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 / Jan–Mar

Price
From $6995

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

In-Depth, Up-Close Whale Encounters

On six separate small-group skiff excursions, delight in close-range interactions with gray whales, including mothers and calves, during their annual migration

A Remote, Locally Owned Waterfront Eco Camp

Stay in solitude on the shore of San Ignacio Lagoon in our private off-the-grid cabanas under starry desert skies—run by devoted community conservationists

Desert Wilderness Discoveries

Traverse the Sierra La Giganta Mountains to reach the marshes and beaches of El Vizcaino, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Mexico's largest wildlife refuge

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917



The Great Gray Whales of Baja Itinerary

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	Loreto
Day 2	Sierra La Giganta Mountains / San Ignacio Lagoon
Day 3	San Ignacio Lagoon
Day 4	El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve
Day 5	San Ignacio / Loreto
Day 6	Loreto



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Day 1

Loreto

Arrive on the shores of the Sea of Cortez, gateway to Baja's gray whales

- Explore the colonial streets and waterfront of Loreto at your leisure
- Join your Expedition Leader and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner celebrating the gray whales of Baja

Your whale-watching tour begins upon arrival in the small coastal town of Loreto on the Sea of Cortez. Our local 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. Your whale-watching tour begins upon arrival in the small coastal town of Loreto on the Sea of Cortez. Our local representative meets you at the airport and assists you with your short transfer to our waterfront hotel. You'll discover from the moment you set foot in Loreto that your trip is going to be special, as we are supported throughout by warm, enthusiastic local Mexican partners who treat you like family.

Centered on a traditional Spanish plaza, this charming colonial town was founded as a mission by Spanish Jesuit priests in 1697 and is the oldest permanent settlement on the Baja Peninsula. Far from the bustle and crowds of Cabo to the south, Loreto feels like you've stepped back decades to when Baja was still laid-back and unsullied by mass tourism. While the whales are of course our big draw, your time in Loreto will be a delightful surprise. Walk the Malecon promenade along the sea, watch fishing boats bringing in their catch at the marina, and admire the mission church with its Baroque facade as you wander Loreto's cobblestone streets. The surrounding area offers fine beaches, reef snorkeling and nearby islands to discover in the shadow of the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains that rise behind the peaceful town. This evening, gather for a welcome dinner and a preview of our time with the magnificent gray whales of Baja.

Day 2

Sierra La Giganta Mountains / San Ignacio Lagoon

Cross the Baja Peninsula to Nat Hab's private whale camp

- Drive across the Sierra de la Giganta through cardon forests and desert landscapes
- Visit San Ignacio's 1728 Jesuit mission in a lush desert oasis
- Settle into Nat Hab's private Kuyima Whale Camp on San Ignacio Lagoon

A stunning 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 this morning, then turn west to wind through a dramatic landscape of arid mountains, giant cardon cacti and tall, spiky aloe plants. Our route is one of only a handful of roads that cross the peninsula between east and west, and it is a highlight in its own right, crossing several different ecosystems on its way to the Vizcaino Flats.

Descending to a lush valley watered by the San Ignacio River, we arrive in the sleepy colonial village of San Ignacio. A Jesuit mission was established here in 1728, and its church is one of the best preserved among those that remain in Baja. Here, 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 "whale camp" accommodations on San Ignacio Lagoon—private for Nat Hab guests only—are a special feature of our trip. Wholly Mexican-owned and operated by community members passionate about conservation, they are an important component of our sustainable ecotourism experience on the lagoon. 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. 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.

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Day 3

San Ignacio Lagoon

Come eye to eye with Baja's friendly gray whales

- Head out by open panga as curious gray whales approach the boat
- Gain deeper insight into gray whale behavior with your Expedition Leader
- Savor freshly harvested oysters at a sea-to-table dinner beside the lagoon

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 10,00-12,000 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 Leaders 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 the very edge of our boats. Generally, we spend 90 minutes 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.

After a day spent eye-to-eye with the gray whales in the protected waters of the lagoon, head to shore for a special "sea to table" culinary experience that connects us further to this extraordinary ecosystem. Local fishermen, who have sustained their livelihoods in these waters for generations, provide us with the freshest oysters in Baja, and the chance to taste them pulled directly from the bay just moments before. As we enjoy the succulent catch, we appreciate the enduring nexus between nature, place, local tradition and sustainable practice.

Day 4

El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve

Explore the protected lagoon where gray whales return each winter

- Venture out by panga for more intimate encounters with gray whales
- Discover how San Ignacio Lagoon became a model for whale conservation
- Enjoy fresh local seafood prepared by your hosts at Kuyima Whale Camp

Greet the sunrise over San Ignacio Lagoon, then spend another day communing with the whales as we head out on two excursions in open pangas to watch their endlessly intriguing behavior. There is simply no other place on Earth where it's possible to get so close to these gentle giants, which often exhibit as much curiosity about us as we do about them. When we're not on the water, we'll explore the local fishing village and nearby environs of the El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve, which is Mexico's largest wildlife refuge, spanning more than 6 million acres in a mosaic of ecosystems including wetlands, marshes, dunes, salt flats and coastal lagoons.

As we wander through the village, learn about the history and culture of the people who live around San Ignacio Lagoon. A mural of Pachico Mayoral depicts the 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. Other activities in the environs around the lagoon include birdwatching, exploring the vast, empty beaches looking for bones and shells, and if weather and tides cooperate, we may investigate the local mangrove estuaries, an important ecosystem in their own right, within the larger mosaic of habitats.

This evening, enjoy another dinner together of simple, authentic meals featuring the freshest fare prepared by our camp hosts—fish and seafood come straight out of the lagoon, accompanied by dishes featuring locally grown produce.

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Day 5

San Ignacio / Loreto

A final whale encounter before returning to Loreto

- Spend one last morning on San Ignacio Lagoon with the gray whales
- Pause in historic San Ignacio for local coffee, tacos or a stroll beneath the plaza's palms
- Cross the Sierra de la Giganta back to Loreto for a farewell dinner

After one last chance to spend time with the whales, it's time to drive back to the village of San Ignacio. At the picturesque main plaza, shaded by large trees, we stop at a local mother/daughter run restaurant in town for lunch and explore some of the history of this colonial town. 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 make the scenic journey across the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains once more to return to Loreto. This evening, we gather for a farewell dinner and a final evening together in this laid-back coastal town.

Day 6

Loreto

Depart Loreto after an unforgettable gray whale adventure

- Transfer to Loreto International Airport for your departing flight
- Or extend your stay to discover more of Loreto and the Sea of Cortez

Today our whale-watching adventure comes to a close. Transfer to the airport for your flight home or spend an extra day in Loreto to explore more of its surrounding beaches, islands and well-preserved colonial architecture and heritage in this little-developed region on the Sea of Cortez.

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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.



Kuyima Whale Camp

On Mexico's Baja Peninsula, 10 new beachfront cabanas offer sweeping views of desert and tidal flats, and incredible opportunities for gray whale encounters. The camp is community-owned and solar-powered.

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

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

The Great Gray Whales of Baja

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 (and the whales!), 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 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 who are passionate about conservation also join us, ensuring the perfect mix of insider insights and attentive personal service. **See Expedition Leader bios** with traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

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. **Read our important promise.**

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:

Price
From $6995

Group Size
Limited to 18 Travelers

The Great Gray Whales of Baja Dates, Pricing & Info

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula

2027 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Jan 28 - Feb 2, 2027	$7095	
Feb 3 - Feb 8, 2027	$7095	Natural Habitat Explorers Pricing Available
Feb 6 - Feb 11, 2027	$7095	Women's Journey
Feb 9 - Feb 14, 2027	$7095	Natural Habitat Explorers Pricing Available
Feb 12 - Feb 17, 2027	$7095	
Feb 15 - Feb 20, 2027	$7095	
Feb 18 - Feb 23, 2027	$7095	
Feb 21 - Feb 26, 2027	$7095	
Feb 24 - Mar 1, 2027	$7095	
Feb 27 - Mar 4, 2027	$7095	
Mar 2 - Mar 7, 2027	$7095	
Mar 5 - Mar 10, 2027	$7095	
Mar 8 - Mar 13, 2027	$7095	Women's Journey

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Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Mar 11 - Mar 16, 2027	$7095	
Mar 14 - Mar 19, 2027	$7095	

2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Jan 26 - Jan 31, 2028	$6995	
Jan 29 - Feb 3, 2028	$6995	
Feb 1 - Feb 6, 2028	$6995	Women's Journey
Feb 4 - Feb 9, 2028	$6995	
Feb 10 - Feb 15, 2028	$7295	
Feb 13 - Feb 18, 2028	$7295	
Feb 16 - Feb 21, 2028	$7295	
Feb 19 - Feb 24, 2028	$7295	
Feb 22 - Feb 27, 2028	$7295	
Feb 28 - Mar 4, 2028	$6995	
Mar 2 - Mar 7, 2028	$7295	Women's Journey
Mar 5 - Mar 10, 2028	$6995	
Mar 8 - Mar 13, 2028	$6995	

See https://www.nathab.com/central-america/whales-of-baja/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

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, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

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.

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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 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.

Getting There & Getting Home

This trip begins and ends in Loreto, Mexico. **You must arrive in Loreto no later than 4 pm on Day 1** in order to attend a group orientation and welcome dinner at 5 pm. For guests who come in early, recommended hotels will be included in your pre-departure materials.

You may depart Loreto at any time on the final day.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

Our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk can best assist with your travel reservations, as our staff is familiar with the specific requirements of this program and can help arrange the most efficient itinerary. Please call us at 800-543-8917. While we offer the best available rates to us on airfare and additional nights accommodations, you may occasionally find special web rates or lower fares online.



The Great Gray Whales of Baja Extensions

Make Giant Friendships at Sea on Mexico's Baja Peninsula



Baja California: 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.

$7250



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!

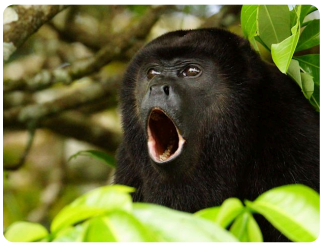
$5495



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.

$11495 (+air)



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.

$8795 (+air)

Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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