



Mexico

Best of Baja with Whale Watching in Magdalena Bay

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



ITINERARY

Baja Mexico • Best of Baja with Whale Watching

12 DAYS • 11 NIGHTS

**Todos Santos – Los Colibris Castias – Punta Lobos – San Pedro Beach
– Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve – Isla Espiritus Santo – Camp
Cecil – La Paz – Magdalena Bay – Todos Santos**
This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Interacting with and photographing the whales in the lagoons of Magdalena Bay
- Camps Cecil in the Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve on Isla Espiritu Santo
- Swimming with the sea lions at the famed sea lion colony of Los Islotes
- Kayaking and standup paddle boarding in the crystal blue waters of the Sea of Cortez
- Hiking along the rugged, pristine Pacific coastline – breathtaking!
- Surfing lessons at stunning Playa Los Cerritos
- Baja Mexican cooking class with local chef
- Charming Todos Santos, artists' colony, surfing hotspot and agricultural center; opportunities to enjoy meals at many of the towns great eateries / historical town tour and taco crawl

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Active & Wildlife Adventure
Tour Start	Todos Santos
Tour End	Todos Santos
Accommodation	Hotel / Campsite
Included Meals	10 Breakfasts, 10 Lunches, 11 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Group Size	Tailormade

THE ACTIVE & WILDLIFE ADVENTURE



The breathtakingly beautiful peninsular of Baja California is a long strip of rugged cactus strewn desert and dramatic coastline sandwiched between the Sea of Cortes and the Pacific Ocean. It's landscape is a mecca for activities and its seascape offers some of the best marine life experiences on the planet. Getting close up with grey whales is a magical experience that will live with you forever. Swim with a sea-lion colony, paddleboard and kayak the tranquil coves of Espirtu Santo. On terra firma experience horseback riding from a remote desert camp. The town of Todos Santos is a small, charming place where art, cultural and culinary experiences complete the best of Baja.

MULTISPORT AND WILDLIFE ADVENTURE *an overview*

Bordered by the United States to the north, Pacific Ocean to the south, Guatemala, Belize and the Caribbean Sea to the south east and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. Mexico is crossed north to south by two mountain ranges known as Sierra Madre Oriental and Sierra Madre Occidental, which are extension of the Rocky Mountains from northern North America. From east to west at the centre, the country is crossed by the Trans-Mexican volcanic belt, also known as, the Sierra Nevada. A fourth mountain range, the Sierra Madre del Sur, runs from Michoacan to Oaxaca. The Tropic of Cancer divides Mexico into temperate and tropical zones, both with constant temperatures. Home to a vast range of wildlife and geographic mountain regions, Mexico is the perfect destination for any adventure.

WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

We really are one of the few specialists that really “do” off the beaten track and unique adventures. We are driven by a passion for adventure travel and wildlife. We are continuously collaborating with our local partners and tour guides to ensure that you have the best experiences on your dream adventure – this focus is reflected in our uniquely wonderful itineraries. Our experts are on hand whether you are looking for a small group trip or a bespoke holiday. Even better, our small group tours have a maximum of 12 people, making it a much more personal experience.



ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrive in Todos Santos

Today you'll arrive at the airport in San Jose del Cabo (please see INFORMATION page for arrival details and procedures) where you will be met by your guide. Please go with him/her for the 90 minute transfer to Todos Santos and Los Colibris Casitas. Upon arrival we'll get you get settled into your lovely rooms with beautiful ocean views, then we'll have a gourmet taco welcome dinner on the Los Colibris grounds at Iker's Colibris Cafe. During dinner your guide will host a trip briefing, outlining the adventures to come.

Overnight at Los Colibris Casitas with an ocean lullaby



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
D



Distance:
Approx. 90min



Activity:
In transit

DAY 2: Surfing / Todos Santos Historical Tour / Taco Crawl

We'll start off this great vacation learning to ride the waves at Los Cerritos, one of the best surf breaks in Baja. Our instructors guarantee that you'll stand up on your board - at least for a moment - during your hour of instruction. It's a total blast!

We'll then head to the heart of the *pueblo magico* of Todos Santos, which has a well-deserved reputation as a food lover's paradise. There is really no better place to indulge in Baja California Sur's greatest contribution to world cuisine: the fish taco! We'll enjoy an epic taco tour to 3 of our favorite local joints to sample not only fish tacos, but other types of tacos drawing on the area's bounties of land and sea. You might find several different types of ceviche out there too!

Todos Santos has a rich and varied history, from the early missionaries, through the booming sugar years, through its current incarnation as an artists' colony, agricultural center and surfing hotspot. After our taco crawl we'll visit many of the historic homes and buildings throughout town, learning fascinating stories of the global forces and colorful personalities that brought these buildings into existence and shaped Todos Santos over the years. We will also visit the studios of working artists who make their homes in – and gain their inspiration from — Todos Santos.

Dinner at a terrific local restaurant tonight.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
Varies



Activity:
Explore

DAY 3: Pacific Bluffs Cliff Walk / Mexican Cooking Class

Glorious scenery, fascinating local history and encounters with strange and wonderful flora and fauna.

Our Pacific bluffs cliff walk starts at Punta Lobos, the sweeping Pacific beach where the local fishermen of Todos Santos launch their boats each morning and bring in the daily catch each afternoon. A quick walk up the hill brings us to breath-



taking views of a different kind of coastline, with dramatic rocky outcroppings and crashing surf. We're likely to spot whales from this high vantage point during several months of the year.

Throughout the walk we'll have the stunning combination of desert landscape running to the sea. We'll pass an active sea lion colony, as well as the ruins of the shipping port Los Algodones. Your guide will offer in-depth commentary on the terrific variety of flora and fauna you see, as well as the history of the area from the human perspective. After about 3.5 hours of walking we'll arrive at the idyllic beach of San Pedro where a picnic lunch will be waiting. San Pedro features a beautiful marsh filled with bird life and a protective cove ringed by towering palms. Here we'll eat, relax, sunbathe, swim, read - just enjoy the bliss of being in Baja!

In the evening we'll have our Mexican Survival Cooking Class with Chef Iker, author of *Cooking Adventures in Baja California Sur*. First, learn to make a great margarita. Second, pay attention because you have to eat what you make!



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Explore

DAY 4: Camp Cecil de la Sierra and the La Laguna Biosphere Reserve

Camp Cecil de la Sierra is a luxury tent camp in a mango and grapefruit grove in the Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve of Baja California Sur, about 90 minutes from Todos Santos. It is the sister property to our award-winning Camp Cecil de la Isla on Isla Espiritu Santo. Camp Cecil de la Sierra is on the property of a local ranching family, and the camp highlights both the cultural and natural heritage of the Sierras. The family is an integral part of the experience, providing all the meat, cheese and tortillas for the camp, teaching guests how to make tortillas and empanadas in the traditional manner, and acting as guides in the reserve.

The Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve is one of Baja's most beautiful but least explored areas. Part of an island off the coast of Baja 10 million years ago, the Reserve is one of the most biodiverse areas in the world. Reflecting its long history of island isolation, almost 25% of plants and 10% of animals found in the Reserve are endemic to the area, i.e., they are not found anywhere else on the planet. Activities at the camp include beautiful hikes in the reserve, with opportunities to get terrific views of the Pacific ocean, swim in watering holes and picnic by waterfalls. There is fantastic birding in the early mornings, amazing star gazing at night, and plenty of opportunities to interact with the ranch family and work with them making cheese, tortillas and other products in the traditional manner. You can also just hang out in the shade of the mango trees and enjoy the books in the library, perhaps while sipping a margarita.

Overnight Campsite – Camp Cecil de la Sierra



Overnight:
Campsite



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
approx. 90 min



Activity:
Explore / Wildlife

DAY 5: Sierra de la Laguna

Perhaps we'll start the day with some birding around camp early in the morning, enjoy an amazing ranch breakfast, then head out for a great hike through the mountains, taking in some spectacular views. Upon our return we'll enjoy happy



hour in the huerta, then a great ranch dinner prepared by our chef. And if you're awake late enough, we'll enjoy the stars in the clear mountain air. A magnificent day.



Overnight:
camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife

DAY 6: Isla Espiritu Santo

Sea of Cortez and Camp Cecil Adventure!

After a final ranch breakfast we're off to Isla Espiritu Santo and Camp Cecil de la Isla today! We'll drive to La Paz, go to our bodega to get snorkeling gear and wet suits, then it's on to the boats and out into the Sea of Cortez!

Camp Cecil is on Isla Espiritu Santo which is in a National Marine Park, part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is one of the best marine life viewing destinations in the world. Whales, dolphins, whale sharks, sea turtles, manta rays and plenty of beautiful tropical fish call the surrounding waters home, while a terrific range of bird species including Blue-footed Boobies, Reddish Egrets, Great Blue Herons and Yellow-footed Gulls frequent the island's skies and shores. The island itself is stunning, with magnificent towering cliffs, spectacular sandy bays, amazing lava rock formations, and rock art left by the now-extinct Guaycura and Pericu Indians. There's even an endemic ring-tailed cat, the *babisuri*. It's a remarkable place to explore. We'll spend the days doing exactly what pleases us - kayaking, snorkeling, hiking, swimming with sea lions, stand up paddle boarding, bird watching, and exploring hidden lagoons and desert beaches. Hanging around doing nothing, reading trashy novels and sipping margaritas also highly encouraged.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Explore

DAY 7: Isla Espiritu Santo

Another day of island riches. Perhaps paddle board with sea turtles, or snorkel with sea lions, maybe spot some whales, or dance with some Blue-footed Boobies. Whatever surprises the day may hold, you can be sure that it will also include magnificent food and drink!





Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Paddle / Snorkel

DAY 8: Isla Espiritu Santo

One more day to enjoy the pure bliss of island living in Baja!



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Explore

DAY 9: Whale Sharks!

Today we'll depart from Camp Cecil and head for one of the most amazing experiences yet - swimming with the largest fish in the world - the whale shark! Of course, you may be asking yourself: is it a whale or is it a shark? Hint: whales are mammals and sharks are fish. These gentle giants feed on plankton in the Bay of La Paz (so all human flesh is safe), and it is here that we have the remarkable experience of observing and swimming with them.

In the afternoon we'll head to our La Paz hotel, Hotel Catedral, right on the town plaza. We'll have dinner at a terrific local restaurant and start dreaming of the wondrous possibilities that await us the next day with the gray whales of Magdalena Bay.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife

DAY 10: Magdalen Bay (Bahla Magdalena) Whale Watching Adventure

Magdalena Bay is the largest wetlands ecosystem on the west coast of Baja and one of the most important in North America. The World Wildlife Fund ranks it as one of the most important coastal habitats in Mexico. The Bay is the prime calving ground for the gray whale, and January to March it is possible to see a large number of whales, including mothers and calves. Magdalena Bay also has mangrove forests, barrier beaches and sand dune islands, all of which contribute to the incredible scenery and biological diversity of the area.

This morning we'll transfer the 4.5 hours to Magdalena Bay, have lunch, then head out onto the water for 3 hours of interacting with the amazing gray whale mothers, babies, young couples and sporting males. We'll have dinner and spend the night in a local hotel



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Whale Watching

DAY 11: Whale Watching / Return to Todos Santos

Things that often happen to us during our two-day/one-night trip in Magdalena Bay:

- Gray whale mothers bring their babies right up to the boat to say hello



- Gray whale babies present themselves for a good rub or a pat
- Gray whale males sidle along the boat and spout water on us – they clearly think it’s very funny
- Gray whales of all types bring their huge heads out of the water and look us straight in the eye

And that’s just to give you an idea! Today we’ll have 3 more hours of interacting with the whales then head back to Todos Santos with a celebratory lunch stop along the way. Dinner at a great local restaurant.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B,L,D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Whale Watching / Transfer

DAY 12: Transfer to the Airport for your Flight Home!

You will be transferred back to the airport for your flight home.



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
N/A



Distance:
Approx.



Activity:
Depart Mexico

Travel Key

You can now view this itinerary on your cell phone! For access, please download **Travel Key by Wetu** at your app store. Once installed, please open the app and enter your name, email address, and this access code: **VYQUVZ**. You can then call up your itinerary whenever and wherever it is most convenient for you!



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included

- Bilingual naturalist guide who is a certified Wilderness First Responder and NOM 9 graduate
- All accommodations in hotels and camps as noted in itinerary
- All meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day
- Daily happy hour at both camps. Drinks with welcome dinner and cooking class
- All adventures and related equipment as indicated in the itinerary
- All transportation and support vehicles, including roundtrip airport transfer
- Entrance fees and permits
- Interacting with and photographing the whales in the lagoons of Magdalena Bay
- Camps Cecil in the Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve on Isla Espiritu Santo
- Swimming with the sea lions at the famed sea lion colony of Los Islotes
- Swimming with whale sharks
- Kayaking and standup paddle boarding in the crystal blue waters of the Sea of Cortez
- Hiking along the rugged, pristine Pacific coastline - breathtaking!
- Surfing lessons at beautiful Playa Los Cerritos.

Not Included

- International airfare
- Travel insurance
- Gratuities
- Any item not specifically mentioned in the itinerary



Pioneer Expeditions

Stable Cottage • Chydyok Road • Chaldon Herring • Dorchester • DT2 8DN
t 01202 798922 • e info@pioneerexpeditions.com

MEX03

- Mexican cooking class with local chef (dancing known to follow).
- Charming Todos Santos, artists' colony, surfing hotspot and agricultural center; opportunities to enjoy meals at many of the towns great eateries / historical town tour and taco crawl



ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
<i>Nights: 1, 2, 7</i>	Todos Santos	Los Colibris Casitas	
<i>Night: 3</i>	Isla Espiritus Santo	Isla Espiritus Santo Camping	<i>Caming</i>
<i>Nights: 5</i>	La Paz	Hotel Catedral La Paz	<i>Hotel</i>
<i>Nights: 6</i>	Magdalena Bay (Bahia Magdalena)	Mar y Arena	



T.B.C



WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

Baja Mexico was simply amazing.

Beginning in the laid back town that is the beautiful La Paz as our base, myself and 11 friends spent the first few days swimming with whale sharks, and then snorkelling with sea lion pups - one climbed on my back and fell asleep, a magical experience

Following the next days' hilarious sea kayaking expedition through mangrove swamps, we then drove over to Magdalena Bay for the highlight of the trip, a days boat trip to see the grey whales. This had been a lifetime ambition for me, and every moment of the day was breathtaking. From seeing distant blowholes to then finding ourselves surrounded by mama whales and their inquisitive babies, the whole day was surreal and wonderful.

I spent my birthday checking out the wonderful town of Todos Santos, home to the Hotel California and numerous little shops all selling Mexican crafts and gifts, with lunch consisting of the best margaritas in Mexico! Then food on the beach in the afternoon - spotting humpbacks and their blowholes further out to sea.

We then spent a couple of days camping, one night on a beautiful deserted beach, and then to some beautiful hot springs in a canyon - nature at its finest.

From start to finish, the trip went perfectly. The guides were amazing - Mario and Lia had a lot on their plates trying to wrangle 12 women and get them everywhere on time, and they handled it outstandingly! They were considered friends by everyone immediately and will be missed.

So... a huge thank you and congratulations to Pioneer for giving me yet another wonderful, memorable adventure. I will never travel with anyone else!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	
Season	This region is best explored between October to May
Best Time To Go	Whale season is between January and March; however there are alternatives to whale watching from October to December, and April to May.
Group Size	2- 14 pax
Responsibility	
Difficulty Level	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'medium to difficult' level (there is between 5 – 7 hours of activities per day – however the pace is relatively slow). This means that you will need an average level of fitness.



THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website www.pioneerexpeditions.com to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

1. Contact us -

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

2. Leave everything to us -

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

3. Wait for your adventure to begin -

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

