



BAJA WHALE BY TIM BUSS

MEXICO

Baja Peninsula: Gray Whales and Desert Landscapes

9 DAYS | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: FEB - MAR

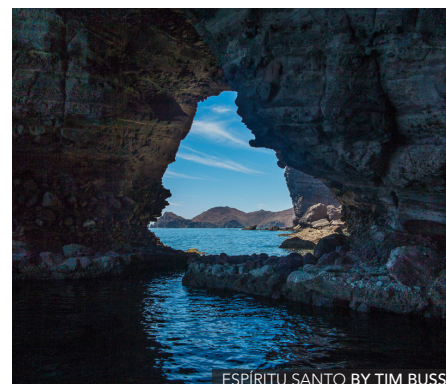
Each year, gray whales travel thousands of miles from the Arctic Ocean to the warm waters of Baja California's lagoons to court, mate, give birth, and care for their young. Join us for the best of Baja! Take part in one of the unique natural wonders of the world. Visit the peninsula's whale sanctuaries for arm's-length encounters with these giant mammals. Plus, you can sample local foods in La Paz, look for birds among the mangroves, and explore the arid peninsula of Baja California, home to over 600 endemic plants including the unique Boojum tree, towering Cardon cactus, and the contorted Elephant tree.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- See gray whales up close! Enjoy thrilling opportunities to encounter these gentle giants from a small boat.
- Experience the crystal-clear waters, pristine beach, hidden coves, and tropical marine life of the protected island of Espíritu Santo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Seek out birds among the mangroves, shore, and prickly desert vegetation of the highlands.
- Walk through the scenic desert garden landscapes of gigantic granite boulders, Boojum trees, Cardon cacti and Elephant trees.
- Stroll the charming Malecón boardwalk in La Paz.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting



ESPIRITU SANTO BY TIM BUSS

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - LA PAZ

Upon arrival at Los Cabos International Airport, travel about two and a half hours to the hotel in La Paz. Participants should arrive no later than 1 pm. Although La Paz is the most important city of the southern part of the peninsula, its tree-lined streets and calm, clear bays inspire tranquility. A walk along the Malecón is a treat. This evening attend a welcome dinner and orientation at the hotel. *Overnight at Hyatt Place. (D)*

DAY 2 - LA PAZ

The Sea of Cortez has been defined as one of the most biologically diverse marine areas in the world. Within the Sea of Cortez Marine Park Reserve, the protected island and UNESCO World Heritage Site Espíritu Santo offers a variety of attractions: fascinating geology, snorkeling with sea lions and tropical fish in crystal clear water, pristine beaches, and hidden and isolated coves. Walk along the marina to board a boat and depart for the island for the day's activities. Return to La Paz and get to know the downtown area. Dinner is in a traditional fish and seafood restaurant on the Malecón. *Overnight at Hyatt Place. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - LORETO

Depart for Loreto. The road crosses an important agricultural area where Crested Caracaras are often seen perched on fence posts. Take a detour to Bahía Magdalena for an unforgettable experience: a boat ride in a gray whale sanctuary to view these giant mammals at arm's length; some even let themselves be petted! Each year, gray whales travel thousands of miles from the Arctic Ocean to the warm waters of Baja California's lagoons to court, mate, give birth and care for their young. Continue to Loreto, the oldest mission and permanent settlement of the Californias. The city also served as the capital of the territory for over 100 years. The mission is still standing today. The beautiful hacienda-style hotel is located on the waterfront. *Overnight at La Mision. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - LORETO

The island-studded portion of the Sea of Cortez facing Loreto is protected by the Loreto Bay National Marine Park. Take a boat to encircle dramatic Coronado Island which offers azure waters, interesting geology, a colony of sea lions, and more. Return to Loreto for lunch and head for the mountains! The city is surrounded by the impressively rugged peaks of the Sierra de la Giganta, providing the scenery for one of the peninsula's most beautiful side excursions, a drive along steep walls to San Javier Mission and village. Known as "the jewel of the missions," San Javier is one of the best-preserved missions, proud of its original orchard planted by the missionaries. Stop at a goat ranch to learn about life on a ranch and the process of making goat cheese. Practice hands-on tortilla making for your cheese and beans snack. The evening is free to enjoy dinner at a restaurant of your choice. *Overnight at La Mision. (BL)*

DAY 5 - SAN IGNACIO

The variety of scenery makes the drive between Loreto and San Ignacio particularly interesting; giant Cardons dominate the landscape on the way to San Ignacio. Drive along the crystal blue waters of Bahía de Concepción, with a stop at one of its unspoiled beaches, where you can see mangroves rich in bird life. Continue to Mulege, a mission settlement on a riverbed lined with palm trees. In Santa Rosalia visit the old French Quarter and the Boleo mine museum to learn how the French established this copper mining town and brought over the prefabricated iron church designed by Gustave Eiffel that is still standing today. North of Santa Rosalia, depart from the blue waters of the Sea of Cortez and climb one of the steepest grades in the peninsula leading to a plateau and to the "Tres Virgenes" volcanoes, cones of red lava rock dotted with gracious white elephant trees. Stop to bird in the highlands among prickly desert vegetation before arriving in San Ignacio, a charming town that developed around its imposing 18th century mission, still in use today, in the midst of a lush, tranquil oasis and a plaza filled with Indian laurel trees. *Overnight at La Huerta. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - SAN IGNACIO

Continue the whale experience in San Ignacio Lagoon. To reach the isolated remote lagoon, cross an open stretch of desert and a salty mudflat.

Board small pangas for a memorable ride among the whales. After lunch enjoy the tranquility of the lagoon and spot migrant birds along the shore. Return to San Ignacio to visit the mission and stroll in the laurel-filled plaza. *Overnight at La Huerta. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - CATAVIÑA

Depart for Guerrero Negro, home of the largest salt plant in the world, an immense salt marsh, and a whale sanctuary which receives a record number of migrant gray whales each year. Drive through the salt plant to reach Scammon's Lagoon and depart for a third and final outing among the whales. Continue the drive to Cataviña with a nature walk in an area rich with desert vegetation. Enter Reserva de los Cirios, named in honor of the Boojum tree, Baja's signature plant. Arrive in the famed Cataviña boulder fields located in the enchanting Central Desert. A combination of sun, sand, gigantic granite boulders, Boojum trees, Cardon cacti and Elephant trees create a superb desert garden landscape. Settle in at the hotel and enjoy a dinner fiesta evening. *Overnight at Mision Santa Maria. (BLD)*

DAY 8 - ENSENADA

Begin the day with a beautiful walk in the magnificent Cataviña desert garden, including a visit to a small cave with simple rock art. Lunch is in a San Quintín restaurant to taste traditional platters. Arrive at Ensenada and take some time to stroll in the main streets and along the waterfront. Check in at the oceanfront hotel and relax, admiring the spectacular view. Farewell dinner is at the hotel accompanied by the sound of crashing waves. *Overnight at Las Rosas Hotel and Spa. (BLD)*

DAY 9 - SAN DIEGO

Depart for the last stretch along Highway One, a very scenic portion with stunning views on the Pacific Ocean coastline. Cross the border into the United States and continue to the San Diego airport for your return flight. Arrival time at the airport is approximately noon. Do not schedule flight earlier than 2 pm. (B)

PROGRAM PRICING

\$3,395 (15 participants + 1 leader)

\$3,995 (10 participants + 1 leader)

Airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included. Valid for travel in 2020

TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants traveling in 2018 or beyond. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

THE FINE PRINT

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due upon booking and no later than four months prior to departure. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 95 days prior to departure are not refundable.



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe