

PACIFIC COAST WHALE CAMP ON MAGDALENA BAY

6-DAY TRIP OVERVIEW

Your first day and night will be hotel-based in the charming and friendly seaside town of Loreto. The next 3 nights will be spent at our uniquely situated Pacific Coast Whale Camp, located in the heart of the whale calving area on Bahia Magdalena, or Magdalena Bay. You'll return to Loreto for your last night at the hotel and your final day in town before departure.

On all our tours, you will be hosted by our experienced naturalist guides. All our guides are either Baja natives or have traveled extensively in Baja, and have intimate knowledge of the area's rich natural history. Skilled kayak instructors, they also provide training for those guests interested in developing their paddling skills. Whether you want to learn about the area's unique bird, fish and plant life or work on your kayak roll, our guides will be at your service.

ITINERARY

Day One: Our friendly local transportation service greets you at the airport and transports you to your hotel in the charming town of Loreto. To help you prepare for the next leg of your adventure, a Blue Waters representative will meet with your group in the evening to discuss trip details and answer any last-minute questions. Participants are free to join each other for dinner and an evening on the town or a relaxing stroll along the palm-lined waterfront of Loreto.

Day Two: After breakfast, a van will arrive at your hotel to transport you through the desert toward Baja's scenic Pacific coast. In the late morning you will arrive at the shores of Magdalena Bay, where your guides will greet you. They will offer an introductory paddle lesson, after which you will paddle off through a beautiful mangrove estuary to your beach island home. There you will settle into camp and surrender into Baja time.

Days Three - Four: You will spend much of these days in the presence of gray whale mothers and calves. Mornings, you'll visit the whales by panga, thrilling to the proximity of these majestic creatures. Afternoons, you'll have opportunities to walk the expansive sand dune beaches and paddle in the extensive mangrove estuaries, observing bird life at every turn. Your guides will be excited to share their knowledge of the area's natural history and marine ecology, and are ready to help you develop your kayaking skills. You can even have your own private self-rescue training sessions right off our camp's beach! Evenings, after a delicious Mexican home-style dinner, kick back into your camp chair and enjoy great company as oranges, reds and golds splash across the sky and water in another magnificent Baja sunset. Browse the camp library in our spacious geodesic dome, or sit outside by the quiet evening waters as we identify constellations, marvel at the water's bioluminescence, and listen for the sound of whales blowing off-shore.

Day Five: On your final morning at camp, the group may choose to go whale watching one last time. Afterwards, you'll pack up and paddle back to the peninsula, where a van awaits to transport you to your Loreto hotel in time for a hot shower and an evening on the town. On your final night, you'll enjoy exploring Loreto's quaint streets and local culture, filled with shops, restaurants, cafés, and friendly local people.

Day Six: Depending on your departure plans, you may find time to enjoy a leisurely breakfast, visit the mission, or further explore the myriad shops of Loreto. Our van will transport you from your hotel to the airport in plenty of time for your flight. Return home refreshed and renewed, with many fond memories of the whales, newfound friends and relaxing, adventure-filled days on Bahia Magdalena.



LODGING & MEALS

LODGING

Blue Waters provides five nights camping at our comfortable Whale Camp on Magdalena Bay, and the first and last nights at a lovely hotel in the seaside town of Loreto. If you wish to make arrangements for an extended stay in Loreto, please call us at 415-669-2600 and we will be happy to assist you with hotel arrangements. For more about Loreto, visit www.mexperience.com/guide/beaches/loreto.htm

MAGDALENA BAY FACILITIES

The Blue Waters base camp is on a small sandy beach on our own beautiful mangrove island we call "Isla Elenita." With no permanent structures on the island, Blue Waters provides a shade structure, a geo-dome kitchen and another geo-dome for group use and enjoyment. We also provide privacy-screened toilet facilities and solar showers. Upon arrival, participants move into their tents, creating home for the duration of their stay. Although the fresh-water supply is limited, plenty is provided for drinking, cooking, and showering. Salt water is used for dishwashing.

BAHIA MAGDALENA

On the Pacific Coast of the Baja Peninsula — approximately 800 miles south of the Mexico/California border — lies Bahia Magdalena. This magnificent bay is surrounded on one side by a series of barrier islands with pristine white sand dunes, and a shoreline on the other of dense mangrove estuaries. With channels that flow north and south, Bahia Magdalena is one of the world's primary calving and mating areas of the *California Gray Whale*.

MEALS

We take our dining very seriously! All meals are provided throughout your stay, except for your dinner(s) out while in Loreto. Prepared by a local Mexican cook at the whale camp, the menu is primarily "Mexican home-cooking," which may include dairy, eggs, mainly organic produce, and sometimes a fresh "catch-of-the-day" brought to us by local fishermen. At each meal there will be a vegetarian option. There will be plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, and purified water is always available. Please indicate on your confidential questionnaire if you have **special dietary requests** that we should integrate into our meal planning. Alcohol is not included on the tour, but we can procure it for you by request. Bring treats that you want to share with others or you'd rather not have to live without.

WHALE WATCHING & KAYAKING & WEATHER

CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALES

In October, the gray whales begin their annual 6,000-mile migration from Alaska to Baja, with the earliest arrivals showing up in Bahia Magdalena by December. Once there, the pregnant females begin to birth their calves. During their first few months of life, the small calves, which average 20 feet in length, are nursed by their mothers and taught to spy hop (raise their heads out of the water), fluke (raise their tails), and breach (leap clear out of the water). By mid-January, some of these very curious and outgoing calves are exercising their independence.

Visit www.acsonline.org/factpack/graywhl.html or www.sclib.ucsd.edu/sio/guide/z-serge.html for more information about the gray whales.

WHALE WATCHING

Because of the growing interest in observing *Gray Whales* in Baja, the Mexican government has implemented a natural resource management plan that protects these majestic animals by limiting the number and type of whale-watching vessels on certain parts of the bay. Therefore, licensed Mexican "panga" drivers will pick us up at our camp and take us out to observe both calves and adults in their natural habitats. In addition, Blue Waters employs both Mexican and American bilingual naturalist guides. They will be your kayak guides as

you paddle amidst the mangrove estuaries, and will also accompany you in the pangas, serving as both interpreters and educators to enhance your whale-watching experience.

KAYAKING

Novices as well as experienced kayakers in reasonably good physical condition are welcome to participate in this nature vacation. Our professional guides offer the instruction you will need to feel comfortable and competent on the water. Blue Waters provides all necessary kayaking gear such as life jackets, paddles and spray skirts. Our double sea kayaks track well, are difficult to capsize, and easy to paddle. Single kayaks will also be available, and can be alternately shared among those with self-rescue training, or used to practice paddling and rescue techniques. If you're a novice, we encourage you to try kayaking before your trip to bolster your confidence. Please contact Blue Waters if you'd like to join us on any of our Tomales Bay tours or classes.

WEATHER

Baja's winter weather is typically pleasant and mild. In February through April, the days are usually warm, with highs in the mid-70s to mid-80s; nights are typically cooler, ranging from the mid-50s to mid-60s. At times, the winds may create challenging conditions for kayaking or whale watching. Our guides may provide alternative activities on days that are too windy, such as hiking, interpretive talks, or kayak-skills training.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT IS PROVIDED

Blue Waters provides roomy double-occupancy tents with thick Thermarest sleeping pads. If you wish to have a tent to yourself, you must bring your own or let us know in advance that you'd like to rent one from us. Likewise, you may bring your own sleeping bag or request to rent one from us.

WHAT TO BRING

Most importantly, bring your ability to work and play with others and a desire to make this trip a once-in-a-lifetime experience for everyone. We have enclosed a packing and equipment list to assist you in your preparations. For your comfort and enjoyment, please be sure to bring everything on the list. You may want to bring a small dry bag for personal belongings (such as binoculars, camera or sunscreen) that you may want easy access to while kayaking or whale watching.

MONEY

It is not necessary to exchange currency, as the locals prefer to receive U.S. dollars. We recommend that you bring about \$300 in small denominations to pay for tips, dining out and smaller purchases in town. If you are driving, also bring enough dollars or pesos for gas, meals, showers and shopping. MasterCard and Visa are accepted at some hotels, shops and restaurants. The local banks will not advance you American dollars from your credit card and the ATMs only dispense Mexican currency, so come prepared with the cash you'll need for your return trip home.

TOUR COSTS

The cost of this six-day special Whale Camp tour with Cindy Wenger is \$1595 per person. The cost is based on double occupancy. If you are traveling alone and would like to share accommodations, please let us know and we will make every effort to match you with another tour participant. If you prefer your own accommodations or if we are unable to match you with roommates, there is a single supplement fee for each night spent in Loreto.

Tour Price Includes:

All airport transfers and ground transportation within Mexico
 All meals in Mexico, except for dinner(s) in Loreto
 Use of kayaking and camping equipment (except sleeping bag)
 Guide services
 Double-occupancy hotel in Loreto
 Double-occupancy tents at whale camp
 Up to eight hours whale watching by panga
 Additional whale watching time (can be purchased @ \$15 per hour)

Does not include:

Air/bus/car travel between the U.S. and Loreto
 Optional rental of snorkeling gear
 Single supplement for hotel in Loreto
 Additional fees that may apply to special programs
 Gratuities

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for your kayak guides are not included in the cost of the trip. Your guides do all they can to provide you with a wonderful vacation and are eager to serve you in every way. If you wish to acknowledge them for their exceptional service, your tips are welcome and appreciated. A suggested gratuity of 10% of the base tour cost is typically shared amongst your guides and cooks. An additional \$2-5 per participant is suggested for each van transport and panga.

RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENTS

To secure your reservation, Blue Waters requires a \$350 non-refundable deposit, payable by check, money order, Visa or MasterCard. The balance is due at least 90 days prior to your tour, payable by check or money order, or using credit card by arrangement with our office.

CANCELLATIONS

Participants may cancel up to 90 days prior to the scheduled departure date, and receive a full refund less the \$350 deposit. If you must cancel within 90 days of the tour, a refund will be issued only if Blue Waters is able to replace you from our waiting list. Otherwise, no refunds or credits will be issued. We regret that no exceptions to this cancellation policy can be made, even for family or medical reasons. That is why we strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We **highly recommend** that you purchase travel insurance. This inexpensive insurance not only protects you if you injure yourself and are unable to go on the trip, but will also protect your vacation investment if any member of your family, or a relative remaining at home, becomes ill or injured. The insurance also covers emergency evacuation as stated, and covers your non-refundable air flight if you have to cancel at the last minute due to injury or illness. It also covers baggage loss, accidental medical and tour cancellation/interruption costs. If your arrival is delayed and you need special livery to join the group in progress, or you need to be evacuated, you are responsible for covering the expenses of water and land transportation, extra hotel nights, etc. Rapid emergency evacuation to U.S. medical facilities is extremely difficult and not guaranteed. We highly recommend travel insurance in case of such emergencies. Travel insurance operates on a reimbursement basis, so you must get receipts for submission to your insurance company. There are many insurance companies; enclosed you will find an application for one of them. Please read the details carefully, as you'll find variations in coverage from one carrier to the next.

CHANGE OF ITINERARY OR CANCELLED TRIPS

Blue Waters Kayaking reserves the right to change the itinerary due to hazardous weather, change in government regulations, and/or circumstances that render the trip unsafe or unsatisfactory to the welfare of the group. Blue Waters Kayaking reserves the right to cancel any trip prior to departure for any reason whatsoever, including insufficient registration or logistical and safety complications that may impede trip operations. A trip cancellation due to insufficient registration normally occurs no later than 3 weeks prior to departure, in which case your complete fee will be returned.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Trip participants have the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to their interests and abilities. We are happy to discuss the trip with you if you have any questions. You are responsible for being in sufficient good health and for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment, so read all the pre-trip information carefully. Please complete and return the enclosed liability release form, reservation checklist and confidential questionnaire with your final payment no later than 90 days prior to your departure date.

RELEASE OF LIABILITY

A liability release form must be signed by each participant prior to the trip, both in the U.S. and in Mexico. No participant will be permitted on our trips without signing release forms, and we cannot issue a refund if a release form has not been signed.

THEFT/ACCIDENTS

Blue Waters Kayaking is not responsible for loss of personal items or injury. There is always a risk of theft or injury wherever you are. Even though present statistics show Baja to be safer than California, it is wise to be cautious. When we leave our campsite unattended for several hours, bring along your most valuable items.

MEDICAL AND HEALTH

Although this tour is not rigorous, it can be physically challenging, and access to medical facilities may not be immediately available. Blue Waters carries a well-supplied first-aid kit and our guides have Wilderness First Responder and C.P.R. training to handle emergencies. However, Blue Waters Kayaking is not responsible for medications, inoculations or the provision of health care. Please bring from home any first-aid items you know you will need, as well as your personal supply of medications.

If you do have medical problems or disabilities, it is important that you call our office well before your departure and make them known to us. You and your private physician should decide what is necessary for your safe participation on this trip.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

It is difficult and expensive to contact participants during the kayak tour, so please ask friends and family to do so in case of extreme emergency only. Participants are responsible for all costs incurred in the delivery of an emergency message. Please call the Blue Waters office @ 415-669-2600 in case of emergency or if you should miss your flight into Loreto.