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Baja Whales and Wildlife

A SPECIAL DEPARTURE WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

March 11-18, 2012

The Sea of Cortez is both the earth's youngest and richest sea. The waters teem with countless invertebrate species and over 650 tropical and temperate fish. It is also home to many of the great whales of the world. The goal of this expedition is to observe the magnificent blue whale, the largest living creature on earth. Reaching over 100 feet in length, the sheer grandeur of these leviathans will utterly bedazzle you.

As you travel aboard the Don Jose during the week's journey you're likely to encounter delightful schools of dolphin and up to seven species of whale including blue, humpback, sperm, finback, Bryde's, minke, orca, and gray whales.

As we explore the Sea of Cortez there will be opportunities to stop at desert islands where we will visit a sea lion rookery and a fishing village and have time for hiking and snorkeling.

The bird life in the Sea of Cortez is spectacular and many tropical seabirds are common. Magnificent frigate birds, brown and blue footed boobies, brown pelicans, Heermann's gulls, yellow footed gulls, royal and elegant terns, storm-petrel and rare red-billed tropic birds can all be found here and add to the excellent diversity of this expedition.

ITINERARY / SEA OF CORTEZ: BAJA WHALES AND WILDLIFE CRUISE

Our daily itinerary will be flexible in order to take advantage of unexpected natural history opportunities. The main objective on this trip will be to seek and observe the blue whale as well as other marine mammals and birds.

Day 1: Arrive in La Paz, Mexico

If arriving at the airport in La Paz, use your taxi voucher for the transfer to the Marina Don Jose. After checking in at the Marina, where you will be met by our naturalist, spend some time exploring the colorful city of La Paz, with its charming promenade and many fine restaurants and shops. There are no activities or meals included today. You'll spend the night dockside aboard the boat awaiting a morning departure. (no meals)

Day 2-6: At sea

An early morning departure is scheduled, cruising north from La Paz through the Sea of Cortez. We will search for whales while making daily stops at various islands for snorkeling, hiking, beach combing and bird watching.

Day 7: Arrive in La Paz, Mexico

The boat arrives in La Paz after lunch, when you'll be transferred to a local hotel. After the check-in, spend some time exploring the colorful city of La Paz, with its charming promenade and many fine restaurants and shops. Dinner is on your own this evening. For dessert, we suggest you visit La Fuente, an ice cream shop across from the Malecon, where you can enjoy your icy treat while watching the sunset. (breakfast and lunch)

Day 8: Depart from La Paz to your home city

Depart to your home city. There are taxis available 24 hours a day in front of the hotel for service to the La Paz airport and the cost is approximately \$20. (no meals)

Hotel on night 7 and transfer from the La Paz airport to the dock on day 1 are included in the trip fee.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Travel Documents

A Tourist Card is required to travel in Mexico. You can obtain a copy upon arrival for your international flight to Mexico. A valid passport is now required for travel between the U.S. and Mexico. This is VERY important. Minors under the age of 18 must have two notarized copies of both parents' consent when traveling alone or with one parent. Contact our office if you require this form.

Mexico's Conservation Passport

Designed by the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas in 2006, this program raises funds for the continued protection of the shorelines, inlets, beaches and coves that make this area so extraordinary to visit. This mandatory access fee of \$25.00 allows you to visit Mexico's Protected Areas as many times as you wish for a calendar year.

Safety

Your safety is our first concern. It is important to remember that these trips take place in a wilderness environment, far from hospital services. Engaging in activities like viewing animals from skiffs, sea kayaking, hiking, exploring, and swimming in a natural environment contains certain inherent risks. If at any time you have concerns about your own safety, please advise the guide. Remember all participation is voluntary.

Weather

The weather in the southern Sea of Cortez is generally mild with warm days in the mid- to high-70s. Surface water temperatures in the spring average between 65 to 75 degrees. The nights are usually mild but can upon occasion dip to 60 degrees or lower. Be prepared for anything is the rule in the Sea of Cortez!

Comfort and Health

We can normally accommodate persons with particular food needs, including vegetarians. Our menus are American with a Mexican influence. Please inform us before departure if you have any dietary needs. If you have any sort of chronic condition that warrants medical attention and could cause you trouble, or if you have any doubt of your physical condition we ask that you have a physical examination. Discuss with your doctor the details of the trip described in our literature, and let your doctor determine your fitness for this journey. Even though we have adequate first aid and emergency gear we will be in remote areas. Please remember to bring a hat, sunglasses and water bottle. Also Sunscreen is very important. Sunburn is a real danger and hindrance to your enjoyment of your trip. You can bring any sunscreen you want, but we recommend one with a block out rating of SPF 50 or higher. Chapstick with a sunscreen is also recommended.

Tipping

Tipping of the captain, crew and naturalist is normally organized by the passengers as a "group tip" to be divided equally among the crew at the end of the trip. The average tip is 5-10% of the tour fee. Please present the tip to the crew through the naturalist.

Personal Equipment Checklist

Please plan well when packing for your trip. Storage space on ships is limited and you must pack in collapsible luggage. Feel free to bring what you will need; this list can serve as a format for your individual needs. We want you to be comfortable in your gear. Remember that dress is strictly casual and camping clothes are the rule.

Clothing

- Wool shirt or sweatshirt
- Warm jacket
- Cotton long sleeved shirt
- T-shirts
- Sweatpants, slacks & shorts
- Swim suit
- Socks, underwear
- Tennis shoes or hiking boots
- Sandals or thongs
- Sun hat
- Wind breaker or rain jacket
- Bandana
- Sleep wear

Toilet Kit

- Toothbrush, paste
- Suntan lotion/screen
- Skin cream/lip balm
- Beach towel, wash cloth
- Brush, comb, shampoo
- Personal medicines
- Insect repellent
- Extra prescription glasses

Notes On Equipment

Binoculars are very useful for viewing birds and whales. They need not be expensive or fancy. You will get the most out of them if you practice using them at home and if you make a habit of wearing them regularly on the trip.

Polarized sunglasses help to see through the reflection at the surface of the water when looking for whales, fish or other interesting marine life as well as protecting your eyes.

Day packs are useful while out whale watching or hiking to carry a water bottle, snack, binoculars, camera, film, and, suntan lotion, and first aid essentials.

Tennis shoes or other appropriate boat (soft-soled) shoes are preferred on board the vessels. You should be your own judge as to the footwear you will wear on the islands. Some people are completely comfortable with tennis shoes while others need the support of sturdy hiking boots. Sandals, “flip-flops”, an old pair of tennis shoes or wetsuit booties can be useful for getting in and out of the skiffs on some landings to keep your walking shoes dry.

Snorkeling is great. A wetsuit is useful, as the water temperatures will range around 65 degrees. We provide wetsuits and snorkeling gear but you may want to bring your own for that perfect fit. Thermal protection is the main use of the wetsuits but it is also protection from small jellyfish and other stinging organisms found in the water. Nylon tights, long sleeve t-shirts, or full body Lycra/Spandex suits work very well when used in conjunction with or in place of wetsuits.

Miscellaneous Gear

- Binoculars
- Sunglasses (Polarized)
- Water bottle
- Earplugs
- Day pack
- Proof-of-citizenship & photo ID
- Small first aid kit
- Dirty clothes bag
- Money
- Wetsuit

Optional Equipment

- Camera, film, batteries
- Sewing kit
- Diary, journal
- Pens, pencil
- Cards, books

Air & Water Temperatures In Baja And Sea Of Cortez

	Air	Water
January-April	60-75	60-65
May	75-90	60-69
June	79-95	60-72
July	85-100	65-80
Aug-Oct	85-100	80-85
November	68-85	78-80
December	68-80	68-75

These are the approximate temperatures. Please remember that you are traveling in a desert region. When on the water, air temperatures can be cooler in the early morning and late evening.

The Don Jose

The Don Jose is an 80' motor vessel launched in 1979, and was designed specifically for dive expeditions. It is outfitted with 7 staterooms, all above deck with excellent ventilation, air conditioning and large bunks. Some are equipped with wash basins and curtained changing area, hanging lockers with drawers for storage and privacy curtains. Three bathrooms with showers adjoin the staterooms. The dining area is separate from the kitchen. There is 110V available 24 hours in all rooms and the dining salon area. Storage lockers are available for snorkeling and dive gear. A VHS video player and monitor are available for your use.

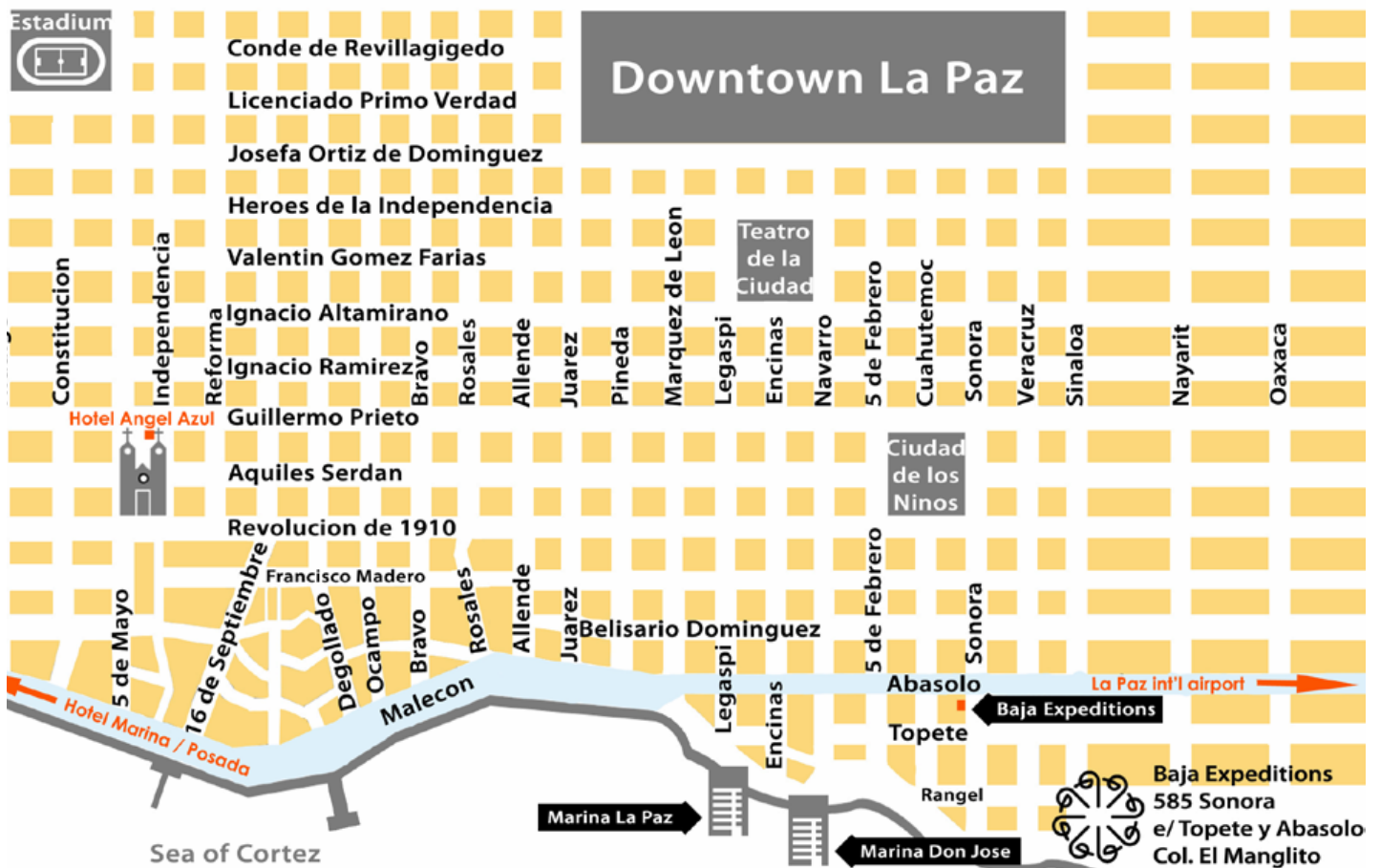


La Paz Information and Things to Do

Landmarks: The airport is approximately 15 minutes from town. The boardwalk that runs along the waterfront is known as the "Malecon" and is where most of the curio shops, restaurants, and the Hotel Los Arcos are located. Some of the more popular restaurants include Carlos & Charlies (lively Mexican), the Bismark (excellent seafood), the Dock Cafe (at Marina de La Paz), La Pazta (homemade pasta dishes), La Caleta (a thatched-roof palapa across from the Los Arcos Cabañas located on the waterfront) and Nueve Dragones (Chinese). Las Varitas and La Paz-Lapa are two of the more popular nightclubs.

The Anthropology Museum of Baja California, at 5 de Mayo and Altamirano Streets, has a wide display of old maps, mission artifacts, dress and tools of Baja's vaqueros, and cork, leather and palm-fiber crafts. In downtown La Paz, at Madero and 5 de Mayo Streets, is the Three Californias Public Library, which contains historical and cultural data on the Californias that can only be found there. A carved mural of Mexico's history decorates the facade of the government palace on Isabel la Catolica Street, and the La Paz Cathedral, on Constitution Square, should be visited. A weavers shop called Artesanias Cuauhtemoc (ask for directions) is a great place to purchase authentic, hand-made weavings.

Taxis are approximately \$5 - \$7 per cab. Many of the shops are closed from 1-3pm, others remain open in the afternoon but close early. Every hour shuttle buses run from the bus station downtown to the most popular beaches: La Concha, Balandra & Tecolote. Deep sea fishing, windsurfing and other activities can be organized through the Hotel Los Arcos (booth in the lobby). Money Exchange Locations ... Most hotels will give you close to the bank exchange rate. Stores will accept dollars and credit cards on most purchases and give a reasonable rate of exchange.



COSTS & RESERVATIONS

- Deluxe Rooms: Main deck (rooms 1, 2, 3, 4), \$2,195 per person, double occupancy.
- Standard Rooms: Upper deck (rooms 5, 6, 7), \$1,995 per person, double occupancy.

Reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis. A 20% non-refundable deposit is required to confirm space. Final payment is due 45 days prior to departure. Please contact Baja Expeditions directly to make your reservation: Nathalie: 1-800-843-6967.

CANCELLATION POLICY

All cancellations must be in writing. All deposits are non-refundable upon receipt. No refunds upon receipt of payment(s). All cancellations must be in writing.



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If you have additional questions, or would like to make a reservation, please contact:

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BAJA EXPEDITIONS

The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

More Information

To download detailed itineraries for our other natural history excursions, please visit nature.org/travel.

Questions?

Contact The Nature Conservancy
821 SE 14th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97214
(503) 802-8170 or excursions.tnc.org