

Baja California

BAJA WHALE WATCHING CRUISE

Why join this Voyage?

- An outstanding 8-day whale watching voyage, combining Baja's bountiful, whale-rich Sea of Cortez with the chance to encounter the 'friendly' grey whales of the Pacific lagoons up-close and personal!
- Rare opportunity to see up to 12 different species of whale, including the blue whale, as well as thousands of dolphins, sea lions, manta rays and blue footed boobies, all set against Baja's dramatic, arid landscape
- Snorkel amongst sea lions, kayak or undertake daily excursions by zodiac and on foot accompanied by passionate onboard naturalist guides, observing wildlife and accessing remote, pristine locations



Trip Summary

Baja's Sea of Cortez, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is indisputably one of the world's outstanding destinations for whale watching. Beginning in Los Angeles, easy access is provided via scheduled flights to this remote region. Travelling by small expeditionary ship with the luxury of a flexible daily itinerary, explore Baja's rich tapestry of life by zodiac, kayak, on foot or snorkelling, accompanied by highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides. The chance to experience whales up close in their natural habitat is one of the great delights of this expeditionary cruise. This voyage has a strong educational dimension; throughout you will be accompanied on all excursions by highly knowledgeable guides, who will also provide an informative lecture programme. In combining the richness of the Sea of Cortez with the extraordinary grey whales of the Pacific lagoons, this voyage must rank as one of the best whale-focused holidays on the planet.

Itinerary



Day 1 London/ Los Angeles

Depart London on the British Airways flight to Los Angeles. Overnight in Los Angeles.

Day 2 Los Angeles/ La Paz/ Embark

Fly from Los Angeles to La Paz in Baja. Group transfer across the neck of the peninsula to San Carlos where you board your expeditionary boat.



Days 3-5 Bahia Magdalena

Bahia Magdalena is one of the main breeding and calving grounds for the California grey whale. Each winter these whales make the longest migration of any mammal; from their Arctic feeding grounds in the Bering Sea to breed and raise their calves in Baja's sheltered waters. During our days here you will have extended opportunity to not only observe these incredible animals from the ship, but also close up at water level from small launches.

In zodiacs and kayaks (*optional*) explore the canals of the rich coastal mangrove swamps. Bird watching here can be excellent including frigate birds, pelicans, cormorants, terns and great blue herons.



Please note the Mexican authorities strictly govern the number of vessels allowed in Bahia Magdalena and the time spent with each whale group. You will be split into small groups to make the most of each of your whale watching opportunities.

Day 6 Los Cabos & Gorda Banks

This morning cruise past the spectacular Friars Rocks at Land's End with optional visit to the historic town centre of San Jose del Cabo. Afternoon spent whale watching at the Gorda Banks sea mount, a gathering place for both whales and dolphins. Humpback whales are often sighted here at this time of the year. See tail lobbing, flipper slapping and breaching. Marine biologists and Naturalists are always available to inform and enlighten you with their knowledge and experience.



Day 7 Islas Los Islotes & Espiritu Santo

With deeply indented shorelines and dramatically eroded cliff faces, Islas Los Islotes and Espiritu Santo are two of the most beautiful islands in the Sea of Cortez. Plenty of opportunity to explore by kayak, zodiac or don a snorkel and mask. Brown pelicans, gulls, wandering tattlers, great blue herons and boobies are all part of the landscape. It is also home to the endemic black jack rabbit.



Day 8 Exploring the Sea of Cortez

Today we have the luxury to make the most of opportunities that present themselves. We may spend the morning whale watching in the waters around Isla Danzante, an area proven to be one of the best for finding blue whales, bottlenose dolphins and common dolphins. Rich in nutrients, the Sea of Cortez is home to a huge variety of fish: king angelfish, surgeonfish, butterfly fish, damselfish and the beautifully coloured parrotfish.



Explore one of the many lovely, uninhabited islands such as Isla San Jose or Isla Santa Catalina, famous for the 12-foot wavy barrel cactus. Whether walking, kayaking or watching from the Bridge, you'll observe the great diversity of bird life; ladder-backed woodpeckers, Costa's hummingbirds, Gila woodpeckers and verdin.



Day 9 La Paz/ Disembark/ Los Angeles

Disembark after breakfast in La Paz with a group transfer to the airport for the flight back to Los Angeles. Connect onto your overnight flight back to London Heathrow,

Day 10 London

Arrive back into the UK

****Please note that this itinerary also operates in reverse on alternative departures.**

Activities



- Zodiac cruises
- Whale and dolphin watching
- Shore landings - hiking on uninhabited islands and remote beaches
- Kayaking
- Snorkelling & swimming
- Bird watching

The Boat

National Geographic Sea Bird



The National Geographic Sea Bird is perfectly suited for this kind of expeditionary voyage, combining all the necessary comforts as your floating base, while nimble enough to unlock those areas inaccessible to larger ships. The captain has decades of sailing experience in the region, ably supported by the knowledgeable expeditionary staff who add an important educational dimension to this trip.



With a maximum capacity for just 62 guests in 31 outside cabins, you are guaranteed a very personalised adventure. The ship features a well-stocked library, comfortable lounge, a full-service bar and facilities for films, slide shows and presentations. There is an observation deck, partially covered sun deck with comfortable chairs where you can relax and LEXspa. Their Open Bridge policy provides guests with an opportunity to meet the Officers and Captain, as well as a convivial place to hang out and observe. There is a choice of 3 cabin types and all cabins are well-appointed with outward facing windows, private bathroom facilities and climate controls. Meals are served in a single seating with unassigned tables for an informal atmosphere and easy mingling.



With a fleet of 4 zodiacs and a selection of virtually un-tippable kayaks, you can be off the ship and out exploring on land or the water. There is also a bow camera, hydrophone, snorkelling gear, splash-cam, underwater video camera and video microscope. There is a ship's Doctor on call and ship to shore communications are available via satellite.

Route Map



Expedition Dates for 2013

19th Jan - 26th Jan
26th Jan - 2nd Feb
2nd Feb - 9th Feb
9th Feb - 16th Feb

16th Feb - 23rd Feb
23rd Feb - 2nd Mar
2nd Mar - 9th Mar
9th Mar - 16th Mar

Guide Prices for 2013

Cabin Type

(guide price quoted per person)

Category 1: Main Deck (no's 300-305)	£3,825
Category 2: Bridge/ Upper Deck (no's 100-104, 200-212, 215)	£4,395
Category 3: Bridge/ Upper Deck (no's 105/6, 214, 216/7, 219)	£4,925

Includes

- 8 day voyage on a full board basis
- All zodiac and shore excursions with guides
- Complimentary use of kayaks and snorkelling equipment and wet suits
- Post voyage expedition log

Excludes

- International flights
- Overnight accommodation in Los Angeles
- Gratuities on board
- Items of a personal nature
- Visas

Please note that these prices are a **guide only** and are subject to exchange rate fluctuations and possible fuel surcharges.

Flight Inclusive Packages

We can offer a fully inclusive package from the UK to include international flights to Los Angeles, a night in LA and flights to La Paz as per the suggested itinerary above, from £1,250 per person depending on choice of airline and accommodation. The advantage of booking the whole trip through Steppes Travel is you will then benefit from full ATOL cover.

Single Supplement

For those solo travellers wishing to secure their own cabin, this is available in cabin categories 1 & 2, typically based on a multiplier of 1.5 that of a single berth. Please contact the office for an accurate quotation.

Want to discuss this trip?

Please call **Sue** on **01285 880981** for more details or to check availability



Having spent the best part of 5 years on my “gap year” working in travel seemed the natural progression. I am most at home travelling to remote wilderness areas of the globe. With a life-long passion for wildlife I love to get up close either by kayak or on foot and learn the local bushcraft skills. My travels have taken me to all seven continents. Most recently whale watching in Baja California’s Sea of Cortez and bear watch in the Russian Far East. I have also travelled to Antarctica, Spitsbergen and the Canadian High Arctic along with sailing on the Amazon and Rio Negro. I hope to go whale and bear watching in Alaska next.

Sue is Country Director for Steppes Voyages
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