



Discovering Our Planet Together



# Among the Great Whales

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



## Table of Contents:

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<b>Trip Overview</b>	.....	<b>3</b>
<b>Trip Itinerary</b>	.....	<b>4</b>
<b>Ships</b>	.....	<b>8</b>
<b>What Makes Nat Hab Different?</b>	.....	<b>9</b>
<b>Dates &amp; Pricing Information</b>	.....	<b>11</b>



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## Trip Details:

**Days:**  
8 Days

**Price:**  
From \$6590  
(+ Air)

**Physical Requirements:**  
Easy to Moderate

## Among the Great Whales

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

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

### Trip Highlights

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

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

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



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## Itinerary At A Glance

- Day 1**  
Loreto, Mexico / San Carlos—Embark Ship
- Day 2**  
Bahia Almejas / Rehusa Channel / Isla Magdalena
- Day 3**  
Boca de Soledad
- Day 4**  
Hull Canal / Cruising
- Day 5**  
Gorda Banks / Cabo Pulmo
- Day 6**  
Los Islotes / La Paz
- Day 7**  
Exploring the Sea of Cortez
- Day 8**  
Loreto—Disembark / Depart

## Among the Great Whales Itinerary

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

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

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





### **Day 2: Bahia Almejas / Rehusa Channel / Isla Magdalena**

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

### **Day 3: Boca de Soledad**

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

### **Day 4: Hull Canal / Cruising**

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



### **Day 5: Gorda Banks / Cabo Pulmo**

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

### **Day 6: Los Islotes / La Paz**

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

### **Day 7: Exploring the Sea of Cortez**

Today is devoted to cruising at sea, with the luxury of no specific plan. Jacques Cousteau called the Sea of Cortez "the world's aquarium," and we get a feel for its tremendous biodiversity as we scout for marine life. We may spend the morning whale-watching around Isla Danzante, one of the best areas for finding blue whales, bottlenose dolphins and common dolphins. Rich in nutrients, the Sea of Cortez is home to a huge variety of fish, including king angelfish, surgeonfish, butterfly fish, damselfish and the vividly colored parrotfish. Explore one of the many uninhabited islands such as Isla San Francisco or Isla Santa Catalina, famous for the 12-foot wavy barrel cactus, or Isla Carmen, with its abandoned salt works. Whether walking, kayaking, paddleboarding or watching from the ship's bridge, you'll observe a great diversity of birdlife—ladder-backed woodpeckers, Costa's hummingbirds, Gila woodpeckers and verdin among them.



### Day 8: Loreto—Disembark / Depart

Our whale-watching cruise comes to an end as we disembark this morning in Loreto, a vibrant colonial town founded in 1697 by Jesuit missionaries. Transfer to the small city's historic center to visit Baja California's first mission—The Mission of Our Lady of Loreto—and the nearby museum, with leisure time to wander the Old Town. After lunch, transfer to the Loreto airport to meet departing flights. *Note: This itinerary should serve as a guideline only; the actual stops are determined by weather, wildlife activity, and a host of factors in order to provide the best possible experience. This flexibility is what makes traveling on our nimble expedition ships so much more rewarding than on a large vessel with a locked-in voyage plan. Some itineraries travel in reverse.*



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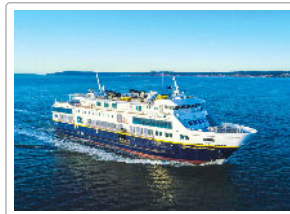
### Ship Details:

#### National Geographic Venture

For detailed descriptions, visit [nathab.com/adventure-cruises/among-great-whales/accommodation/](http://nathab.com/adventure-cruises/among-great-whales/accommodation/)

## Among the Great Whales Ships

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



#### National Geographic Venture

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





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

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

### 1 Travel with a Top Naturalist Expedition Team

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

### 2 Gain Unmatched Access to Whales

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

### 3 Explore in Depth via Excursion Craft & Specialized Equipment

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



**4 Be a Part of Citizen Science**

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

**5 Help Support Local Communities**

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

**6 Flexibility Keeps You Closer to Wildlife**

Flexibility is a hallmark of our expeditions in Baja California, and our small ship is what makes that 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 towering cacti or cruise by expedition landing craft along the shore to get close-up photos of plunge-diving pelicans and blue-footed boobies.

**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 \$6590  
(+ Air)

**Location:**

**Group Size:**  
National Geographic Venture

**Physical Requirements:**  
Easy to Moderate

## Among the Great Whales Dates, Pricing & Info

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### 2023 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Jan 7, 2023	Jan 14, 2023	Loreto to San Carlos   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Jan 14, 2023	Jan 21, 2023	San Carlos to Loreto   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Jan 21, 2023	Jan 28, 2023	Loreto to San Carlos   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Jan 28, 2023	Feb 4, 2023	San Carlos to Loreto   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Feb 4, 2023	Feb 11, 2023	Loreto to San Carlos   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Feb 11, 2023	Feb 18, 2023	San Carlos to Loreto   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Feb 18, 2023	Feb 25, 2023	Loreto to San Carlos   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Feb 25, 2023	Mar 4, 2023	San Carlos to Loreto   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>
Mar 4, 2023	Mar 11, 2023	Loreto to San Carlos   <i>National Geographic Venture</i>



## Pricing

### 2023 Prices

#### Pricing & Deck Plan

*National Geographic Venture*

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. A **\$750** per-person deposit is required to reserve your space.

## Group Size

*National Geographic Venture* : Approximately 100 Travelers

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

## Included

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

## Not Included

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

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

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

## Physical Requirements

### *Easy to Moderate*

This adventure does not require a high degree of physical fitness. You must be able to walk up and down stairs, wade through shallow water to step in and out of the excursion skiffs, and sit on bench seats for long periods of time while whale watching. Depending on weather and sea conditions, boat



excursions to the whales can be rough, bumpy and wet. Winds may be strong, water may spray into the boat, and temperatures may be cold. Optional hikes will also be available, and in order to participate, you should be able to walk unassisted on uneven terrain for at least one mile. All activities are completely optional, and travelers should only participate in those activities with which they feel comfortable.

### **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**

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Since 2003, Nat Hab has donated more than \$4.5 million to WWF's global conservation efforts and will continue to give 1% of gross sales plus \$150,000 annually through 2023 in support of WWF's mission to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth. WWF® and ©1986 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All rights reserved.