



## **Itinerary for Sea of Cortez, Baja - Grey Whale Encounter On the MV *Westward***

*Itineraries are dependent on weather and tides and may change at the captain's discretion.*

**An expedition among the scattered islands along the shore of the Baja peninsula begins with an overland visit to the grey whale breeding and birthing lagoons of Bahia Magdalena or San Ignacio, with up-close whale encounters. On other days we snorkel with young sea lions, walk along desert island ridges and palm-lined arroyos, visit a remote fishing village and kayak into a mangrove lagoon. A favorite highlight is the half-day snorkel with whale sharks.**

### **La Paz to Loreto Day 1**

Please plan your arrival at the Los Cabos airport to be prior to 1:30 PM. One of our crew will meet you as you exit the arrivals door at the Los Cabos Airport, and you will be escorted to our van which will transport you to La Paz. We hope to leave the airport at 2:00 PM for the drive back to La Paz. Upon your arrival at our boutique hotel in La Paz there will be time for a stroll along the bay-side Malecon before we gather for dinner at a nearby restaurant.

### **Loreto to La Paz Day 1**

You will arrive in Loreto aboard the Alaska/Horizon shuttle from Los Angeles in the afternoon. After clearing Mexican customs, a crew member will meet you and escort you to our van for the short drive to our hotel in Loreto. After checking in, there is time to rest, or to explore the historic town square, which is lined with shops and cafés. We will meet in a small, outdoor restaurant that abuts the square for a group dinner.

### **Grey Whale Encounter, Days 2 & 3\***

This morning, you will meet your van to either Bahia Magdalena or Laguna San Ignacio, both of which are grey whale birthing and breeding lagoons on Baja's west coast. It is about a three-hour drive to Bahia Magdalena and a four-hour trip to Pueblo San Ignacio, and then another 90 minutes to our camp on the shore of the lagoon, with stretching stops along the way. After settling into your lodgings, you will gather to meet your skiff (called a "panga") and head out into the lagoon's designated whale viewing area. There are no words to adequately describe these encounters, but most people return feeling as though they have just had one of the most profound experiences of their lives.

The next morning, after breakfast, you will head back out into the lagoon for another visit to whale waters. Lunch will await you back on shore before packing up and boarding the van for the return trip. Here, you will check back into your first nights' hotel after which we will gather once again for a group dinner.

### **Whale Shark Snorkel (Day 4 La Paz-Loreto\*/Day 11 Loreto-La Paz)**

Today is whale shark swim day! Only a few outfitters are granted access to the whale shark swim area, and these operators are specially trained and follow strict regulations. Depending on the weather, we will either meet our outfitter inside the port of La Paz, or outside, closer to the designated whale shark swim area. We will board a panga, your transportation into whale shark waters.

### **Days 5 through 10\***

We will spend these six days cruising through the scattered islands between La Paz and Loreto. On the way we will kayak along rugged cliffs and into quiet mangrove-lined lagoons, snorkel in impossibly clear water, cataloging myriad fish that seem to fly beneath us, and gather to enjoy truly gourmet meals.

Weather and sea conditions play a huge part in how we select our routes and anchorages, but with thousands of miles of experience in and among these islands we will show our guests the very best of what is available during our time together.

In these waters we have seen blue, humpback, sperm and fin whales, orcas, common and bottle nose dolphins, pilot whales, and acres of leaping manta and mobula rays. We have had striped marlin swim right next to our boat, and taken so many sunrise and sunset pictures that we struggle to choose our favorites.

### **Day 11 (La Paz-Loreto)**

Raising our anchor after breakfast and perhaps a final kayak paddle, we will make the short transit from our night's anchorage to Puerto Escondido, about 15 miles south of Loreto. Our van will meet us for the twenty-minute drive to Loreto. Depending on Alaska Airlines schedule, you will either go directly to the airport, or have a few hours to explore the historic downtown of old Loreto. Enjoy a meal or margarita in one of the small cafes surrounding the town square, shop for locally produced art, or just sit on a bench along the laurel shaded peace of Mile 0 of El Camino Real until it's time to meet our van for the short drive to the airport.

### **Day 12 (Loreto-La Paz)**

After an early breakfast you will be meeting our van for the two-and-a-half-hour drive to the airport, where you will arrive by 11:00 AM.

*\* La Paz to Loreto departures that visit San Ignacio Lagoons will have their whale shark snorkel on day 2, departing La Paz immediately after, cruising through the islands. Guests will disembark on day 8 in Loreto, spending the night at our boutique hotel. The grey whale encounter will be on days 9 & 10, with the final night spent in Loreto. Day 11 guests will be transported to the Loreto airport after breakfast.*

### **Optional Add On Package**

We offer an optional 4-day/3-night package to explore stunning prehistoric Petroglyphs. There are an unknown number of painted caves in the Sierra Mountains of southern Baja. Some are small, with paintings having been protected for thousands of years by small overhanging rock ledges. Other sites are large caves, with remarkably detailed drawings of people and animals. Experts place the ages of these paintings at between 6,000 and 10,000 years. They rival those in Western Europe for artistry and significance. Please call our office at 360.378.7123 for more information.

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