



Discovering Our Planet Together



Among the Great Whales

Meet Gray Whales Up Close & Explore the Desert & Seas of Baja California

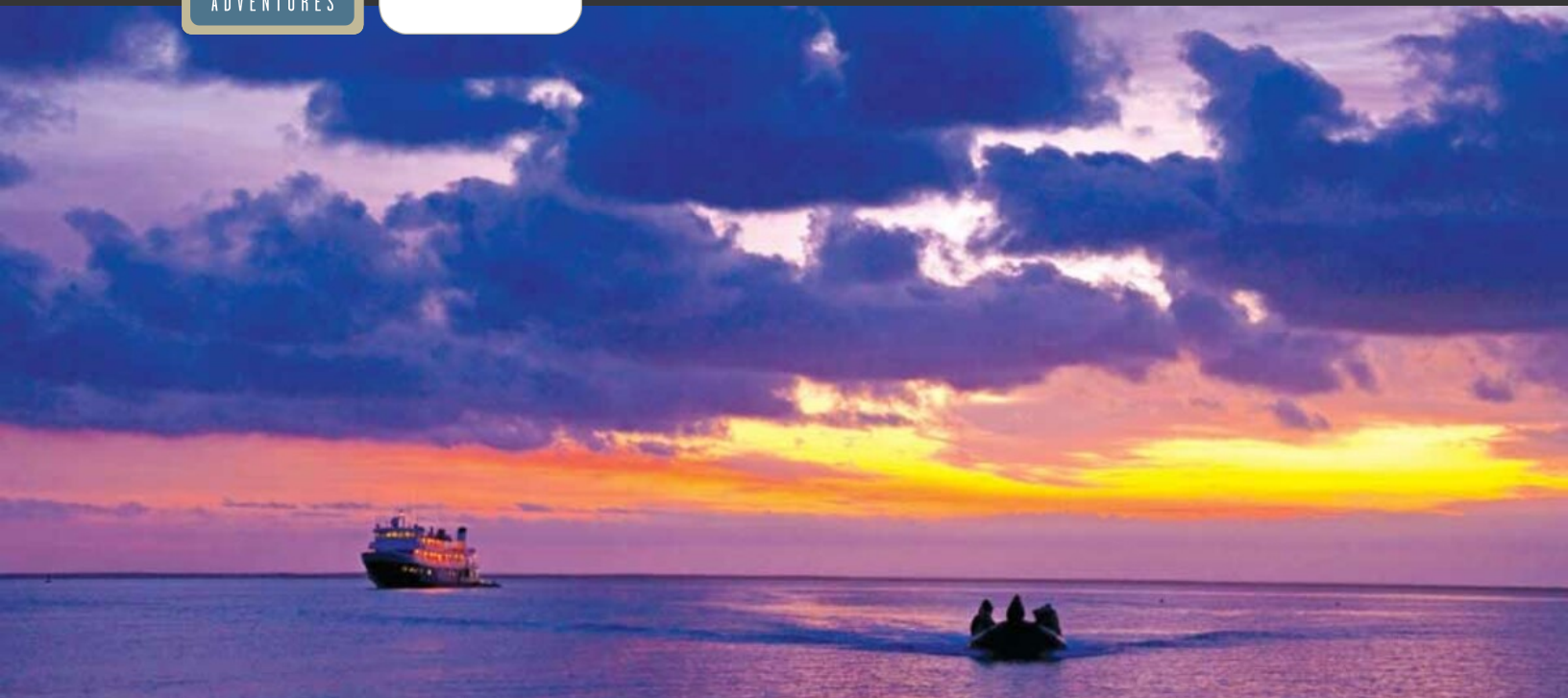


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Trip Details:

Days:
8 Days / Jan–Mar

Price:
From \$7000
(+ Air)

Physical Requirements:
Easy to Moderate

Among the Great Whales

Meet Gray Whales Up Close & Explore the Desert & Seas of Baja California

Each winter, gray whales migrate from their Arctic feeding grounds in the Bering Sea to breed and birth their young in the sheltered lagoons of Mexico's Baja Peninsula. The annual journey is the longest mammal migration on Earth, covering more than 10,000 miles roundtrip. In the protected waters of Magdalena Bay on Baja California's Pacific coast, cruise among the whales in expedition rafts, offering the rare privilege of a close-up, water-level perspective—these friendly mammals sometimes approach our boats directly! We also enjoy naturalist-guided walks on uninhabited islands, plus swimming, snorkeling and kayaking in the Sea of Cortez. Based aboard our expedition ship, discover all the natural treasures Baja California is famous for, including whales, dolphins, sea lions, blue-footed boobies and frigatebirds, huge cardon cacti, mangroves and sand dunes.

Trip Highlights

Experience magical moments with gray whales—one of the world's largest mammals—and witness the start of the whale calves' life journey

Swim, snorkel and hike among the Sea of Cortez islands as we look for blue whales, bottlenose dolphins and endemic black jackrabbits

Discover the varied habitats of Baja California—lagoons, desert, dunes and mangroves home to frigatebirds, pelicans, cormorants and great blue herons



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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1

Loreto, Mexico / San Carlos—Embark Ship

Day 2

Bahia Almejas / Rehusa Channel / Isla Magdalena

Day 3

Boca de Soledad

Day 4

Hull Canal / Cruising

Day 5

Gorda Banks / Cabo Pulmo

Day 6

Los Islotes / La Paz

Day 7

Exploring the Sea of Cortez

Day 8

Loreto—Disembark / Depart

Among the Great Whales Itinerary

Meet Gray Whales Up Close & Explore the Desert & Seas of Baja California

Day 1: Loreto, Mexico / San Carlos—Embark Ship

Upon arrival at the airport in Loreto, transfer to San Carlos to embark ship. Settle in to your cabin and head up to the sundeck to admire the views as we prepare to sail. This evening, we anchor off the coast of Isla Santa Margarita, a sandy barrier island that separates Magdalena Bay from the Pacific Ocean.





Day 2: Bahia Almejas / Rehusa Channel / Isla Magdalena

Awake in Bahia Almejas, the southernmost part of Magdalena Bay, where we expect our first encounters with whales. Each winter, Pacific gray whales make the longest migration of any mammal, swimming south from their Arctic feeding grounds off Alaska to breed, birth and raise their young in the warm waters of Baja California's west coast. Bahia Magdalena (Magdalena Bay) is a primary breeding and calving area for gray whales, protected by a chain of barrier islands. We stop at a large frigatebird colony en route to the whale grounds of Bahia Almejas. During lunch, the ship will reposition to Isla Magdalena where we head to shore to explore the ever-shifting sand dunes on a walk across the island to one of Mexico's most pristine Pacific beaches. Bird watching here can be excellent—it's not unusual to see 40 bird species in a single day along this shoreline, where migrators refuel for their destinations ahead.

Day 3: Boca de Soledad

Our ship remains in the heart of the gray whale's breeding grounds today. Marvel at these gentle giants that are often visible from the deck, then step ashore on Lopez Mateos where local fishermen guide us into the bay on Zodiacs to observe the numerous mother-calf pairs that thrive in this protected region. Birdwatching can be excellent here too, with magnificent frigatebirds, pelicans, cormorants, terns and great blue herons among the species we frequently see. We'll eat lunch at a local restaurant before returning to the ship in late afternoon.

Day 4: Hull Canal / Cruising

Spend a final morning exploring Magdalena Bay's vast mangrove system via kayak, stand-up paddleboard and Zodiac, learning from our naturalist guides about the importance of these massive ecosystems. This afternoon, we sail out through "La Entrada," the Hull Canal's narrow, navigable channel, as we leave Magdalena Bay to sail south along Baja's Pacific coast. This is where the rugged Baja California desert meets the sea, and the shoreline is marked with sand dunes, deserted white sand beaches and small fishing camps—as well as several famous surfing spots. At sea, keep watch for a diverse array of wildlife including seabirds, dolphins and maybe even the largest animal on Earth, the blue whale. Breathe in the salt air and watch the changing sky as you gain in-depth insights from the onboard naturalists who know these waters intimately. You may also choose to pursue some new photography skills under the guidance of the ship's National Geographic-certified photographer.



Day 5: Gorda Banks / Cabo Pulmo

Watch the sun come up as we cruise past Friars Rocks at Land's End. We spend the morning at the Gorda Banks sea mount, a gathering place for whales and dolphins. Humpback whales are often on view this time of year, and we may see tail lobbing, flipper slapping, spy-hopping and breaching. Our marine biologists and naturalists are at your side to share their extensive knowledge of this region and its species. Not only do they know where the best spots are to look for wildlife, their passion for the area is infectious—whether you ask a question or two, or spend an entire day in their company. After lunch, set out for the East Cape region of Baja California Sur to snorkel the reefs of Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park. Surrounded by uninhabited desert and rugged mountains, Cabo Pulmo has successfully preserved pristine beaches along a shallow bay with the only hard coral reef in North America. The reef is approximately 20,000 years old, among the oldest in the American Pacific. Fishing is restricted, and the marine life in these waters is prolific. Spend time learning about park's conservation efforts with devoted locals whose advocacy for this pristine environment drove the effort to achieve official protection for Cabo Pulmo by the Mexican government.

Day 6: Los Islotes / La Paz

With deeply indented shorelines and dramatically eroded cliff faces, Los Islotes are some of the most beautiful islands in the Sea of Cortez. We swim and snorkel here, with equipment and instruction provided by the ship's expedition staff. Curious sea lions often swim right up to us, eager to play. There's also a chance to observe the islands' rich geological history from a kayak, observing massive amounts of compacted volcanic ash covered with solidified lava floods, just yards from the shore. Seabirds abound, and brown pelicans, yellow-footed gulls and blue-footed boobies dot the landscape. This afternoon, take in vibrant La Paz, the capital city of Baja California Sur. With its lively street art and bustling waterfront Malecon, you'll feel the romance of authentic Mexican culture. Dinner this evening is an unforgettable cultural experience, complete with local cuisine, dancing and folklore.

Day 7: Exploring the Sea of Cortez

The Gulf of California—also known as the Sea of Cortez, named in 1539 for the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortez who explored it earlier that century—is home to tremendous biological diversity, and sightings of whales, dolphins, and other sea life are among the highlights of our journey. With the luxury of flexibility and no set plan, we explore a sampler of the Sea's many uninhabited islands today. Our captain and Expedition Leader will choose the optimal combination of activities for the day. Jacques Cousteau called the Sea of Cortez "the world's aquarium," and we get a feel for the aptness of that moniker as we scout for marine life. We may go ashore at Isla San Francisco, where a sweeping arc of white-sand beach fringes waters perfect for kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding. Or perhaps we'll visit Bahia de Los Muertos to snorkel among the coral. Rich in nutrients, the Sea of Cortez is home to a huge variety of fish, including king angelfish, surgeonfish, butterfly fish, damselfish and the vividly colored parrotfish.



Day 8: Loreto—Disembark / Depart

Our whale-watching cruise comes to an end as we disembark this morning in Loreto, a peaceful colonial town founded in 1697 by Jesuit missionaries. Transfer to the small city's historic center to visit the first mission in Baja California—The Mission of Our Lady of Loreto—and the nearby museum, with free time to wander the compact Old Town. After lunch, transfer to the Loreto airport to meet departing flights.

Note: This itinerary should serve as a guideline only; the actual stops are determined by weather, wildlife activity, and a host of factors in order to provide the best possible experience. This flexibility is what makes traveling on our nimble expedition ships so much more rewarding than on a large vessel with a locked-in voyage plan. Some itineraries travel in reverse.



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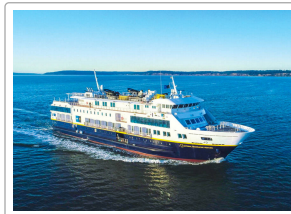
Accommodation Details:

National Geographic Venture

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/adventure-cruises/among-great-whales/ships/

Among the Great Whales Accommodations

Meet Gray Whales Up Close & Explore the Desert & Seas of Baja California



National Geographic Venture

Built in 2017, this sister ship to Quest incorporates state-of-the-art features and technology including a panoramic windows and an open bow for wildlife watching, and ample expedition tools.



Discovering Our Planet Together

Sail with the World Leader in Conservation-Focused Small Ship Cruising

We're proud to offer a worldwide slate of Adventure Cruises through our partner, Lindblad Expeditions. Nat Hab joined forces with Lindblad in 2016 to expand our mutual collection of nature adventures. Founded in 1958 by Lars-Eric Lindblad, the company pioneered eco-conscious expeditions for "citizen explorers" and today is the world leader in conservation-focused small-ship cruises. Our Adventure Specialists are intimately familiar with the ships and itineraries and are on call to answer any questions you might have.

1 Travel with a Top Naturalist Expedition Team

Gain a deep understanding of the natural history of Baja as you sail with a veteran expedition team. Each sailing includes an Expedition Leader and a team of naturalists, plus an undersea specialist, a Lindblad-National Geographic certified photo instructor, and a wellness specialist. Our Baja naturalists represent a diversity of specialties, including marine biology, evolutionary biology, ornithology and more. As you choose your daily activities, flexibility lets you gravitate to the naturalists whose interests mirror your own.

2 Gain Unmatched Access to Whales

Enjoy the rare privilege of entering the Pacific gray whale birthing lagoons for close encounters with these gentle giants. Lindblad is the only non-local company allowed to bring its own expedition landing craft into this area of Magdalena Bay. This is also the only itinerary that explores both the lagoons on the Pacific Ocean side plus the Sea of Cortez on the same voyage, offering more chances for whale sightings. While gray whales offer the most consistent interactions, the Sea of Cortez is home to a great variety of whales and dolphins: pods of hundreds of common and bottlenose dolphins; orcas and false killer whales; blue, fin, Bryde's, humpback, pilot and sperm whales; and more.

3 Explore in Depth via Excursion Craft & Specialized Equipment

The ship's fleet of tandem and single kayaks facilitates intimate water-level exploration of scenic coastlines with close proximity to nesting birds. Complete snorkel gear, including wetsuits, is at your disposal so you can swim with sea lions and schools of colorful reef fish. If you prefer to stay dry, observe the underwater world of the Sea of Cortez via HD video shot by our undersea specialist who shares footage from each day's dives on the plasma screens in the ship's lounge. Listen to whale communications via hydrophone, and observe the whales underwater in real time via a bow-mounted camera that sends a live feed to the onboard screens. Via expedition landing craft, explore with a naturalist's expert narration, and get great photos from this platform with tips from a Lindblad-National Geographic certified photo instructor.



4 Be a Part of Citizen Science

Witness research on board our ship that's supported by National Geographic. Watch our crew lower scientific instruments that measure various levels in the Sea of Cortez, with the goal of revealing changes in an ecologically important zone.

5 Help Support Local Communities

In 2004, Lindblad founded the Gulf of California Conservation Fund in partnership with the Mexican Nature Conservation Fund to raise funds for conservation projects. Lindblad's contributions support a range of programs in Baja's local towns, from promoting lower-impact fishing to seabird research, marine conservation, sustainable tourism and social marketing for sustainable seafood.

6 Flexibility Keeps You Closer to Wildlife

Flexibility is a hallmark of our expeditions, and our small ship is what makes that possible. Expedition landing craft get you close to whales and follow the shoreline for close-up photos of plunge-diving pelicans and blue-footed boobies. And the captain will change course to keep the ship among a pod of dolphins. A less-scripted voyage means more spontaneity to follow the wildlife.

7 We're Committed to the Planet

Natural Habitat Adventures is a standard-setter in eco-conscious travel. We have been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007. And we continue to break innovative ground in adopting practices that help to protect our global environment. Because of our concern for the environment, we are pleased to partner with Lindblad Expeditions for our Adventure Cruises, a company that shares our values and commitment to the planet.

8 Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner

Because of our environmental commitment and the outstanding quality of our adventures, World Wildlife Fund has chosen Natural Habitat Adventures as its worldwide travel partner, a designation we're very proud of! When you book your Lindblad Expeditions cruise with us, a portion of your trip fee supports WWF.





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Pricing

2024 Prices

Pricing *Note that pricing is subject to change and may vary based on availability. For per-departure pricing, hover your cursor over the dates above (desktop) or tap the date of your choosing (mobile).*

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. A deposit of **15%** of the cabin fare is required to reserve your space.

New Year, New Perspectives: Book select departures (listed below) by March 13, 2024 and receive a credit of **\$500 per person**, deducted from the cabin fare prior to any additional applicable savings. Save an additional **10% on the cabin fare** when you pay in full at time of booking. Solo travelers save an additional **25% on solo cabins**. Conditions apply, subject to availability, may not be combined with other offers, and not applicable on airfare or extensions. Please call for details.

- Feb 3, 2024 (NG Venture)
- Feb 24, 2024 (NG Venture)

2025 Prices

Pricing

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Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. A deposit of **15%** of



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Group Size

National Geographic Venture : [see deck plan and photos](#)

An important feature of any Lindblad Expeditions adventure cruise is the small ship size. Smaller ships are able to access more remote areas off limits to large cruise ships, and guests aboard enjoy more intimate nature encounters as well as more personalized interactions with the ship's naturalist staff. Guests are divided into smaller groups for boat excursions, kayak outings and hikes ashore.

Included

Accommodations; meals indicated; excursions; services of Lindblad Expeditions' Leader; naturalist staff and expert guides; use of kayaks; snorkel gear; all port charges and service taxes.

Not Included

Air transportation; voyage DVD; personal items such as alcoholic beverages, emails, etc.; discretionary tips to ship's crew; optional travel and/or medical evacuation insurance.

Recommended Insurance Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we strongly recommend that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. While this is not required, we make this strong suggestion in the interest of our guests' safety. We recommend that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least \$250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

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.

Physical Requirements

Easy to Moderate

This adventure does not require a high degree of physical fitness. 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, you should be able to walk unassisted on uneven terrain for at least one mile. All activities are completely optional, and travelers should only participate in those activities with which they feel comfortable.

Mandatory Insurance



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Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least \$250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

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

You will need to fly in and out of Loreto, Mexico.

We can best serve you by having Lindblad Expeditions' air department book your flights, since Lindblad is most familiar with the special requirements of each trip. Please call Lindblad directly at 800-397-3348. Note that while Lindblad Expeditions' air department will offer you its best available rates on airfare, you may find special web rates or better fares online.



Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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WWF's membership travel program is operated by Natural Habitat Adventures (Nat Hab). To date, Nat Hab has provided more than \$6 million in support of WWF's mission and will continue to give 1% of gross sales plus \$175,000 annually through 2028. WWF® and ©1986 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All rights reserved.