



Discovering Our Planet Together



Baja California: A Living Sea & Desert Isles

Discover One of the World's Richest Marine Realms from a Fully Equipped Expedition Ship



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Trip Details:

Days

8 Days / Dec

Price

From \$6045

Physical Requirements

Easy to Moderate

Baja California: A Living Sea & Desert Isles

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French maritime explorer Jacques Cousteau called the Sea of Cortez the world's aquarium. These dazzling waters are so rich in aquatic life that UNESCO named it a World Heritage Site along with the scores of islands that dot its turquoise waters. Dividing the Baja Peninsula from mainland Mexico, this narrow gulf teems with nearly 900 different fish species, 39 percent of the world's total number of marine mammal species, and one-third of all cetacean species. Few places are better for whale watching, and spring is prime time to see humpback, sperm, fin, pilot, Bryde's and blue whales, plus large pods of dolphins. As we sail among the many uninhabited islands, explore the transparent waters with a suite of expedition tools and walk ashore among myriad seabirds. A flexible itinerary means we're free to follow the seasonal movements of wildlife to optimize sightings.

Trip Highlights

Aboard a small expedition ship, cruise teal waters with whales, dolphins, rays and turtles, stopping at wild desert islands where thousands of seabirds nest and breed

Explore caves by kayak, snorkel with acrobatic sea lions and schools of colorful fish, wander uninhabited beaches, and hike among blooming cactus with naturalist guides

Visit the old copper mining town of Santa Rosalia and see its historic metal church designed by Gustave Eiffel (of Eiffel Tower fame) reflecting 19th-century French influence



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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1

Loreto, Baja California, Mexico—
Embark Ship

Days 2 - 7

Exploring the Sea of Cortez

Day 8

Loreto—Disembark / Depart

Baja California: A Living Sea & Desert Isles Itinerary

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Day 1: Loreto, Baja California, Mexico—Embark Ship

Fly into Loreto, midway down the Baja Peninsula, and embark ship.



Set sail this evening on the Sea of Cortez, also called the Gulf of California, which separates the Baja Peninsula from mainland Mexico. The sea bears the name of Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortez, who was the first European to send expeditions to the gulf. When he landed on the Baja Peninsula in 1535, he believed he had found the mythical island of "California," a legendary quest among earlier Spanish explorers.

This long, narrow body of water came into being some 5 million years ago when tectonic forces wrenched the Baja Peninsula away from the North American plate. The Pacific Ocean filled the gap, creating one of the world's youngest and most biodiverse seas, a veritable "fish trap" due to its geographic confines. Volcanic islands rise from the blue-green waters, further evidence of the powerful geologic forces shaping this wild habitat. Within the still-evolving Sea of Cortez, we find coral reefs, estuaries, seagrass beds and rocky sea beds providing habitat for a vibrant array of marine life.



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Days 2 - 7: Exploring the Sea of Cortez

Biologically speaking, the Sea of Cortez is the richest body of water on the planet, and we have a full week to delve into its marine wonders. Jacques Cousteau called it "the world's aquarium," and it's easy to see why. More than 900 species of fish live here, with 10 percent of them found nowhere else. From schools of silvery snapper and skipjack to neon-colored angelfish, blue tangs and Cortez damselfish, snorkeling here offers a chance to swim among a kaleidoscope of dazzling sea life.

The Sea of Cortez is also home to five of the world's eight species of endangered sea turtles; 170 shark species, with hammerhead, mako and sand sharks spotted most frequently; numerous rays including mantas and flying mobulas that leap vertically out of the water; huge regattas of bottlenose dolphins; great colonies of seabirds that nest on island cliffs, including blue-footed and brown boobies and black storm petrels; and, of course, whales. While most of the gray and humpback whales will be migrating north to by the time we arrive, we anticipate seeing plenty of others such as resident sperm and fin whales, minke, Bryde's and maybe even the gigantic blue whale—the world's largest animal.

Our route is designed with flexibility in mind to maximize opportunities for wildlife sightings. If, for example, we see Bryde's whales in the morning, our scheduled hike will be postponed so we can linger among them, shooting photos from the bow of the ship or from our expedition landing craft.

While our itinerary is not fixed, it will most likely include these islands and activities, though the order may vary:

Isla San Esteban

Walk up a dry wash to search for desert songbirds such as the handsome black-throated sparrow, listen for the cascading song of the canyon wren, and look for and the endemic pinto chuckwalla—a gentle member of the iguana family found only on this island.

Isla San Pedro Martir

The most remote island in the Sea of Cortez, this thousand-foot-high guano-covered outpost is home to scores of seabirds including blue footed boobies, red-billed tropicbirds, brown pelicans, magnificent frigatebirds and Brandt's cormorants. Sea lion rookeries also ring the island.

Isla San Marcos

One of the few inhabited islands we visit, rugged San Marcos is home to about 500 people and offers plentiful opportunities to explore via kayak, snorkeling and hikes ashore though partially forested environs. A beautiful shoreline also invites swimming. When we sail from here, we are in rich cetacean waters near the mouth of Bahia Concepcion, where excellent possibilities exist to sight several whale species, plus pods of common and bottlenose dolphins—with luck, the latter may join us as we cruise, riding our bow wave and sometimes leaping from the water to delight everyone on deck.

Isla San Jose

One of the larger islands in the Sea of Cortez, San Jose offers several landing possibilities depending on conditions and the whim of the moment. Photograph the ochre cliffs on the island's eastern shore, hike a cactus-filled arroyo, visit the abandoned salt works on the island's west side, and snorkel with sea lions.



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Bahia Loreto Marine Park

Within this rich marine sanctuary, the waters south of Isla Carmen offer good odds for finding blue whales and fin whales, and researchers have recently concluded that the latter may be part of a resident population. We also frequently encounter bottlenose and common dolphins. We'll visit one of the islands inside the marine park, with ample time for kayaking, snorkeling, stand-up paddleboarding and possibly hiking. In the evening, enjoy a beach barbecue under the desert sky.

Los Islotes and Isla San Francisco

This collection of rocky uninhabited islands lies in the southern Sea of Cortez, and Los Islotes is the southernmost rookery of the California sea lion, where we find a colony of several hundred in residence. Curious youngsters often want to check us out as we swim and snorkel in the clear turquoise waters. Numerous seabirds nest in the vertical cliffs above the colony—watch out for dive-bombing pelicans! On Isla San Francisco, keep an eye out for 10 different species of reptiles, including the endemic Isla San Francisco whiptail, as we explore the island's rocky beaches and salt flats. Birds abound here, too: look for yellow-footed gulls, brown pelicans and blue-footed boobies.

Day 8: Loreto—Disembark / Depart

Return to Loreto to disembark ship. A transfer to the airport is included to meet homeward flights.



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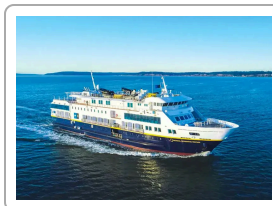
Accommodation Details:

National Geographic Venture

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/adventure-cruises/whales-and-wildness-spring-in-the-sea-of-cortez/ships

Baja California: A Living Sea & Desert Isles Accommodations

Discover One of the World's Richest Marine Realms from a Fully Equipped Expedition Ship



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.



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Sail with the World Leader in Small-Ship Expedition 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

Sail with a Top Naturalist Expedition Team

Gain a deep understanding of the natural history of Baja California and the Sea of Cortez as you travel with a veteran expedition team that includes an Expedition Leader and five naturalists, plus an undersea specialist, a Lindblad-National Geographic certified photo instructor, and a wellness specialist. The ship's naturalists are experts in Baja marine biology, evolutionary biology, ornithology and more. The daily schedule is flexible, so you can choose activities with the naturalists whose interests mirror your own. With just 62 guests aboard this small ship, that's a ratio of approximately one guide for every 10 guests.

2

Gain Unmatched Access to Marine Life

The Sea of Cortez holds the world's greatest marine biodiversity, and this voyage immerses you in it—literally! A full complement of exploratory tools (see #3 below) grants you varied vantage points, above and below the surface, on whales, dolphins, rays, sea lions, sea turtles, nesting birds and huge schools of fish. You won't find a trip that offers a more in-depth opportunity to explore a broad cross-section of this globally important body of water.

3

Explore via Excursion Craft & Specialized Equipment

The ship's fleet of motorized expedition landing craft and tandem and single sea kayaks facilitates intimate exploration. Watch whales rise, sea turtles glide and birds congregate on shore, all at eye-level. Full snorkel gear, including wetsuits, is at your disposal so you can swim with sea lions and reef fish. Observe the deeper underwater world 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 songs via hydrophone, and observe whales underwater in real time via a bow-mounted camera that sends a live feed to the onboard screens. And up your photography game with tips from a Lindblad-National Geographic certified photo instructor.



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4

Be a Part of Citizen Science

Witness research conducted on board by National Geographic-supported scientists. Watch the crew lower scientific instruments that measure oxygen 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 towns, from promoting lower-impact fishing to seabird research, marine conservation, sustainable tourism and social marketing for sustainable seafood.

6

A Flexible Itinerary Keeps You Closer to Wildlife

Flexibility is a hallmark of a Lindblad expedition cruise, and a nimble small ship makes it possible. Expedition landing craft are dropped to get close to whales, and the captain will change course to keep the ship among a pod of dolphins. Hike through forests of cacti or cruise near shore for close-up photos of plunge-diving pelicans and blue-footed boobies. The movements of wildlife are what determine our course!

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.

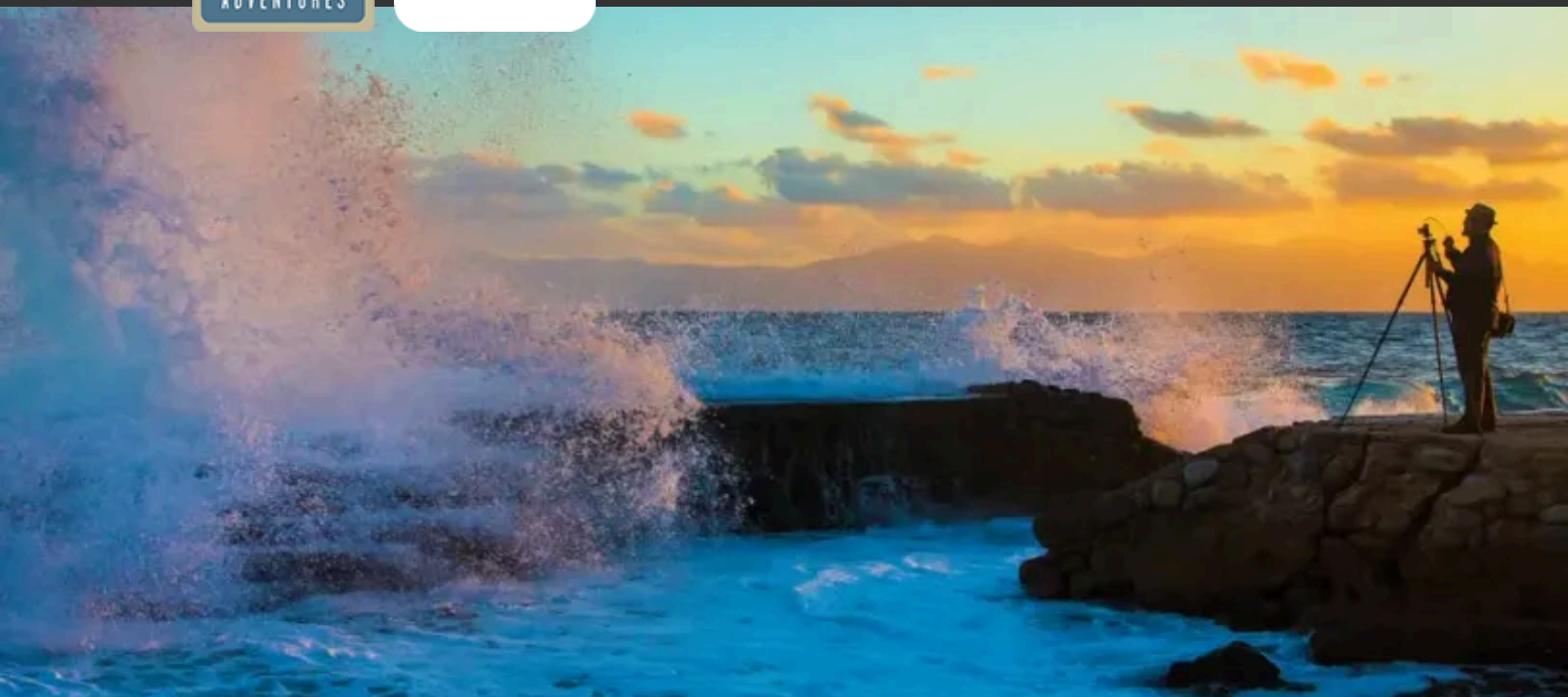
8

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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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From \$6045

Group Size:
Limited to 100
Travelers

Physical Requirements:
Easy to Moderate

Baja California: A Living Sea & Desert Isles Dates, Pricing & Info

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2025 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Dec 13, 2025	Dec 20, 2025	
Dec 20, 2025	Dec 27, 2025	
Dec 27, 2025	Jan 3, 2026	

2026 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Dec 12, 2026	Dec 19, 2026	
Dec 19, 2026	Dec 26, 2026	
Dec 26, 2026	Jan 2, 2027	

2027 Departures



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Departure	Return	Notes
Jan 2, 2027	Jan 9, 2027	



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Pricing

2025 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.

Please read Lindblad's Payment & Refund Policy [here](#).

Included

Accommodations aboard ship; meals as indicated; non-alcoholic beverages; excursions; services of Lindblad Expeditions' Leader, naturalist staff and expert guides; use of kayaks and snorkeling equipment; 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 wildlife watching. Depending on weather and sea conditions, boat excursions 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

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 better fares online.



Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

Natural Habitat Adventures • PO Box 3065 • Boulder, CO USA 80307

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.