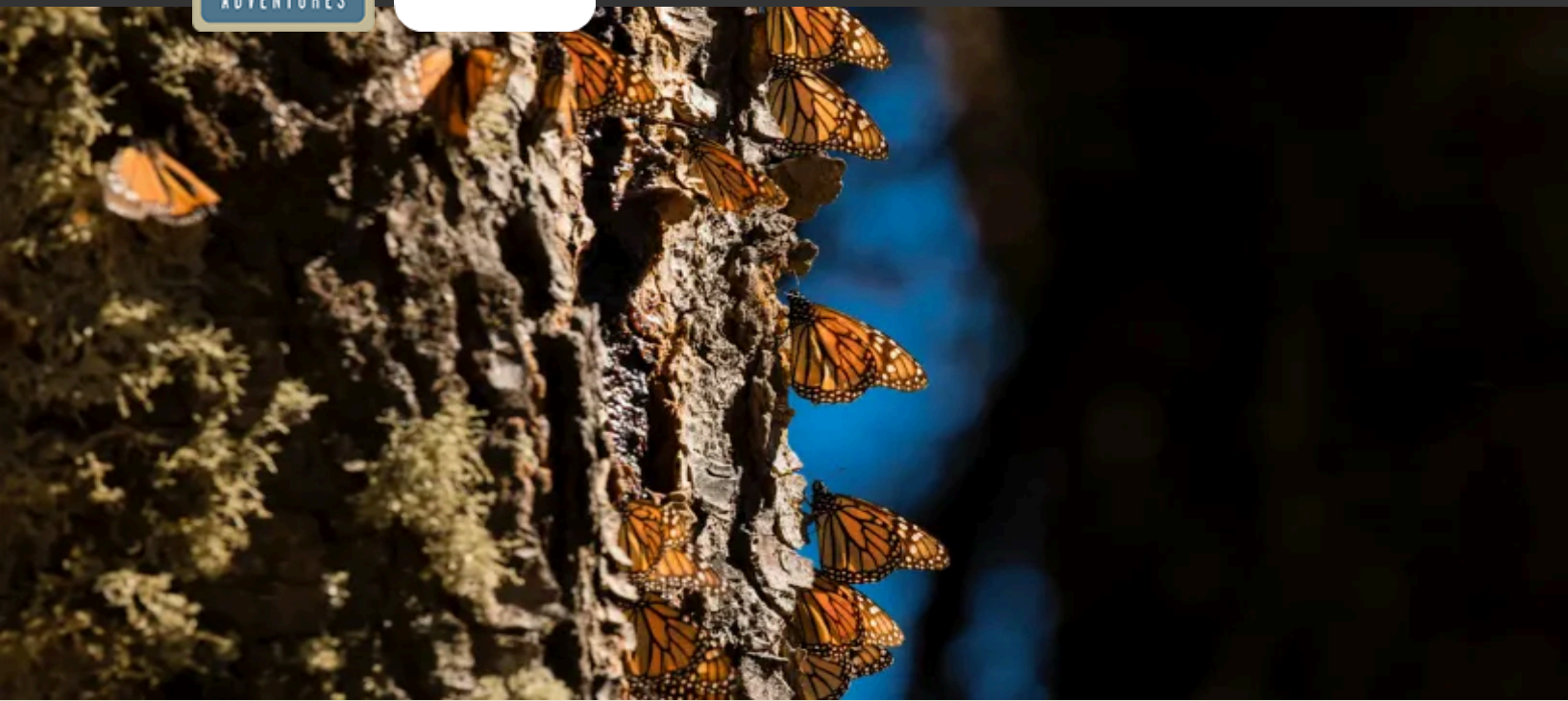




Discovering Our Planet Together



# Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition

*Capture Wondrous Images of One of Earth's Most Amazing Migrations!*



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## Trip Details:

### Days

6 Days / Jan–Feb

### Price

From \$5995

### Physical

### Requirements

Moderate/Difficult

# Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition

## Capture Wondrous Images of One of Earth's Most Amazing Migrations!

One of the world's grandest wildlife photography opportunities features one of its smallest creatures, the delicate monarch butterfly. While they may be familiar sights during a New England or California summer, there is nothing that prepares you for the marvel of the monarchs' migration, when they congregate by the millions in Mexico's Central Highlands. Each fall, the monarchs make an extraordinary 3,000-mile flight to these remote forests that are their ancestral breeding grounds, a phenomenon that still mystifies scientists. Guided by our Expedition Leader, who is both an expert naturalist and an accomplished photographer, learn to capture amazing images of the butterflies as they flutter overhead in a cloud of orange, float delicately onto our shoulders, and blanket tree trunks like quivering, rusty bark.

## Trip Highlights

**On foot and horseback in the fir forests of Central Mexico, enter protected sanctuaries to photograph millions of monarchs that roost here each winter**

**When the air warms, photograph hundreds of thousands of monarchs taking flight, with sheer wings that look like orange stained glass backlit by the sun.**

**Photograph scenes of traditional mountain villages, soak in healing mineral springs, and witness the benefits of butterfly ecotourism for local communities**





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## Itinerary At A Glance

### Day 1

Mexico City, Mexico

### Day 2

Angangueo—El Rosario Sanctuary

### Day 3

Chincua Sanctuary—Angangueo

### Day 4

Angangueo—El Rosario Sanctuary  
/ Jungapeo

### Day 5

Jungapeo / Toluca / Mexico City

### Day 6

Mexico City / Depart

## Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition Itinerary

Capture Wondrous Images of One of Earth's Most Amazing Migrations!

### Day 1: Mexico City, Mexico

Our monarch butterfly photo tour begins upon arrival in Mexico City, where we transfer to our hotel in the upscale Polanco district downtown. Gather this evening for a welcome dinner with our Expedition Leaders, followed by an introduction to the exciting photo opportunities that lie ahead. During this orientation, you'll receive guidance on the best strategies for capturing stunning monarch images from your guides, whose expertise and experience will help inform photo shooting throughout the adventure. Each fall, tens of millions of monarchs set flight on a remarkable 3,000-mile journey from the northeastern U.S. and Canada to their ancestral wintering grounds in Mexico's volcanic Central Highlands. The location of their breeding grounds remained a mystery until researchers found it with the help of local people in 1977. How an infant generation of butterflies finds it anew each year is still a mystery. Filled with anticipation, we look forward to tomorrow's photographic expedition into the mystical kingdom of the monarchs.







### Day 2: Angangueo—El Rosario Sanctuary

From Mexico City, we drive northwest into the highlands, passing dramatic vistas of snow-capped volcano Nevado de Toluca towering over the pine forests. Equal parts scenic and educational, the ride gives our Expedition Leaders the opportunity to explain the relationship between the landscape and monarchs. They'll also offer tips and advice for photographing this sometimes tricky subject, offering insight into camera settings, positioning and image composition.

Our destination is the mountain village of Angangueo, a tumble of pastel buildings set along narrow cobblestone streets that hug the steep slopes. Once a silver and copper mining town, Angangueo today thrives on butterfly tourism and local agriculture. We enjoy a traditional lunch of homemade Mexican fare before making our first entry into the monarch kingdom.

With cameras ready, we arrive in an open-back truck at El Rosario Butterfly Sanctuary. A few butterflies flit about overhead, a hint of what awaits. Riding small Mexican horses provided by the local community (and led by your own caballero, so no horse experience necessary), we ascend the trail through the forest. Hummingbirds and red warblers accompany us en route to the heart of the monarchs' migratory breeding grounds. What we find is almost surreal: millions of butterflies cover the oyamel fir trees in a delicate, quivering blanket of black and orange, at first glance resembling autumn leaves. Boughs bend beneath their numbers, though each weighs less than half an ounce. When the sun warms their parchment-thin wings, the butterflies take to the air in a whirling cloud of color, so many that the air hums with the sound of their beating wings. Sometimes the stream along the forest floor is covered in a flutter of orange as the butterflies descend to drink. The beauty of the *mariposas* is so ethereal that many Mexicans still hold the Aztec belief that the souls of the dead are reborn as monarchs.

### Day 3: Chincua Sanctuary—Angangueo

An optional pre-breakfast workshop offers the opportunity to review yesterday's shots and receive expert feedback from your Expedition Leaders. Part of an ongoing conversation with your photo pros, this workshop helps photographers integrate constructive feedback and builds excitement for another day of extraordinary photography.

After breakfast, drive to Chincua Butterfly Sanctuary for our second magical encounter with the monarchs. Riding horses most of the way over the steep mountain terrain, we hike in the last bit to reach the densest concentration of butterflies. Backlit by the sun, their wings in flight glow transparent orange, making for striking photos. Sometimes the stream along the forest floor is covered in a flutter of orange as the butterflies descend to drink. At every turn, our Expedition Leader helps us get amazing shots, though nothing truly captures the wonder of standing among the millions of monarchs.

As we learn about efforts to preserve the fragile forest ecosystem that is the key to the monarchs' survival, we find that our visit is one way to assist, demonstrating to the local people that ecotourism can be as viable a source of economic sustenance as logging. As Mexican butterfly conservationist Carlos Gottfried said, "When you stand in a monarch sanctuary, your soul is shaken and your life is changed." This afternoon, we enjoy a tour of the village of Angangueo.



#### **Day 4: Angangueo—El Rosario Sanctuary / Jungapeo**

This morning we return to El Rosario to observe the butterflies in the early morning light. In contrast to our previous afternoon visit, we'll witness the monarchs as they awaken for the day, hoping the sun will shine and warm their wings, prompting lively activity. As the butterflies take flight, we may see them float down to drink nectar from flowers or even alight on an arm or shoulder. The largest of the monarch sanctuaries in the region, El Rosario offers the best opportunity to view large numbers of monarchs in one location. After lunch, we travel to Jungapeo to reach our ecolodge and spa, tucked into the mountains of Michoacan. Renowned for its mineral thermal springs and soaking pools, our hotel's lush grounds are home to myriad species of tropical birds. Spend the afternoon soaking it all in. Dip in the legendary springs, or scout for birds across the verdant grounds. Hike to a nearby waterfall, book a spa treatment, or simply relax.

#### **Day 5: Jungapeo / Toluca / Mexico City**

Awaken to a symphony of tropical birdsong emanating from surrounding trees and bushes as we enjoy a peaceful morning at our eco-resort. There will be an optional workshop on basic photo editing techniques, covering some of the different editing programs available and successful strategies to sort, select and edit images. Those who prefer to explore the grounds, hike to the waterfalls, search for birds or soak in the thermal springs are welcome to do so. After lunch we begin our return journey to Mexico City, stopping en route in Toluca, originally a 13th-century indigenous settlement, to visit Cosmovital Botanical Garden. The building's interior, which houses 500 plant species from Mexico and around the world, glows with the ethereal light of stained-glass panels created by Toluca artist Leopoldo Flores. Say farewell over a classic Mexican feast before returning to the capital this evening for a late check-in at our hotel.

#### **Day 6: Mexico City / Depart**

Our monarch butterfly tour concludes with a transfer to the airport for flights home.



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## Accommodation Details:

Plaza Don Gabino Hotel

Agua Blanca

Grand Fiesta Americana Hotel

Hotel La Margarita

For detailed descriptions, visit [nathab.com/central-america/monarch-butterfly-photo-expedition/accommodations](http://nathab.com/central-america/monarch-butterfly-photo-expedition/accommodations)

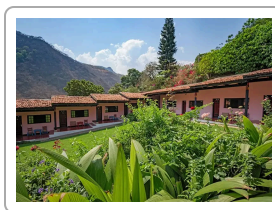
# Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition Accommodations

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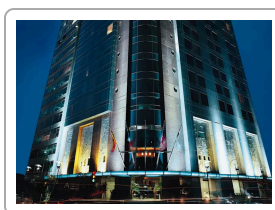
## Plaza Don Gabino Hotel

This small and simple family-operated hotel offers clean, colorful rooms, homecooked local fare in the dining room, and warm hospitality -- all with easy access to the monarch sanctuaries.



## Agua Blanca

Tucked within the mountains of Michoacan, Hotel Agua Blanca is a secluded ecolodge renowned for its mineral hot springs and natural surroundings.



## Grand Fiesta Americana Hotel

The 4-star Grand Fiesta Americana Chapultepec is one of Mexico City's finest hotels, enjoying an ideal location facing the verdant expanse of Chapultepec Park, with proximity to all the buzz of cosmopolitan Mexico City.





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### Hotel La Margarita

This small hotel near the center of the historic silver mining town of Anguango provides clean, colorful rooms with modest amenities, and is an ideal base for visiting the monarch colonies.



## Our Monarchs Photo Expedition is a Nat Hab Exclusive!

For nature photographers, few spectacles are more dazzling than the sight of millions of monarch butterflies massed together in their winter roosting grounds in the highlands of Central Mexico. And when you're after amazing images of this phenomenon, you'll want to spend as much time among them as possible, with excellent guidance to attain the best shots. To our knowledge, no one else offers a specialized photography tour to the Kingdom of the Monarchs!

1

### **Photograph *More* Butterflies on *More* Excursions into Monarch Habitat**

While other companies might offer you day visits to one or possibly two monarch sanctuaries, our in-depth itinerary includes three excursions into two different butterfly sanctuaries—we maximize an assortment of settings and lighting situations. Catch them as they take to the air in a cloud of fluttering wings, backlit by the sun in an orange glow. Or snap thousands of monarchs in one shot, as they upholster the tree branches like autumn leaves or hang like bunches of grapes.

2

### **A Small Group for Personalized Photography Coaching**

Because we limit this trip to just 12 guests, you'll get plenty of personalized attention from our Expedition Leader. Ask all the questions you want, and get expert advice for improving your photos. Fewer people also means quieter, closer photo encounters, as well as the flexibility to remain at a site longer if it shows a lot of photographic potential, or to move on to a new location if it doesn't.

3

### **Cultural Experiences Round Out Your Trip**

Unlike most butterfly tours, in addition to a focus on the monarchs we also visit several cultural sites that invite photography. Among them are Toluca, originally a 13th-century Indian settlement, where we photograph the Cosmovital Botanic Gardens and the conservatory's famous stained glass panels.

4

### **Authentically Mexican Lodgings & Cuisine**

From a cozy inn in the small mountain hamlet of Anguango to a family owned Spa and Healing center near Jungapeo known for its thermal springs, our accommodations are chosen for their authenticity, charm, natural environs and access to the butterflies. We also enjoy home-cooked dishes sourced from fresh local food that reflects the cultural heritage of the places we visit.



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5

### **Expert Naturalist Guides Who Are Also Accomplished Photographers**

Nat Hab is internationally lauded for employing the highest-quality Expedition Leaders in the industry, with additional training and resources provided by WWF's top scientists. On this tour, your guide is both a butterfly naturalist and an expert photographer adept at helping you capture outstanding images of the butterflies. **See Expedition Leader bios** with traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

6

### **Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding Photo Tour**

Natural Habitat Adventures offers an 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.

7

### **Feel Good About the Way You Travel**

We all care about the planet, and you can travel with us knowing that the emissions from your trip are 100-percent carbon-offset. Natural Habitat Adventures is the world's first carbon-neutral travel company, a feature that is especially critical when considering that many of the species and habitats we visit are under substantial threat from our planet's warming temperatures.

8

### **Natural Habitat Adventures Is World Wildlife Fund'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 planet's leading conservation organization—has named Natural Habitat its worldwide travel partner — a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!





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## Make It Private with Your Family or Friends

Travel privately, exclusively with your immediate family, multi-generational family or group of friends. And when you choose a private departure, you're assured the most exclusive and authentic Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition on offer. Request your private departure by completing the form below.

***Please note that on Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition Make It Private departures we require a minimum group size of 6 travelers.***

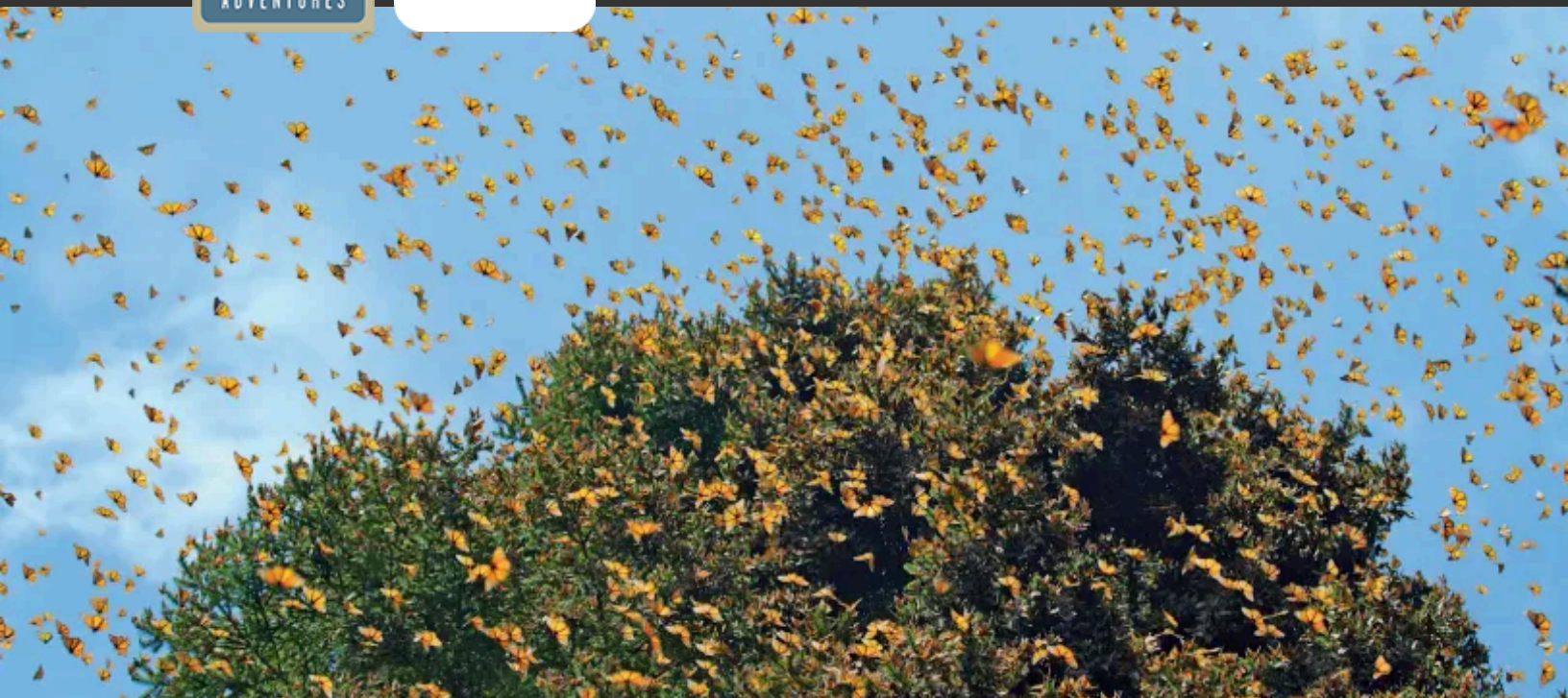
*Also, please be aware that your per-person cost on a Make It Private trip will vary depending on the number of travelers in your group and may be as much as 10%-30% higher (ship-based trips may be even higher) than our normal trip cost unless you fill the trip.*

---

This **Make It Private** option is available on nearly every Nat Hab trip for family and friend groups. Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917 or look for the "Make It Private" icon in the **pricing section** of a trip online at [nathab.com](http://nathab.com) to see prices based on your specific group size.



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## Dates & Pricing Summary:

**Prices:**  
From \$5995

**Group Size:**  
Limited to 12 Travelers

**Physical Requirements:**  
Moderate/Difficult

# Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition Dates, Pricing & Info

Capture Wondrous Images of One of Earth's Most Amazing Migrations!

## 2026 Departures

| Departure    | Return       | Notes  |
|--------------|--------------|--|
| Jan 5, 2026  | Jan 10, 2026 | Pair with our Costa Rica Jewels trip           |
| Jan 12, 2026 | Jan 17, 2026 | Pair with our Costa Rica Jewels trip           |
| Jan 19, 2026 | Jan 24, 2026 | Pair with our Costa Rica Jewels trip           |
| Feb 9, 2026  | Feb 14, 2026 | Pair with our Costa Rica Jewels and Baja trips |
| Feb 16, 2026 | Feb 21, 2026 | Pair with our Costa Rica Jewels and Baja trips |

## 2027 Departures

| Departure    | Return       | Notes |
|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Jan 11, 2027 | Jan 16, 2027 |       |
| Jan 18, 2027 | Jan 23, 2027 |       |



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| Departure    | Return       | Notes |
|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Jan 23, 2027 | Jan 28, 2027 |       |
| Feb 8, 2027  | Feb 13, 2027 |       |
| Feb 13, 2027 | Feb 18, 2027 |       |





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## Pricing

### 2025 Prices

- **Photo Expedition Price**  
\$5895 to \$6095

**Single Occupancy:** For a single room add \$1195. **Click here** to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.

**Deposit:** \$500 per person

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. Prices for Dec are not yet confirmed. Contact an Adventure Specialist for more details: 800-543-8917. **Please read our Payment & Refund Policy here.**



### 2026 Prices

*Mouse over or tap dates above to view prices for specific departure dates.*

- **Photo Expedition Price**  
\$5995 to \$6295

**Single Occupancy:** For a single room add \$995. **Click here** to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.

**Deposit:** \$500 per person

**Make It Private:** **View pricing** to take this trip privately with just you and your select travel companions.

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. Prices for December are not yet confirmed. Contact an Adventure Specialist for more details: 800-543-8917. **Please read our Payment & Refund Policy here.**

### 2027 Prices

We're still in the process of confirming 2027 pricing. Please contact an Adventure Specialist for more details: 800-543-8917.

## Included

Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Photography Expedition Leader(s), 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

### *Moderate / Difficult*

Visiting the butterfly sanctuaries requires walking through the forest for approximately 3 to 4 miles round-trip, at altitudes that could reach up to 10,660 feet. Because the location of the butterflies within the sanctuaries changes throughout the season and from year to year, exact hiking distances on each departure can vary. At times, the terrain can be rough and rocky, and we may have to traverse uneven ground and step over or around sticks and branches. Uneven, steep inclines may require us to maintain balance as we watch the butterflies. The effects of altitude should not be underestimated. **The physical exertion involved can be considered strenuous for people who are less active.**

The entrance to El Rosario butterfly sanctuary can only be accessed via a 30-minute, open-bed truck ride over cobblestone roads, which can make for a somewhat bumpy ride and may be considered uncomfortable for travelers with back or neck issues. Once inside the sanctuaries, horses are available to ride uphill to reach the butterfly colonies, but not down. When riding the horses, we will be led by a local guide through trails that can, at times, be narrow and rugged, so riders must be alert and maintain balance. Travelers should expect to spend 30-45 minutes on horseback at a time. Due to the diminutive stature of the local horses, the maximum rider weight each horse can carry is 260 pounds.

It is important to note that even with the option to ride horses, there will still be some hiking involved while going up to the colonies, as the horses cannot travel the entire length of the trail. After dismounting, travelers will be required to walk a final 1/4 to 2 mile up a steep slope to reach the butterfly colonies. Depending on where the butterflies are located, this final slope can be less steep at times. Anyone who opts not to ride horses will have an approximately 3-mile uphill hike with roughly 1,000 ft. elevation gain. All travelers must hike downhill back to the sanctuary entrance, descending at least 600 steps over approximately 3 miles, with an elevation change of about 1,000 feet.

## Important Information About This Trip

The monarch butterfly sanctuaries in Mexico's Central Highlands are a marvel no nature lover should miss! Observing millions of monarchs clustering and moving together is a wondrous experience. This trip can be more strenuous than most, however, so please read carefully the section on Physical Requirements above.

**[Click here to see examples of the hiking and horseback riding activities you can expect on this trip.](#)**

## Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to on this trip are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require medical evacuation insurance for our guests' safety. If you decline the medical evacuation insurance coverage offered by Natural Habitat, we request that you send us documentation of the independent coverage you have selected. We will add the cost of a medical evacuation policy to your tour invoice until you provide our office with proof of coverage, including your insurance company's name, contact number and your individual policy number. Thank you for understanding that our policy exists exclusively in the interest of our guests' safety.



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## Getting There & Getting Home

Plan to arrive in Mexico City no later than 5:30 pm on Day 1 of the adventure, as there is a group welcome dinner and orientation at 7 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 our staff is 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:

**The Great Gray Whales of Baja**  
\$5795

**Costa Rica Wilderness Explorer**  
\$7995

**Natural Jewels of Costa Rica**  
\$9695

## Monarch Butterfly Photo Expedition Extensions

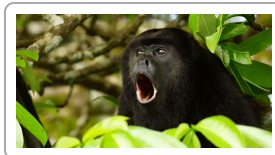
Capture Wondrous Images of One of Earth's Most Amazing Migrations!



### The Great Gray Whales of Baja

On skiff excursions from our shorefront whale camp, come within arm's length of amiable gray whales and their calves, as these gentle giants birth and nurture their young in the warm Pacific waters of San Ignacio Lagoon.

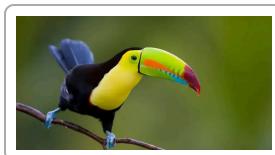
**\$5795**



### Costa Rica Wilderness Explorer

See another side of Costa Rica on this adventure into rainforests, mist-shrouded mountains and coastlines well off the typical tourist track, and enjoy remote and authentic ecolodges en route.

**\$7995 (+air)**



### Natural Jewels of Costa Rica

An all-encompassing nature expedition through the jungle canals of Tortuguero to the misty cloud forests of Monteverde and Corcovado's wild beaches—discover Costa Rica's exceptional biodiversity.

**\$9695 (+air)**



**Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together**

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USA & Canada: 800-543-8917 • International: 303-449-3711

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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.