

ITINERARY

WEEKEND WHALE ADVENTURE

Birch Aquarium at Scripps

Surrounded by a natural aquarium, the rugged magical landscape of Baja California Peninsula is home to vast deserts rich in vegetation, pristine beaches, jagged mountains, an array of shore birds and isolated villages. Of special attraction are the gray whales. Each year, gray whales travel thousands of miles from the Arctic Ocean to the warm waters of Baja California lagoons, designated as wildlife refuges, to court, mate, give birth and care for their young. Join the unique, unforgettable experience to view these giant mammals at arm's length; some may let themselves be petted!

Whale behaviors at the lagoons change as the season unfolds. Beginning in mid-January, whales arrive to give birth to their young outside the viewing areas. At this time, whales can be observed in the spectacular behavior of courting and mating. In February the lagoons reach the highest number of whales, up to 2,000 at one time! Spouts are visible at all times, mating still occurs and mothers with newborn calves begin to enter the observation areas. In March, as bulls and newly-pregnant whales depart, mother and baby pairs dominate the lagoons. Towards the end of the season, calves gain size and weight and mothers become less protective, offering a greater opportunity for close encounters. Whales remain in the lagoons up to mid April.

Day 1. San Diego - Ensenada. Begin the trip after work. Cross the border into Mexico and spend a relaxed evening in Ensenada. Depart 4 pm.

Hotel: Corona, Ensenada

Meals: Snack

Day 2. Ensenada - Guerrero Negro. The day is dedicated to admire the wonders of the desert. The mountainous peninsula is covered by innumerable species of flora, many of which are endemic. Drive in *Reserva Valle de los Cirios* established to protect the natural life, especially the unique boo jum tree. Lunch stop is in a traditional Baja traveler restaurant in El Rosario. Brief rest stops. At parallel 28, Baja California Sur begins with the town of Guerrero Negro.

Hotel: Desert Inn, Guerrero Negro

Meals: B/L

Day 3. Guerrero Negro - Scammon's (Ojo de Liebre) Lagoon - Cataviña. Begin early in the morning driving through *La Exportadora de Sal*, one of the largest salt plants in the world, to reach the pier. At Scammon's Lagoon, board small pangas for TWO exciting encounters among whales with a brief rest stop between the outings. On the way back to town drive through a salt marsh where birds migrate from Russia, Canada, and other latitudes. Return to Cataviña stopping on the way for a walk in an area rich in desert vegetation. In isolated Cataviña, the nights reveal an enchanting desert sky. Dinner at the hotel consists of a variety of finger food.

Hotel: Desert Inn, Cataviña

Meals: B/L/D

Day 4. Cataviña - San Diego. Located in the midst of the Central Desert, a combination of sun, sand, gigantic granite boulders, and amusing combinations of boo jums, cardons and elephant trees make Cataviña a superb "desert garden". An early morning walk in this stunning setting includes a visit to a cave with paintings. Lunch is in a typical San Quintin Restaurant with fresh seafood or Mexican specialties. A brief stop is made in Ensenada.

Meals: B/L

Features include:

- Comfortable private motor coach
- Three nights accommodations in comfortable hotels
- Most meals with one drink each. Meals are chosen according to the local specialty
- Snacks and drinking water
- TWO Whale Watching Excursions
- Services of experienced guides and a naturalist from the Birch Aquarium at Scripps
- Taxes and tips of included hotels and meals. *Note: tips of drivers and guides are not included*
- Creative learning experiences during driving times

DATE: Friday February 17 to Monday February 20, 2012

PRICE: \$ 610.00 Double Occupancy
\$ 745.00 Single Occupancy (subject to availability)
Full payment is preferred.

Traveler must be able to endure extended driving periods and board small fishing boats ("pangas") with the possibility of encountering rough seas. Walks are usually short and on relatively flat terrain, however often on uneven ground. There are options for short but steep hikes. If traveler can't join, he/she may spend time around the flat area while the activity is in process.

VALID PASSPORT MANDATORY

Please note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information featured on this itinerary. Itineraries are based on our best information at this time. Circumstances beyond our control may require us to adjust itineraries or other details. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding.