



SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM | WWW.SDNHM.ORG

### **Baja California Whale-watching Safari**

Drive to and from San Ignacio, exploring the scenic landscape and discovering quaint villages along the way. Get up close and personal with gray whales in San Ignacio Lagoon in their winter breeding and calving grounds. Stay at a tented base camp at Punta Piedra. Observe breaching and blowing whales, flocks of shorebirds, and beautiful sunsets. In between whale watching from skiffs and shore, explore mangrove estuaries, and the area's geologic history.

#### **About your leaders:**

**Brad Hollingsworth, Ph.D.**, is the Museum's Curator of Herpetology. He earned his doctorate from Loma Linda University, after receiving both his B.S. and M.S. from San Diego State University (SDSU). His research interests center around the molecular and morphological systematics of squamate reptiles. Research projects focus on the evolution and biogeography of the herpetofauna of Baja California and its associated islands. Brad serves on the Board of Governors for the American Society for Ichthyologists & Herpetologists. He has taught a number of university courses in anatomy, histology, genetics, and molecular systematics. Currently, he teaches *The World of Animals* at SDSU.

**Jim Stone** is the Museum's Vice President of Public Programs; he is the senior administrator responsible for Museum exhibitions, education programs, the volunteers and the website. Previously the Director of Education, he brings experienced leadership to the position. Stone served as Vice President of Programs and Director of Exhibitions at Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, Connecticut. He frequently leads ecotourism expeditions, and has been to Ecuador, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Culebra Island, Puerto Rico, Sea of Cortés, Galapagos Islands, Gulf of Saint Lawrence, and the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. He has a special interest in marine mammalogy and environmental stewardship. He holds a BS in Biology from Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), has taken graduate courses in Education at SCSU and the University of Rhode Island, and holds a Rhode Island Teaching Certificate for Secondary Level Biological Sciences.

#### **Dates:**

**Orientation:** Monday, March 16; 6:30-8 PM

**Trip:** Tuesday, March 24 to Tuesday, March 31, 2009

**Cost:** \$1465 per person; Optional transportation \$200; Single supplement \$160; Deposit \$300

#### **DAY 1**

Meet at 7:45 AM at the Mission Brewery Airport Parking, 1765 Hancock Street, San Diego (619.296.7275). Bring lunch for a picnic at San Vicente. Arrive in Cataviña in time

for a nature walk through big rock country in late afternoon. Explore one of North America's most fascinating desert areas, complete with huge cardón cactus and the oddly shaped cirio or "boojum." Observe and photograph wildflowers with our naturalist leader. Arrive about 5:30 PM at the Desert Inn Hotel in Cataviña (011-52 -200-124-9123). All meals no-host.

## **DAY 2**

Continue south with a lunch stop in Guerrero Negro, a community known for salt production and whale watching (Scammon's Lagoon is nearby). Arrive in the charming town of San Ignacio around 4 PM. After checking into the Rice and Beans Hotel (011-52-615-154-0283), take time on your own to stroll to town to see the impressive stone mission, local archeological museum, or birdwatch near the river. All meals no-host.

## **DAY 3**

Meet the whale camp crew outside the hotel at 8:30 AM. Travel in their vans through fascinating desert country to the San Ignacio Lagoon shore, then by boat to your island base camp. You have now joined the gray whales at their winter calving and mating grounds. After lunch...whale watching! Lunch and dinner included.

## **DAY 4–DAY 5**

Just steps from camp, our boats are ready to take us out among the whales, which are often right offshore. Explore the various and unique lagoon ecosystems, walk the shoreline and beaches, tidepool, photograph the birdlife, or just sit back and absorb the ancient unbroken rhythms of the lagoon and its splendid wildlife. Round off each day by watching the sunsets fill the lagoon with color, enjoying good food and conversation, and attending natural history programs. All meals included.

## **DAY 6**

After a final morning of whale watching and a hearty lunch at the lagoon, travel back to San Ignacio and the comfortable Rice and Beans Hotel (011-52-615-154-0283). On the way, time and temperature allowing, explore the fascinating Vizcaíno Desert. Breakfast and lunch included, dinner is no-host.

## **DAY 7**

Return to San Quintín for the night's lodging at Desert Inn Hotel (011-52-616-16-59-008). As time permits, natural history stops will be made along the way. All meals no-host.

## **DAY 8**

Continue to San Diego. As time permits, natural history stops will be made along the way. All meals no-host.

### **Cost includes:**

Transportation from San Ignacio village to Whale Camp and return  
All whale watching excursions  
All accommodations

Some meals

**Cost does not include:**

Transportation and 11 meals en route from San Diego to San Ignacio (and return), toll road fees (about \$20–\$25 per vehicle), Mexican vehicle and trip insurance, gratuity to local guides (suggested \$70 per participant) and waiters, and an additional tourist fee of \$20–\$25 per person (payable in Mexico).

**Suggested Equipment List:**

**Clothing:**

***Please keep in mind wind, water, and temperature variances when selecting clothing.***

Wide-brimmed hat

Waterproof windbreaker

An inexpensive top and bottom thin plastic rain suit—this could serve as the windbreaker listed above

Warm jacket, or a wool sweater and a down vest

Two warm long-sleeved shirts

One light, airy long-sleeved shirt

Top and bottom underclothes and socks

Two pairs of jeans and/or sweatpants

One or two pairs of shorts

Two pairs of shoes: one pair for land use (tennis shoes work great) and one pair for boat and water (waterproof sandals, surf walkers or some type of beach shoes). Shoes must be worn in the water and while in the boat.

One set of casual, comfortable clothes for hotel and air travel (no need for formal attire)  
If you have a tendency to get cold, bring a cap and gloves.

**Non-clothing items:**

Flashlight with extra batteries—very important! You will need it for walking around camp at night. A tent light will be provided.

Sunglasses (preferably polarized) and a neck strap

Sunscreen and sunscreen lip balm (15 SPF or higher)

Biodegradable soap for body (phosphate-free)

Kleenex and Wash 'N Drys

Moisturizing lotion

One towel and one washcloth

Prescriptions (keep prescriptions drugs in their original prescription-labeled containers to get through customs easily)

Small canteen or water bottle

Fanny pack (or small, frameless day pack)

Binoculars

Hair dryers, electric razors, etc. may be used in Mexican hotels without adapters, but the whale camp has no electrical hookups for such items.

**Cameras and film:**

Bring your camera/s and plenty of film, because you cannot buy film at the lagoon or certain types of film in San Iganacio. The same holds true for digital cameras needing memory cards. Bring extra! Pack your camera gear in soft, well-padded cases that can keep dust and water out.

We recommend bringing two types of zoom lenses: 28–85mm or 35–70 mm, and 70–210mm or 60–300mm range. On the water, you will most likely use the first type of zoom lens. For land-based shots of birds and people, you will often use the latter lens.

Filters on your lenses will protect them from the elements and bumps. We recommend using a skylight, ultraviolet (UV), or 81A (warming filter) filters, and a polarizing filter to cut sun glare. If you are familiar with graduated filters, they will come in handy in reducing contrast light situations.

If you have “fast” lenses, f1.2–f2.8, your best film choices will be to 100 asa for land-based shooting, and 200 asa for on the water shooting. If you have “slower” lenses, f3.5–f8 and up, your best film choices will be 100–200 asa for land-based shooting, and 200 asa for on the water shooting. Most professionals and advanced amateurs who come through camp have used Fuji and Kodak films. **Be sure that your cameras are insured and that the coverage includes Mexico**

We have had great shots with “point and shoot” cameras as well. This includes the disposable underwater cameras and “weekenders.”

Bring your lens cleaner and tissue paper. It is a good idea to clean your lens after every outing. You will be glad you did when you get that spectacular shot without a waterspot or dust particle.

#### **Video cameras:**

If you bring your video camera, bring extra batteries (at least four) and charger. Our camp operates on solar power. We have the capacity to recharge batteries, but we are somewhat limited dependent on the sun. So to be safe and avoid disappointment, bring extra batteries.

#### **Frequently asked questions:**

##### **How much money should I bring? Should I change dollars to pesos?**

You will need to buy meals on the road. Prices range from \$5–\$15 per meal, not including cocktails. There is no need to change your dollars for pesos, since most hotels accept credit cards and dollars for meals. (Other than buying whale-watching merchandise or souvenirs, you will need very little cash.)

##### **What is your guideline for tipping?**

Tipping, of course, is voluntary. Some groups have organized and presented a group tip. Others have contributed individually. Tips generally range from \$8–\$15 per guest per day. A tip box will be made available the last morning of the trip. Tips are divided

equally among camp staff (guides, cooks, boatmen). Gratuities should reflect your satisfaction of the staff's performance.

**Can I swim in the lagoon?**

Swimming is not allowed during whale-watching season in San Ignacio Lagoon; however, you may want to bring a swimsuit for sunbathing and for hotel pools.

**Note: Mexico now requires all visitors to carry a current passport.**

**CANCELLATIONS:** Cancellations received in writing at Baja Discovery's office less than 90 days prior to departure forfeit 35% of the tour price; cancellations so received less than 60 days prior to departure forfeit 85%; and cancellations so received less than 30 days prior to departure shall receive no refund. If the operator cancels a tour, a full refund will be made and guests will be offered an opportunity to reschedule. If any portion of a trip operates, there will be no refunds of unused portions of the tour.

To register, call 619.255.0203 or visit [www.sdnhm.org](http://www.sdnhm.org).