BAJA’S WHALE BOUNTY
EXPLORING THE SEA OF CORTEZ ABOARD THE SAFARI ENDEAVOUR
5TH TO 16TH FEBRUARY 2016
Just south of California lies an inland sea known as the Gulf of California, Sea of Cortez, or Sea of Cortés. A bird’s paradise, this rich archipelago serves as an important bird refuge and migration corridor. It is a place author John Steinbeck found “ferocious with life” and described by Jacques Cousteau as “the aquarium of the world” and we tend to agree. UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve, noting it as one of the most biologically diverse marine environments on Earth.

Each winter, thousands of gray whales migrate south from their Arctic feeding grounds to Baja California’s sheltered Pacific coastal lagoon. Their migration is the longest of any animal, covering more than 10,000 miles. Join us aboard the Safari Endeavour and discover a world of breathtaking beauty on an island-hopping journey through wildlife rich waters and to islands that are home to both plants and animals found nowhere else. Baja is an inexhaustibly rich place to explore. If we are lucky, we may have the chance to observe grays during their breeding, calving and nurturing cycle and of seeing fins, blues, orcas and humpbacks.

Baja is one of those rare geographies where the desert meets the sea. Its topography is stunning; there is literally something to see everywhere and from the Safari Endeavour, a multitude of activities for you to enjoy daily. Our ethos of using small ships to deliver big experiences comes into its own in this region and when using a vessel as small and as well equipped as the Safari Endeavour. You could be kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding one morning and snorkelling the next. Another day may offer a gentle afternoon walk ashore or if you prefer a more strenuous hike. On days when you may prefer to relax and not be so active, there is always the opportunity to enjoy a ride in the skiff or spend time with the Captain on the Bridge. The itinerary will be kept flexible and will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain to ensure the best experience.

Coastal mangroves and dunes, along with desert scrub and red rock cliffs provide the backdrop. Swim with playful sea lions, watch whales, and discover a centuries-old mission town. Hike nearby shores, rimmed with white-sand beaches and cactus-clad ridges, then cool off in impossibly brilliant turquoise waters. To explore this extraordinary place is to know firsthand how small the human presence here truly is.

Our View

“The Baja Peninsula is relatively unknown but offers some magnificent opportunities to search the ocean for whales and dolphins and to discover the underwater world. However this is also where the desert meets the sea and so we will have the chance to get ashore amongst the cacti on our guided nature walks. Our comfortable ship is well equipped with kayaks, paddleboards and snorkelling equipment meaning you can be active or simply join one of the skiffs as they search for wildlife. Only small ships can access these parts of the world and the knowledgeable team onboard will ensure you learn about the things you see.”

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR CRUISE WILL INCLUDE:

- Full-day whale watching excursion in Magdalena Bay
- Exploration in a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve
- Unhurried time for watching whales, dolphins and other marine life
- Snorkel with playful sea lion pups
- Hike along cactus-clad rims and the giant Cardón cactus
The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Mexico City. Fly by scheduled flight and arrive in the late afternoon. Stay overnight at the Hotel Camino Real situated near the airport.

Day 2 Mexico City to Los Cabos. Return to the airport this morning for your flight to Los Cabos, Mexico. Arrive and embark the Safari Endeavour in the port of San Jose del Cabo. Enjoy dinner onboard this evening.

Day 3 Gordo Banks. Our week's adventure starts at Gordo Banks – an underwater mountain, also known as Sea Mount, located five miles off Baja's southern tip. Perfect for all kinds of sea life, humpback whales, mobula and Manta rays, tuna, dolphins and hammerhead sharks are all known to frequent this important marine habitat.

Day 4 Isla San Francisco. Sailing through islands once pillaged by conquistadors for their black pearls, you will nestle into a white sand beach at Isla San Francisco’s aptly named Half Moon Bay. Then, following a snorkel and kayak orientation from your expedition team, it is time to explore. Snorkel along barnacled rocks, kayak amidst hues of blue and take an interpretive walk to the salt chuck or a more strenuous guided hike along a desert rim for a spectacular panoramic view. Then there is the possibility of a post-dinner swim in a bay filled with stunning luminescence.

Day 5 Isla Santa Catalina & Bahia Agua Verde. Isla Santa Catalina is ideal for bird watching and seeking endemic wildlife. A guided hike takes you among a forest of the world’s tallest cactus, the giant Cardon. At Bahia Agua Verde, clear waters are bordered by sparse craggy mountains hemmed in green. Explore the coast by small skiff, visit with a local ranchero and his family and take to the canyons and mountains on a burro ride and experience the “real Baja.”

Day 6 Whale Watching & Bahia Magdalena. When the gray whales have arrived near Bahia Magdalena, where they are known to migrate and calf, we will dock in Puerto Escondido then head across the peninsula to ride in a panga and observe them in the lagoon. With binoculars in hand, keep your eyes peeled this afternoon for pods of dolphins, blue, fin, sei, orca and sperm whales as they spout and dive in the surrounding waters. Blue-footed boobies, brown pelicans, cormorants, and gulls also make this area their home. Weather permitting we will enjoy a sunset bonfire this evening.

Day 7 Isla Carmen. Enjoy a lingering brunch then it is off to enjoy the desert sea. Drop anchor in a hidden cove straight out of a movie set and paddle for shore. There are plenty of options today, kayaking, paddle boarding, snorkelling and beachcombing, or a guided hike into an inland sandy valley, perfect for identifying animal tracks. Explore nature’s diversity and learn about the geologic forces that formed the islands.

Day 8 Los Islotes & Ensenada Grande. At Los Islotes, a steep rocky outcropping leaping straight from the sea, you can observe a sea lion colony from the boat and skiff, or slip into a wetsuit for a pre-breakfast snorkel with agile young sea lions. Swim through a rock arch where orange fan and white fire coral sway in the current, while high overhead, sea birds perch on the cliffs. Later today we set sail for Ensenada Grande for the last afternoon of activities and tonight enjoy a farewell dinner onboard.

Day 9 Los Cabos to Mexico City. Disembark in Los Cabos and transfer to the airport for your flight to Mexico City. On arrival we transfer to our four star central hotel for an overnight stay. Remainder of the day at leisure.

Day 10 Mexico City. After breakfast in the hotel enjoy a morning tour of Mexico City including Metropolitan Cathedral, the zocalo and the National Palace with the murals of Diego Rivera. After lunch in a local restaurant enjoy a free afternoon and evening. Perhaps visit the Museum of Anthropology or simply walk amongst the historical buildings.

Day 11 Mexico City to London. Check out this morning and transfer to the airport for your scheduled flight.

Day 12 London. Arrive this morning.

PRICES PER PERSON
Based on double occupancy

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Price includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, seven nights aboard the Safari Endeavour on a full board basis, all drinks onboard the Safari Endeavour, complimentary massage onboard, complimentary use of kayaks, paddleboards and snorkelling equipment, three nights hotel accommodation in Mexico City on a bed and breakfast basis, Mexico City Tour and lunch on day 10, onboard expedition team, Noble Caledonia Tour Manager, shore excursions, transfers, port taxes, airport taxes. Not Included: Travel Insurance, gratuities. NB. Ports subject to change. Wildlife sightings are not guaranteed.
POST CRUISE EXTENSIONS

There are two post-cruise tours available with this voyage. Choose between a five night visit to Copper Canyon, one of the world's most remote and beautiful canyons, during which you can enjoy the spectacular scenery and engineering feats of the Chihuahua-al-Pacifico Railroad or a three night tour to Playa del Carmen from where we will explore the Mayan sites of Tulum and Chichen Itza.

Below are preliminary details for our two post-cruise extensions but please note that dates and prices are yet to be confirmed upon the release of flight schedules which may have an impact on the itinerary for the extensions. Full pricing, itinerary details and dates for the extensions will be confirmed 11 months prior to departure. In the meantime, if you would like to join one of the extensions, please advise at the time of booking and we will inform you of the details as soon as they are confirmed.

COPPER CANYON

THE ITINERARY

Day 10 Mexico City to El Fuerte. After breakfast in the hotel enjoy a morning tour of Mexico City including Metropolitan Cathedral, the zocalo and the National Palace with the murals of Diego Rivera. After lunch in a local restaurant transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to Los Mochis. On arrival transfer to the Hotel Posada del Hidalgo in El Fuerte for an overnight stay.

Day 11 El Fuerte to Bauhichivo. Enjoy breakfast in the hotel and receive your First Class train tickets. This morning we transfer to the train station for our three hour journey to Bauhichivo. On arrival we transfer to Mision Cerocahui hotel where we enjoy lunch. This afternoon we enjoy a tour to Cerro Gallegos with a breathtaking view of the Canyon, and a visit of the Mission of Cerocahui. Enjoy dinner at the hotel.

Day 12 Bauhichivo to Posada Barrancas. After breakfast at the hotel we transfer to the train station and continue the train ride to Posada Barrancas Divisadero. After lunch we have a walking tour along the canyon with a visit at a family of Raramuri Indians. Dinner tonight at our hotel in Posada Barrancas.

Day 13 Posada Barrancas to Creel. This morning is free to either explore Posada Barrancas or maybe take a cable car ride over the canyon. Activities can be booked at the hotel. After lunch at the hotel we transfer to the train station and continue our train journey to Creel. On arrival transfer to your hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 14 Creel to Chihuahua. After breakfast in the hotel we enjoy a morning tour to the Arareko Lake and the Mission Cusarare. In the afternoon we return to the train for our five hour journey to Chihuahua arriving in the evening. On arrival transfer to the Chihuahua Quality Inn for an overnight stay.

Day 15 Chihuahua. Enjoy breakfast in the hotel before transferring to the airport for your scheduled flight to Mexico City. Connect here with our onward flight to London Heathrow.

Day 16 London. Arrive this morning.

Extension includes: Economy class scheduled air travel from Mexico City to Los Mochis and Chihuahua to Mexico City, five nights hotel accommodation as described, breakfast daily, lunch and dinner on days 11 and 12, excursions, first class train travel, transfers, Noble Caledonia Tour Manager.

Not included: Travel insurance, gratuities, meals other than those stated.

MAYAN SITES EXTENSION

THE ITINERARY

Day 10 Mexico City to Playa del Carmen. After breakfast in the hotel enjoy a morning tour of Mexico City including Metropolitan Cathedral, the zocalo and the National Palace with the murals of Diego Rivera before transferring to the airport for our scheduled flight to Cancun. On arrival you will be met and transferred to the Mahekal Hotel (or similar) in Playa del Carmen for a three night stay. The remainder of the day and evening is free.

Day 11 Tulum. After breakfast in the hotel our local guides will collect you and transfer you to Tulum. We will enjoy a guided visit of the site and also have some free time to either continue our exploration or visit the local beach for a swim. We also have time to visit a local handicraft market before returning to Playa del Carmen and a free afternoon.

Day 12 Chichen Itza. After breakfast in the hotel our local guides will join us for the full day tour to Chichen Itza. Here we will explore the famous Kukulkan Pyramid, the Observatory and the Ballcourts. A short drive takes you to the sinkhole Ikkil where we enjoy a tasty lunch buffet, and free time to swim in the cenote (sinkhole), with its clear and fresh water. We return to Playa del Carmen in the late afternoon.

Day 13 Playa del Carmen to London Gatwick. Enjoy a morning at leisure in Playa del Carmen before transferring to Cancun for our scheduled flight to London Gatwick.

Day 14 London Gatwick. Arrive this morning.

Extension includes: Economy class scheduled air travel from Mexico City to Cancun, three nights hotel accommodation in Playa del Carmen, breakfast daily, half day tour to Tulum, full day tour to Chitchen Itza with lunch, airport transfers.

Not included: Travel insurance, gratuities, meals other than those stated.
SAFARI ENDEAVOUR

Built in 1983 and refurbished in 2012, the 84-passenger Safari Endeavour at 232 feet in length and 37 feet wide is the perfect size for our explorations of Baja California offering breathtaking views from the four public decks. Passengers with a sense of adventure and a desire to escape to unknown harbours and regions will feel at home aboard the Safari Endeavour.

Your Cabin/Suite
There are five categories of cabin onboard ranging from the compact staterooms to the spacious suites. The 42 cabins are spread over three decks and feature individually controlled air conditioning, iPod docking station, flat-screen TV/DVD, generous storage and closet space, desk with chair as well as private en-suite facilities with shower. With wide panoramic windows, all staterooms offer superb views. The Commodore Suites feature French doors with balcony and a Jacuzzi bath tub.

Your Space
The window-lined lounge offers an uncompromising 270-degree view with comfortable seating for all guests. There is also a spacious and elegant dining room that seats passengers in a single sitting, a small wine bar and a library. The main feature of the vessel are the extensive viewing areas allowing you to never miss such events as spotting a whale breaching or a pod of dolphins swimming alongside the vessel. There is also a spa area including two hot tubs, sauna, fitness equipment, yoga classes, and massage suite (one complimentary massage included per person).

Your Dining
Onboard the Executive Chefs create delicious meals using locally sourced fresh ingredients. Each day includes an early-riser breakfast of fresh fruit, baked-onboard pastries and breads and a full breakfast complete with specialty items. Lunches range from pasta salads and sandwiches to homemade soups and ethnic dishes. Dinners offer a choice of entrees, including fresh seafood and meats. Vegetarian dishes are available and special dietary needs can be met with advance notice. Hors d'oeuvres for the cocktail hour feature a variety of appetizers and desserts are varied and plentiful.

Life Onboard
The atmosphere onboard is casual and relaxed and the high ratio of passengers to crew ensures service is attentive and personal. There is an open bridge policy onboard so you are welcome to visit and discuss navigation with the Captain. The EZ Dock launch platform makes launching a kayak or stand-up paddle board and boarding a skiff easy. Onboard adventure equipment includes kayaks and stand-up paddle boards; inflatable skiffs; hiking poles; yoga mats; hydrophone for listening to below-surface sounds; and a bow-mounted underwater camera pipes the action to the lounge and to your cabin TV. Depending on the schedule for the day, there will be presentations pertaining to the wildlife, history or culture of the region. Whether relaxing onboard, taking out one of the ship's kayaks or paddle boards, enjoying a walk ashore, whale watching or snorkelling, you can be assured that your day to day activities are in the safe and capable hands of an expert team. There is also a varied collection of board games, books, and DVDs onboard.

For your Comfort, Safety & Security
The Captain, officers, expedition team and hotel staff are individually selected not only for their outstanding knowledge, customer service and safety skills, but also for their genuinely welcoming and enthusiastic personalities. All key crew are fully trained wilderness and first responders.

This cruise visits out of the way destinations. You will be accompanied by an expedition team and most landings ashore will be made by Zodiac landing craft. Cruises such as this will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.
All Staterooms are above deck with view windows     #Double or triple accommodation

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request. Cover image: Whale Breaching.