



Baja Sea Kayaking & Whale Watching **ITINERARY & TRIP PLANNER** **(10 DAYS/9 NIGHTS)**

This trip provides the experience of a lifetime for avid kayakers, wildlife lovers, whale watchers and outdoor enthusiasts. As you encounter the magnificent gray whale and the wonders of the Sea of Cortez, you'll combine the best of both coasts of Baja.

The first half of your trip will explore the beautiful Island of Espiritu Santo in the Sea of Cortez. Kayaking from our base camp on Espiritu Santo allows us the opportunity to explore beautiful white sand beaches, canyons adorned with hanging fig trees and to snorkel among friendly sea lions and tropical fish.

The second half of your trip offers close encounters with the pacific gray whales in Magdalena Bay. The gray whales have migrated from their feeding grounds in the north to court, breed, give birth and simply frolic in the waters of the protected bays along Baja's Pacific coastline. Daily excursions into the bay in motorized skiffs, skillfully and sensitively operated by local boatmen, provide close up viewing of the magnificent and friendly gray whale. Other activities may include exploring the dunes and coast in search of whalebones, bird watching and kayaking in the mangrove estuaries, playing beach volleyball or enjoying a good book in the warm Baja sun.

Sample Itinerary

We pride ourselves in running a relaxed and always flexible schedule. Every trip is different depending upon the group, other trips on the water and sometimes the weather. Please be advised that the sea kayaking and whale watching portions of your trip may be reversed. The following is a sample of what your trip might be like.

Day 1: Fly to La Paz, B.C.S., Mexico. Upon arrival take a taxi to your hotel. (Final information with details regarding your hotel and a voucher for your taxi will be sent approximately two weeks before your trip.) The evening is on your own to explore La Paz and dine at one of its many fine restaurants.

Day 2: Enjoy an early breakfast at the hotel, then pick up and pay for your rentals. We then transfer by boat to the island of Espiritu Santo (approximately 2 hours). Lunch will be served upon arrival at camp. During lunch we will give a camp orientation followed by sea kayak instruction and paddling. The sea kayak orientation includes a mandatory wet exit or "dunk test". Get ready to have some fun as we all take the plunge! It's a piece of cake! (B/L/D)

Days 3-4: We'll spend the days kayaking, snorkeling, hiking, fishing and relaxing along the shores of the enchanted island of Espiritu Santo. Guided kayak excursions from 1 1/2 - 4 hours are offered daily along the coast and to outlying islands. Camp is located in a large protected bay, allowing guests additional kayaking time to explore the sheltered bay. Other guided activities from camp include skiff excursions to nearby snorkeling "hot spots" including a sea lion rookery where we join these graceful creatures, swimming alongside them while enjoying their playful and curious nature first hand. Hiking into canyons draped with fig trees and fishing for sea bass and red snapper are other side attractions. (B/L/D)

Day 5: After lunch, we'll return by skiff to La Paz, where we'll indulge in a hot shower and dinner, then overnight in the hotel. Dinner is on your own and the La Paz office is happy to offer suggestions. (B/L)

Day 6: After an early breakfast at the hotel, we'll transfer to Magdalena Bay by van (approximately 4 hours) and skiff (1/2 hour) to our whale camp. Upon arrival, we'll have lunch and a camp orientation, and if time and conditions permit, an afternoon whale watch. (B/L/D)

Days 7-8: Motorized skiffs take us into the bay to view the magnificent gray whales. From 2-4 hours per day may be spent observing whales. (Active whale watching by kayak is prohibited in Magdalena Bay.) Other activities include bird watching by skiff or kayak and beach combing along miles of pristine pacific coastline. Each evening our knowledgeable naturalists present slide shows on gray whale natural history, behavior and birds of the area. (B/L/D)

Day 9: After morning whale watching, we transfer back to our hotel in La Paz. The afternoon is free to shower and relax, or shop and wander through downtown before meeting for the farewell dinner this evening. (B/L/D)

Day 10: Transfer to the La Paz airport from the hotel for departure to the U.S.A. The ride to the airport takes approximately 20 minutes and you should arrive at the airport 2 hours prior to your flight departure.

Qualifications & Group Information:

No prior experience is necessary for this trip, which offers a variety of activities in addition to whale watching, including kayaking, snorkeling, hiking and fishing. All of these activities are easy to learn and your experienced guides will teach you all you need to know to enjoy them. Kayaking expeditions may vary daily from 4-6 miles, depending on weather, desires and locations. Minimum age is 6. Minimum group size is 4; maximum is 18. All rates are based on double occupancy.

Travel Information

Alaska Airlines serves La Paz from Los Angeles (on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays) and Aero Mexico flies from Phoenix or Tucson. Delta codeshares with Aero Mexico.

Another option is to fly into San Jose del Cabo and take the bus to La Paz. Cabo is served by American, Continental, US Airways, Alaska, Delta and Frontier. There is direct bus service from the airport to La Paz twice a day in each direction. The cost is \$25-\$30 one-way and it takes approximately three hours. Please see <http://www.shuttletolapaz.com> for information and booking. If you plan to take the bus, allow for plenty of time and flexibility.

Private shuttle service can also be arranged from Cabo San Lucas to La Paz and return. One-way rates range from \$150 for 1-3 persons to \$250 for 7 or more. Please call for more specific pricing.

For assistance booking your flights, please contact Exito Travel. Exito is an airfare specialist to Latin America since 1994, and knows the region intimately. To obtain a quote, you may fill out an online request form at: <http://www.exitotravel.com/affiliate/templateform.php?id=OARS> or contact Exito at info@exitotravel.com or 800-655-4053.

Please do not purchase airfare until your departure has been confirmed by the minimum number of required guests.

Ecotourism

For four decades O.A.R.S. has been a leader in ecotourism. Our goal isn't simply to be one of the most environmentally responsible tour operators in the world, but to continually raise the bar and challenge other companies to raise their standards as well. From escorting congressional staffers, eco-celebrities, and politicians on the waterways of the Western U.S. to establishing a model business for ecotourism operators in Fiji, O.A.R.S. is professionally committed to the cultural and environmental well-being of the places we visit. Our main operations office in Angels Camp, California, and our warehouse and office in Flagstaff, Arizona,

run on 100% solar energy, and through the support of domestic carbon offset projects that are inspected, verified and or certified by independent third parties including Green-e, the Gold Standard, CDM, and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance our company is 100% carbon neutral. Through partnerships with environmental organizations such as the Grand Canyon Conservation Fund, Idaho Rivers United, Alaska Wilderness League, American Whitewater, The International Ecotourism Society and Leave No Trace, O.A.R.S. is committed to reducing our impact on the natural world. We actively support awareness, deeper appreciation, and the preservation of rivers and wild places.

Equipment and Clothing List:

If you do not already own any of the items on the suggested packing list feel free to call our office for suggestions. However, each item listed is available for purchase online at www.oars.com in the **OARStore**.

- Two to three pair fast-drying shorts
- Four t-shirts and/or tank tops
- Waterproof windbreaker
- One set long-sleeved light clothes (shirt/pants)
- Lightweight fleece jacket &/or sweat shirt
- Swimsuit (one or two)
- Beach towel & washcloth
- Sun hat with strap
- Plastic bags for wet/dirty clothing
- One pair comfortable hiking shoes & socks
- One pair sport sandals or aqua socks
- Snorkel gear
- Sleeping bag, pad, cotton sheet
- Sunglasses with securing strap
- Flashlight/small headlamp & batteries
- Water bottle with securing device
- Toilet articles (biodegradable soap that lathers in salt water)
- Baby wipes (for quick clean-ups)
- Suntan/moisturizing lotion, lip protection
- Insect repellent
- Wetsuit
- Small dry bag (for personal items when kayaking or riding in the skiffs)
- Paddling gloves

For December through early March trips

- Lightweight synthetic long underwear
- Heavy fleece jacket (instead of lightweight)
- Rain pants
- Warm hat & socks

Please pack your gear in a duffel or soft luggage as it will be carried as packed in the motorized skiffs. (Dry bags are not necessary.)

Optional Items: Camera and memory cards, binoculars, pocketknife, journal, book, small day or fanny pack, pillow and kayak seat pad. Although we provide plenty of food and some snacks if you have a high metabolism you may want to bring along a few of your own favorite snacks.

Trips Include

All accommodations (rooms and tents) in Baja from the first to the last night of the trip, based on double occupancy, meals as noted in the itinerary, group equipment, guides, instruction, and transfers

Not Included

Airfare, sleeping bags and pads, single supplements, snorkeling equipment, meals as noted, gratuities or travel insurance

Rentals & Single Supplements

Sleeping bag with pad \$20; either separately \$15

Snorkel gear set \$15; Mask, Snorkel or Fins \$10 each; Wetsuit \$15

Wetsuits are highly recommended for trips in late November through April.

Single room & tent \$195; single tent only \$75

If you are a single traveler willing to share, we will waive the single supplement if we're able to pair you with another same sex single.

Please make sure to reserve all equipment rentals on your trip application form. Payment for equipment will be collected in La Paz prior to your trip departure in cash. Single supplements must be prepaid.

Extra Luggage

Personal gear you do not want to bring on the trip may be stored at the hotel for your return.

Important Documents

Please be advised that all travelers, including U.S. citizens, who are departing the U.S. and intend to re-enter are required to hold a valid passport upon departure from the U.S. If not a U.S. citizen, you will still need a passport to travel to Mexico. Please check with your local embassy regarding visa requirements.

Upon arrival in Mexico you will go through customs. Your airline will give you a tourist card to complete while on your flight. Be sure that you have signed both copies of this form. Please have this document and your passport available for the customs officer. Keep your copy of this form in a safe place; you will need it to exit Mexico and return to the U.S.

Minors traveling with one parent or a guardian **MUST** have a notarized letter of consent from the other/both parents to take the minor out of the country. ***IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTS FOR YOUR TRIP.***

A word of warning: Mexico has very strict and harsh laws regarding possession of illegal drugs. For your own peace of mind, do not put your vacation in jeopardy by bringing anything that is not in its original prescription bottle or packaging.

Additional Details

Kayak Equipment

Our fleet of kayaks on each trip is comprised of approximately 2/3 double kayaks and 1/3 single kayaks. Most are made by SEDA products of fiberglass construction and ALL are equipped with rudders. We do have a few rotomolded or plastic boats in our fleet for variety in seat construction as some of our guests find the plastic boat seats more comfortable. Based upon your experience, size and group composition your guide will help determine what kayak you will paddle, double or single, fiberglass or plastic. We encourage the group to rotate kayak seats so everyone has a chance to paddle to their desire. If you are particularly tall (over 6'2") or large (over 200 pounds) please let us know well in advance as we may have to arrange a special kayak to be brought to camp. Lightweight Swift and Nimbus paddles, PFD's (personal flotation device otherwise known as a lifejacket), nylon spray skirts, paddle floats and bilge pumps are all provided on our expeditions. We no longer provide kayak seat pads and highly recommend you bring your own. If you are vertically challenged (under 5'3" tall) we recommend you bring a seat pad that adds a couple inches of height while sitting in the kayak seat as our shorter clients have exclaimed how much comfort this adds to their paddling experience.

We now offer exclusive use of a single kayak on most trips for a fee of \$50. This option is NOT available on the Magdalena Bay portion of this trip although single kayaks are available for the Espiritu Santo Island portion. You must be fit, experienced in kayaking and screened by our office. Please contact us for a list of qualifications and to check on availability.

Camping Facilities

Our camp on Magdalena Bay is on the lee side of barrier islands nestled in sand dunes. The camp faces the bay and often provides a great view of whales and dolphins as they swim by. The kitchen and dining area is comprised of large wall MASH tents complete with table and chairs for eating. Large (10' x 12') walk-in canvas tents are provided for sleeping accommodations, each complete with two cots, pads and tables. Please note, the larger tents in Magdalena Bay are for double occupancy and smaller tents may be used for singles.

On the Sea of Cortez we camp on sand and gravel beaches located in protected bays, mostly on the lee (west) side of Espiritu Santo Island. A large dome tent is set up by our staff and used for cooking. Meals are taken outside, while enjoying the spectacular views. Chairs are provided, but not dining tables. An additional shade tarp provides protected outdoor seating and relief from the noon day sun. Quality 4-person tents are provided for double occupancy or you may choose to sleep on the beach under the starry sky.

Our staff does the cooking, and you are welcome to lend a hand at any time. It's a great way to practice your Spanish and learn some Mexican cooking secrets! Bathing is available daily in the sea using a biodegradable soap that lathers in salt water. Warning: Dr. Bonners' does not lather in salt water. Campsuds, Joy or Dawn work great! Fresh water will be available for a quick rinse from a sun shower to complete the process. The toilet is a porta-potty system. It is basically a small self-contained toilet basin that even uses water to flush. It is placed in a secluded spot at each camp and is available from the time you arrive until you depart.

Meals

We serve a combination of the best of American and Mexican tradition prepared with local fresh ingredients. Barbecued chicken, fresh fish Vera Cruz style, grilled steak tacos accompanied by guacamole and a variety of Mexican salsas, plus fresh soups and salads prepared for lunch are just a few examples of our tasty menu. The skiffs allow us to bring large blocks of ice to store fresh produce and indulge in luxuries such as cold sodas, juice and beer. . Each evening, we serve a cocktail and appetizer for "happy hour" which you can enjoy during the spectacular Baja sunset! Special diets are easily accommodated due to the variety of foods we are able to store.

Special Considerations

Please let us know if you're having a birthday or anniversary on the trip, so we can pack a surprise or two! We'll also need to know of any medical or dietary requirements that you'd like us to consider in planning your trip (i.e. if you're a vegetarian or vegan or if you have any food allergies.). Please note this on the Guest Registration Form (be specific as to what your needs are) and return it to our office at least 90 days before your trip. If you're booking your trip less than 90 days before departure, please make sure you've discussed any special requests with our office.

Weather

Spring and fall are the most ideal times for enjoying the Sea of Cortez. The strong northerly winds blow longest and strongest from late November through early March and spring and fall trips are characterized by calmer, warmer days.

Fall trips (Oct & Nov) offer warm and clear waters for great snorkeling and little chance of strong winds. An added attraction is the opportunity to observe the Baja desert in bloom following the rainy season in August and September.

Winter trips (Dec, Jan & Feb) tend to be cooler with more chance of wind and some chance of rain. The weather in Magdalena Bay during the whale watching season does tend to be windy and chilly. Daytime highs may be in the 70's but with the wind it can feel much cooler.

Spring trips (Mar, Apr & May) offer warmer waters with warm calm days being common. As an added bonus on spring trips many cetaceans migrate into the Sea of Cortez at this time and sightings may include blue, fin, sperm and humpback whales.

BAJA AVERAGE TEMPERATURES:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Water</u>	<u>Air</u>
OCT	80	80-95
NOV	75	70-80
DEC	65	60-80 (strong winds likely)
JAN	60	60-80 (strong winds likely)
FEB	60	65-85 (strong winds likely)
MAR	65	70-85
APR	68	75-90
MAY	70	80-95

Insects

Due to the dry desert nature of Baja, and most of the beaches we camp on, it does not tend to be buggy, although certain years can provide sufficient precipitation to support mosquitoes, gnats and no-see-ums. It's a good idea to bring some form of insect repellent along just in case and especially on fall trips which follow the rainy season.

Fishing

If you are interested in fishing, please come prepared with your own lures. Small minnow-type lures are suggested such as a Rebel jointed Fastrac or mid size Rapala Magnums (4.5 to 5 inches or 9-12cm in length). Suggested colors include: blue/silver, black/silver, black/gold, green mackerel/gold or blue mackerel/silver. We will supply rod and reel. Fishing is done by trolling behind a motorized skiff (two rods at a time) from one to two hours before breakfast on certain mornings or from your kayak and our cooks will happily prepare your catch! Fishing permits are required for anyone who plans to fish during the trip. Permits cost \$15/day or \$30/week and must be arranged in advance. Please call us if you would like to purchase a permit.

Something Voluntary

In reviewing your statement, you'll note a \$1/person/day donation to Waterkeeper alliance, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to fishable, swimmable and drinkable waterways worldwide. One-hundred percent of these funds go directly to worldwide watershed protection and your contribution is tax-deductible. This donation is voluntary and may be removed from your invoice if you choose not to participate. Please notify our office if you would prefer to delete the donation from your balance.

Gratuities

Guests often ask whether gratuities are appropriate, and in what amount. If you feel your guides have provided a very special trip for you, a gratuity may be left with the trip leader and will be shared among the crew. Entirely discretionary, anything between "Thank you" and 10% of trip cost is a general tipping guideline. If you plan to tip, remember to bring cash—ATMs are hard to find in the backcountry!

Local Currency

La Paz is a large cosmopolitan city of 200,000 and has many ATM machines. Often you have the choice of receiving money in US dollars or pesos. Keep in mind that accessing these machines can be a hassle and they do not always work. Some businesses accept credit cards and travelers checks but you'll be surprised how many do NOT even in La Paz. US dollars are accepted at most establishments so it is not necessary to change your

dollars into pesos before you arrive. We recommend bringing plenty of cash and in small bills such as 1's, 5's, 10's and 20's to use for rentals, restaurants, tipping and other incidentals.

Your Outfitter

Your guides know Baja well along with its waters, landscapes, people, weather, wildlife and natural history, and enjoy sharing it with interested adventure seekers. Operations in Mexico are conducted under all the proper government permits, contributing to the local economy through employing local people, using local products, paying local taxes and creating and supporting local conservation efforts. All trips are operated with the utmost respect for the local culture, flora and fauna.

Suggested Reading List

One of the ways to prepare yourself for your adventure is to do some armchair traveling before the real thing happens. All of the following books are great resources that can add to your trip enjoyment.

Field Guides:

A Field Guide to the Common and Interesting Plants of Baja California,* Jeanette Coyle
Field Guide to the Birds of North America, by The National Geographic Society,* Jon Dunn and Erik Blom
Birds of North America Golden Guide
Sierra Club Handbook to Cetaceans,* Steve Leatherwood
Marine Animals (includes fish and invertebrates) of Baja California,* Daniel Gotshall
Fishes of the Pacific Coast,* Gar Goodson

Natural History and Travel:

Almost an Island, Travels in Baja California, Bruce Berger
A Desert Country Near the Sea, Ann Zwinger
The Log of the Sea of Cortez, John Steinbeck
Miraculous Air, C.M. Mayo

Adventure:

Baja Adventure Book, Walt Peterson
Into a desert Place, Graham Mackintosh
Sea Kayaking in Baja,* Andromeda Romano-Lax

Fiction:

The Pearl. John Steinbeck
The Girl of the Sea of Cortez, Peter Benchley

Whale Watching:

Field Guide to the Gray Whale,* The Oceanic Society
Friendly Whales, Roy Nickerson
Delicate Art of Whale Watching, Joan McIntyre
Pod of Gray Whales,* Francois Gohier
Eye of the Whale, Rick Russell

Maps:

Baja Almanac Detailed Topographic Maps.
Sea of Cortez Paddling Charts. For ordering info call us at 1-800-355-7140

For Fun:

Spanish Lingo for the Savvy Gringo, Reid
Mexican Slang Guide, Robinson

*Included in the camp library

A Few Important Details

DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS: A \$500/person deposit is required at time of reservation. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS: If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, notify us as soon as possible. All payments are nonrefundable and we regret that we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, we strongly urge our participants to investigate trip cancellation insurance (see Insurance).

MEDICAL: Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying a Travel Outdoors trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

INSURANCE: Although every effort is made to insure a safe trip for all, **we require that you purchase medical emergency evacuation insurance.** Call Travel Insurance Services at 800-937-1387 or visit their website for inexpensive options that cover this requirement: <http://www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635>. We also strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a short-term traveler's policy. A trip cancellation policy covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip at the last minute due to illness or injury. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury on a river trip, evacuation could be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner's risk, and Travel Outdoors accepts no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed, or stolen property.

LIABILITY WAIVER: Everyone is required to sign a standard release before the trip, acknowledging awareness that some risks are associated with the trip. Safety is of the utmost concern on our trips. However, due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign both a Travel Outdoors form and one from Sea & Adventures and return them to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with Travel Outdoors cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

RESPONSIBILITY –AN IMPORTANT NOTICE

Travel Outdoors, Inc. and cooperating agencies act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings, and other factors. There is risk in sea kayaking, particularly during rough water conditions. Sea kayaks, skiffs, or other boats do capsize, you could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to "self-help" without further endangering yourself or others. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

Contact Information

For more information on this or any of our over 75 rafting, sea kayaking or multi-sport adventures, please call 1-800-346-6277 in the USA or Canada or 1-209-736-4677 if outside the USA or Canada or email us at info@oars.com and one of our knowledgeable Adventure Consultants will be happy to help you.

Did you know that travel related activities account for about 1/3 of the greenhouse gas emissions worldwide? Visit www.oars.com/CarbonNeutral.html to join O.A.R.S. in making your entire travel experience environmentally friendly and 100% carbon neutral