early as possible to avoid problems with flight availability and expensive fares. Additionally, airlines tend to alter flight schedules on this route fairly often, so please be aware that we may need to address a schedule change after flights have been booked.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas you will travel to on this trip are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require medical evacuation insurance for this program. If you decline the medical evacuation insurance coverage offered by Natural Habitat Adventures, we require that you send us documentation of the independent coverage you have selected. We recommend that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least \$250,000 in medical evacuation coverage. Please note that we will add the cost of Natural Habitat Adventures' medical evacuation policy (currently \$48 per person) to your tour invoice until you provide our office with proof of coverage including your insurance company's name, phone number and your individual policy number. Thank you for understanding that our policy exists exclusively in the interest of our guests' safety.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

Plan to arrive in Loreto no later than 4 pm on Day 1 of the adventure, as there is a group orientation and welcome dinner at 5 pm. You are free to depart anytime on the final day. We can best serve you if our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk makes your reservations, as we are intimately familiar with the special requirements of this program and can arrange the most efficient travel. Please call us at 800-543-8917. Note that while we offer you the best possible rates available to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may find special web rates or better fares online.



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Extension Details:

Among the Great Whales
8 Days / Jan – Mar, From \$5990

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Extensions

Make Giant Friendships at Sea off Mexico's Baja Peninsula



Among the Great Whales

Enjoy magical close encounters with enormous gray whales in the warm waters of the Baja Peninsula, which are their winter breeding and nursery grounds.

8 Days / Jan – Mar, From \$5990





Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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NHA has provided more than \$4 million to World Wildlife Fund and will continue to give 1 percent of gross sales plus \$125,000 annually through 2023 in support of WWF's mission to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.® WWF and World Wildlife Fund are WWF Registered Trademarks. © 1986 Panda Symbol WWF.