



Discovering Our Planet Together



The Great Gray Whales of Baja

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula



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Trip Details:

Days:
6 Days / Feb & Mar

Price:
From \$5595 (+ Air)

Physical Requirements:
Easy

The Great Gray Whales of Baja

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula

Each winter, hundreds of gray whales return to their traditional breeding and birthing grounds along the Pacific coast of Mexico's Baja Peninsula. Their 6,000-mile migration from Alaska's Bering Sea to these sheltered lagoons is the longest mammal migration on Earth. Once hunted nearly to extinction, these gentle leviathans have made a dramatic comeback. Friendly and engaging, they are often intrigued with humans, swimming right up to our open boats in the warm, shallow waters of San Ignacio Lagoon. We may see mothers with their babies, and our small groups frequently interact with them at close range. The whales entertain us with breaching and spy-hopping, and we may observe mating behavior as well. When you come to Baja with us, 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, delight in close-range interactions with gray whales, including mothers and calves, during their annual migration

Overnight in solitude in private "whale cabanas" at our eco camp on the shore of San Ignacio Lagoon, an off-the-grid retreat under starry desert skies

With two naturalist Expedition Leaders, explore the marshes, beaches and cactus-studded desert of El Vizcaino, a UNESCO 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 & Exploring El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve

Day 5

Whale Watching / Loreto

Day 6

Loreto / Depart

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Itinerary

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula

Day 1: Loreto, Mexico

Our whale-watching tour begins upon arrival in the small coastal town of Loreto on the Sea of Cortez. A Nat Hab representative meets you at the airport and joins you on the short transfer to our waterfront hotel where our Expedition Leader will be waiting to greet you. Loreto was founded as a Spanish mission by Jesuit priests in 1697 and is the oldest permanent settlement on the Baja Peninsula. Loreto offers fine beaches, reef snorkeling, nearby islands to discover, and excellent hiking in the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains that rise behind the peaceful town centered on a colonial Spanish plaza. This evening, gather for a welcome dinner and a preview of our time with the magnificent gray whales of Baja.





Day 2: Loreto / San Ignacio Lagoon

A scenic drive is in store as we traverse the mountainous spine of narrow Baja California Sur to reach the Pacific Ocean. First, we follow the Sea of Cortez coastline northward, then turn west into a dramatic landscape of arid mountains and giant cardon cacti. Once we reach the sleepy colonial village of San Ignacio, we transfer into smaller vans for the remainder of the trip to the coast, arriving at our whale camp in the afternoon. Then, time permitting, we'll set out on our first whale-watching excursion. Our accommodations on San Ignacio Lagoon—private for Nat Hab guests only—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 room equipped with a small hygienic porta-potty is provided for nighttime relief. These remote lodgings are basic and cozy, offering the opportunity to experience the wilderness of the Vizcaino Desert, a 6-million-acre UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, in solitude and comfort. We are also secluded in a remote area under very dark skies, making for outstanding star viewing.



Days 3 & 4: Whale Watching & Exploring 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. Pacific 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, then swimming north again in the spring. Our Expedition Leader and local guides provide expert interpretation about the whales' remarkable journey and their fascinating range of behaviors, which we expect to witness at close range.



We make multiple whale-watching excursions in San Ignacio Lagoon in motorized open pangas, offering an unimpeded view. We may see whales breach, spy-hop or glide up close to present their backs for a scratch. Generally, we spend 90 minutes whale-watching on each 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 outings 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, and our panga captains are experts at positioning the boats to maximize proximity to the whales without disturbing or encroaching upon them, instead allowing them to approach us—which they often do. 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. Calves are 14-16 feet at birth and gain 50 pounds a day as they grow, and some swim within arm's length of our boats. Once a gray whale reaches full maturity, it will weigh 30-40 tons and reach 50-60 feet long.

Ashore, we visit the nearby fishing village and learn about the history and culture of the people who live around San Ignacio Lagoon. We view a mural of Pachico Mayoral, a local fisherman remembered as the first person to have a friendly encounter with a gray whale in the lagoon in 1972, changing the community's relationship with them. After commercial whaling was banned in Mexico in 1947, fishermen still saw whales as adversaries, threatening their catch. But Mayoral's remarkable encounter—when a huge whale surfaced alongside his boat and rubbed against his outstretched hand—inspired him to offer whale-watching tours, opening the door to ecotourism that today provides incentive to local people to advocate for the whales' protection. Depending on the day, we may also tour a local oyster farm, with a chance to sample fresh oysters. Other activities around the lagoon include birdwatching, exploring the vast, empty beaches looking for bones and shells, surveying the expansive salt flats around the lagoon as we drive beyond camp, and if weather and tides cooperate, we might investigate the local mangrove estuaries.



Day 5: Whale Watching / Loreto

After a last chance to spend time with the whales, it's time to drive back to San Ignacio. At the picturesque main plaza, we stop to eat our packed lunches and explore some of the history of this colonial town founded as a Jesuit mission in 1728. During a bit of free time, view the monastery, sample local coffee or authentic tacos from one of the many stands in and around the square, or shop for locally made souvenirs. Then it's time to cross the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains once more to return to Loreto. We gather for a farewell dinner and a final evening together in this laid-back coastal town.

Day 6: Loreto / Depart

Our whale-watching adventure comes to a close with a transfer to the airport for flights home. Or, choose to spend an extra day in Loreto to explore its well-preserved colonial architecture and heritage in this little-developed region on the Sea of Cortez.



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Accommodation Details:

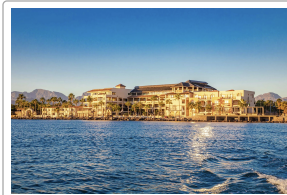
La Mision

San Ignacio Whale Cabanas

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

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Accommodations

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula



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.



San Ignacio Whale Cabanas

With 10 small and simple thatched-roof cabanas set directly on San Ignacio Lagoon, this eco-camp offers a secluded experience where guests are enveloped by the desert wilderness.



Come Eye to Eye with Gray Whales—No One Gets You Closer!

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 real "whale of an adventure" compared to the others:

1 SIX Whale-Watching Excursions

Typically, we 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 separate outings during our trip.

2 Our Small Groups Get You Much Closer to Whales

Our pangas—traditional, seaworthy open skiffs—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 Pangas are More Maneuverable, for Better Viewing

There's simply nothing more exhilarating than getting close to a huge gray whale. Imagine the photo opportunities as you come within arm's length of these charismatic cetaceans in a small (but stable) open boat! Your panga captain is an expert at positioning us to maximize proximity to the whales without disturbing them. The whales are engaging and friendly, and young whales tend to be especially curious, even with their protective mothers by their side.

4 Stay in Unique Accommodations Secluded in Nature

Our private whale camp lies within the protected confines of El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve, with lodgings located on a quiet stretch of shoreline right on the lagoon's edge. These rustic but comfortable private thatched cabanas are backdropped by a vast expanse of desert, where nature's peace is palpable. The UNESCO World Heritage Site Vizcaino ecosystem contains thousands of endemic species—plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. And the dark starry nights are a wonder in their own right.



5 The Whale Camp is Ours Alone

Not only do we enjoy exceptional proximity to San Ignacio Lagoon, but genuine privacy, too. Our small group has exclusive use of the camp's 10 shoreside cabanas and dining palapa. We have the surrounding terrain to ourselves to birdwatch, beachcomb and explore the mangrove estuaries, salt flats and desert dunes.

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

Our Expedition Leaders are seasoned professional naturalists with extensive experience guiding in Mexico. In addition, they receive special training and resources from WWF scientists. 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!





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 Great Gray Whales of Baja adventure on offer. Request your private departure by completing the form below.

Please note that on Great Gray Whales of Baja Make It Private departures we require a minimum group size of 10 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 to see prices based on your specific group size.



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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From \$5595
(+ Air)

Group Size:
Please note that on Make It Private departures we have a minimum group size of half the maximum size of our regularly scheduled departures.

Physical Requirements:
Easy

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Dates, Pricing & Info

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula

2026 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 9, 2026	Feb 14, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip or Monarchs Photo Expedition*
Feb 12, 2026	Feb 17, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip*
Feb 15, 2026	Feb 20, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip or Monarchs Photo Expedition*
Feb 18, 2026	Feb 23, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip*
Feb 21, 2026	Feb 26, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip*
Feb 24, 2026	Mar 1, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip or Monarchs Photo Expedition*
Feb 27, 2026	Mar 4, 2026	Women's Journey
Mar 2, 2026	Mar 7, 2026	Pair with our Monarchs trip*

2027 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 9, 2027	Feb 14, 2027	



Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:

From \$5595
(+ Air)

Group Size:

Please note that on Make It Private departures we have a minimum group size of half the maximum size of our regularly scheduled departures.

Physical

Requirements:

Easy

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 12, 2027	Feb 17, 2027	
Feb 15, 2027	Feb 20, 2027	
Feb 18, 2027	Feb 23, 2027	
Feb 21, 2027	Feb 26, 2027	
Feb 24, 2027	Mar 1, 2027	
Feb 27, 2027	Mar 4, 2027	
Mar 2, 2027	Mar 7, 2027	
Mar 5, 2027	Mar 10, 2027	
Mar 8, 2027	Mar 13, 2027	
Mar 11, 2027	Mar 16, 2027	
Mar 14, 2027	Mar 19, 2027	



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Pricing

2024 Prices

- ▶ **Trip Price**
\$4995 - \$5295

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$1095.

Deposit: \$500 per person

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

2025 Prices

- ▶ **Trip Price**
\$5595 - \$5895

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$1195.

Deposit: \$500 per person

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

2026 Prices

- ▶ **Trip Price**
\$5795 - \$6095

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$995.

Deposit: \$500 per person

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

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 Expedition Leader(s) and local staff, a local San Ignacio Lagoon guide on all excursions, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, some alcoholic beverages, some 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, with these important considerations

This adventure is not strenuous and does not require a high degree of physical fitness, however there are a few taxing physical elements that could be challenging for some participants. The long round-trip drive from Loreto across the Baja Peninsula to San Ignacio takes place in a large shuttle on rugged, narrow, winding roads that cross mountains and skirt sheer cliffs. It could be taxing for any guests susceptible to motion sickness, vertigo, or who have back or neck issues. Though our drivers are experts, the drive can be uncomfortable for some travelers. Many locals and tourists also use the same highway, and we frequently deal with passing vehicles. Once we reach San Ignacio town, we switch to smaller vans for the rest of the journey to Whale Camp on San Ignacio Lagoon. It's a 1.5 mile ride on extremely bumpy, washboard dirt roads that can quickly turn into thick, immovable mud after a rain. The washboard portions of the roads are so intense that it can be difficult to sustain a conversation on this section of the drive, and the bumpiness can be very jarring for anyone with back or neck issues. There are no paved roads after we leave San Ignacio town, so all extra activities from Whale Camp require navigating these rough dirt roads.

Once we arrive, 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 in Loreto 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 open panga excursion boats, and sit on bench seats for long periods of time while whale watching. Getting in and out of the boats, guests will also have to shuffle through water potentially thigh-high over stretches of uneven sand, thick layers of seashells and slick mossy rocks. Boarding the pangas may require use of an unstable metal ramp, which guests must be able to navigate. 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 nature walks will also be available, and in order to participate in these, you must be able to walk unassisted for at least 1 mile. All activities are completely optional, and travelers should only participate in those activities they feel comfortable with. If you are concerned about 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 rare adventure offers the closest possible whale encounters and is a must for lovers of marine wildlife! Here are some important aspects of the trip you should be aware of.

Early Booking Advised for Flights to and from Loreto, Mexico

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. **Seasonality of Whale Behavior**

Our current whale-watching season runs from early February to early March. With climate-related changes, we are observing the whales' migration timing and seasonal behavior patterns slowly shifting. Visitors in the first part of February will be more likely to see active whales engaging in playful behavior, courtship and mating, with plenty of spy-hopping and dramatic breaches. Earlier in our season, mothers and calves are less visible as they remain in the upper protected areas of the lagoon where



whale watching is not allowed, so as not to disturb the calves as they gain strength and weight. Later in February and into March, we are more likely to see mothers with calves, and “friendly” whale behavior, approaching our pangas at close range and sometimes coming directly alongside our boats.

San Ignacio Lagoon Permitting Part of what makes San Ignacio Lagoon such a pristine whale-watching environment is the unique permitting structure formed and managed by the local community. In addition to regulations set by the Mexican government, the lagoon camp operators and fishermen developed a permitting system to fairly manage the demand for whale-watching tourism while maintaining protection of the lagoon and the whales. The system involves a limited set number of permit-holders allowed to operate in the lagoon, and an even smaller number of permitted pangas that can enter the lagoon at a given time. Once a panga has entered the whale-watching area, it is allowed to remain up to 90 minutes before it must exit and allow other pangas to enter. Each panga must wait a minimum of 20 minutes between scheduled times in the whale-watching area, meaning no operator can have a panga in the whale-watching area for more than 90 minutes at a time. This can mean that at times, we must wait for a short period at the entrance to the whale-watching area until the sheriff permits our panga to enter. During this time, distant whale behavior can still be spotted in the viewing area.

Mandatory Insurance

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

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
\$7000

Kingdom of the Monarchs
\$4995

Natural Jewels of Costa Rica
\$9695

Costa Rica Wilderness Explorer
\$7795

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Extensions

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on 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.

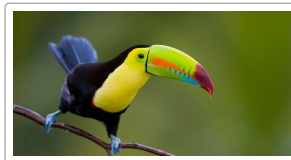
\$7000



Kingdom of the Monarchs

Each winter, millions of monarch butterflies migrate to the fir forests of Mexico's Central Highlands—walk among them, take amazing photos, and listen to the air hum with the vibration of their wings!

\$4995



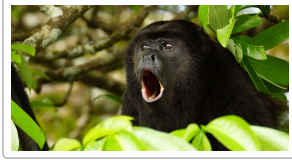
Natural Jewels of Costa Rica

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)



Discovering Our Planet Together



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.

\$7795 (+air)



Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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