

DISCOVER THE  WORLD OF **PANTERRA**

Robinson's Journey to the Sea of Cortez

7 Day Expedition - April 17 - 23, 2011, La Paz, BCS, Mexico

Expedition Brochure
September 9, 2010



JOURNEY TO THE SEA OF CORTEZ

April is my absolute favorite month to explore the islands in the southern Sea of Cortez. It is the magical month of the great whales. During this time one can encounter several species of whales, including some of the largest on earth, on a daily basis. The whales are definitely the highlight of this trip, but whale-watching is not the only activity we will be involved with. Enjoy snorkeling, swimming and kayaking in crystal clear waters. Hike the desert islands with a cool breeze on your back. Around every corner exciting adventures await.

The culture of the isolated communities we visit is heart-warming. The people exist happily, with no electricity and minimal freshwater, and greet us with open arms allowing us access to their land. The places we explore offer a diversity of things to experience. One community in particular, usually insists on a game of volleyball before our visit ends. There is so much to explore and discover that quite often guests return year after year to continue their journey of discovery with us.

I invite you to join Gayle Robinson, Stasia Ferbey and myself as we venture into the amazing world of the Sea of Cortez.



Breaching Humpback whale.

Lela R. Sankeralli - naturalist and founder of Panterra

INTRODUCTION

The Baja Peninsula was formed approximately five million years ago when part of the earth's crust separated along the San Andreas Fault drifting in a northwesterly direction away from mainland Mexico. After colliding with southern California, an ocean basin was formed. This basin is known today as the Gulf of California or more commonly referred to as the Sea of Cortez.

Left in the wake of the collision was an explosion of natural geological wonders; a group of desert islands. The area has remained uninhabited, spellbinding and timeless. This amazing Galapagos type setting plays host to some of the rarest and most beautiful marine life encounters possible and offers an amazing environment for swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and hiking. It's an ideal opportunity to explore, discover and learn.

On July 15, 2005 the islands of the Sea of Cortez were declared a World Heritage Site.

Rich in natural history, unspoiled in beauty, and unrivaled in marine life, the Sea of Cortez is a world of a different time, place and rhythm.

TRIP INFORMATION

Itinerary:

Day 1 (Sun. April 17): Your Arrival and Boarding the Ship

- The crew of the MV Narval will be awaiting your arrival, at Marina Singular in La Paz, and the ship will be available for boarding after 5:00 pm.
- Once onboard and settled in, pre-dinner cocktails will be served, with dinner set for 7:30 pm as the ship departs the Bay of La Paz.
- We will be anchoring for the night in a quiet bay at the entrance to the Sea of Cortez.



Kayaking to Fossil Beach.



Aerial view of the basin of the Sea of Cortez

TRIP INFORMATION: Itinerary continued

Day 2 - 6: Our 5 day Adventure at Sea

- Today we begin our adventure at sea. Some of the islands to be explored include Isla Espiritu Santos, Isla San Francisco, Isla San Jose and Isla Partida.

Please Note: Due to wind, tide, current and sea conditions, accessibility of some of the areas may be limited or simply not possible. During our time at sea we will engage in the "Planned Activities" outlined below and continued on pg. 4.

- On Day 6, we will arrive back at the docks of Marina de La Paz, where the late afternoon and evening will be yours to stroll and shop along La Paz's famous "Malecon" (seawalk). Plan on meeting up with the group for dinner at one of the local restaurants.

Day 7 (Sat. April 23): Trips End

- As this is the end of our adventure guests will disembark the ship by 9:00 am.

Planned Activities:

Snorkeling - Snorkel in crystal clear waters observing the amazing diversity of undersea life.

We may also have the opportunity to swim with California sea lions at their breeding grounds, weather permitting.

As an added note, if weather conditions and the presence of whale sharks in the area are favorable, the group will have the opportunity to snorkel with the whale sharks and possibly be a part of an ongoing research project conducted by a whale shark scientist.

Kayaking - Kayak through mangrove lagoons, over coral reefs, and in quiet bays. The kayaks are amateur "sit-on" type boats that are made of high impact plastic, requiring no previous kayak experience. They should not be confused with the enclosed seagoing type.

Desert Island Nature Hikes - Explore and venture through many different environments. Meander through cactus forests observing native plants and their amazing adaptations to the harsh environment.

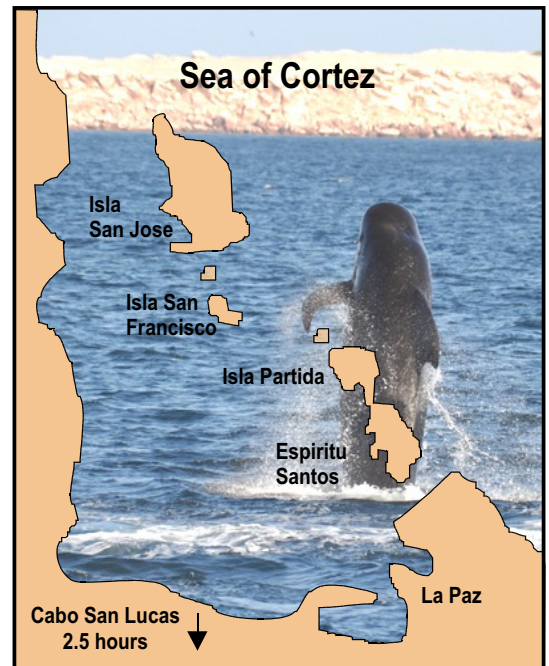
Take a walk back in time as layers of fossilized rock beds reveal the area's geological past.

Visit actively mined salt pans where the local fishermen produce salt to preserve the day's catch.

Beachcomb along miles of white sandy beaches identifying bones, shells, and other treasures washed up on the beach.

Visit an isolated community of goat herders or fishermen as they allow us to explore their "backyards".

Marine Life Encounters - This is the month of the great whales. Anticipate encounters with one or more of the several different species of whales such as Sperm, Blue, Humpback, Finback, Pilot and Orca to name a few.



Stasia holding up a brown sea cucumber.



Exploring a cactus forest.

Planned Activities - **Marine Life Encounters** - continued

Marvel at the antics of hundreds of dolphins as they escort us on our journey swimming alongside the ship.

Explore a sea lion habitat where males jostle for dominance, females nurture their young and juveniles come out to play.

Encounter manta rays as they swim by the ship or do back flips on the distant horizon.

Discover a large variety of coastal birds nesting in cliffs and cactus and hiding in the low-lying brush on the shoreline. The bird life of the Sea of Cortez is very prolific and extraordinarily different to the marine coastal birds of Canada.

Explore a low tide, where life beneath the sea is exposed for a very short period of the day, revealing some of the most bizarre, yet beautiful marine life.

A morning visit to the fishing village of Isla Paredito is an excellent way to experience the simple traditional life of the fishermen of the Baja. This is also where we have the opportunity to assist one of the local fishermen with his turtle research.

Evening Activities - As the sun sets and the night falls upon us one of the most beautiful things you can do is stargaze. If you have never done it, it is a must. Stasia Ferbey, our resident astronomer, will introduce you to the night sky.

You may also choose to simply relax with a cocktail in hand, play some cards, get into a game of chess or grab a good book. It's your time to chillax and ponder the day's adventures.

Wildlife Conservation Projects - We have added two wildlife conservation programs to our expeditions. The first program is a Turtle Monitoring Program where we assist a local fisherman from the fishing village of Isla Paredito, Felipe Cuevas. Once or twice a month Felipe sets up nets, for a 24 hour period, capturing and releasing sea turtles. During the time of their capture data is collected as an ongoing monitoring program of sea turtles along the Baja Peninsula.

The second program is assisting world renowned whale shark scientist, Deni Ramirez Macias, in her work with the whale sharks of the Sea of Cortez. We will be snorkeling alongside Deni as she puts us to work observing, photographing and collecting data on these amazingly huge but, docile animals. Observe from the boat or join us in the water, it's your choice!

Participation in both these programs will be based on weather conditions and the presence of the animals at the time of the trip.

Panterra contributes monetary donations towards these projects.

Baja Gifts Program (Optional) - The Baja Gifts Program was started in 2000 when a few of us decided to donate money and gifts to schools and families in the Baja South area. We had mentioned what we were doing to a few of the Panterra guests and the response was incredible! The program has grown from a few of us simply donating money to the distribution of boxes upon boxes of clothing and community supplies.

If you are interested in participating in the program please let us know so that we may include you in the seasons gift program. This is a gift giving opportunity and not a mandatory requirement of the expedition.

Climate:

During the month of April the average temperature in the Sea of Cortez ranges from 22-26° Celsius (72-79° f). In the Baja the days are warm and beautiful, however the evenings cool down and often require light pants and a jacket. The water temperature ranges from 18-22° Celsius (65 - 72° f) and can be surprisingly cool. It is not the tropical temperatures one would expect.



Encounter with a pod of Common dolphins.



A Green Turtle is released after being weighed, measured and tagged as part of a Turtle Monitoring program.

Trip Information continued:

Menu:

Our meals consists of a variety of healthy and nutritious foods including fresh fruits, vegetables and meats. The ships cuisine reflects the Mexican culture and most dietary needs can be accommodated with advanced notice.

Customs and Immigration:

Requires pre-immigration clearance prior to leaving the docks in La Paz. A valid passport is required and this information (Participant Information Form) must be submitted to the Panterra office with the initial deposit . A lengthy delay in getting this information to Panterra may result in a delay in departure from the docks of up to 3 days.

Expedition Staff:

The Panterra staff, Lela Sankeralli and Stasia Ferbey, bring to the expedition a science based educational component with 30 years of combined experience in teaching marine sciences, natural history and astronomy in the Baja. Much of their time has been spent exploring the many bays, beaches, mangroves, coral reefs, nature trails and geological sites in the area. Our goal is to blend adventure travel with environmental awareness, providing participants with an unforgettable cultural and educational experience.

Ship's Crew:

The Captain(s), engineer and crew are onboard to insure the safety and well being of the group. They bring many years of mariner experience in the Sea of Cortez and offer the warmth and kindness that reflects the beauty and hospitality of the people of Baja, Mexico.

Ship Info:

The "MV Narval" is a 117' steel hull ship. As a certified passenger vessel, all crew, vessel paperwork, safety and navigation equipment meet the legal requirements under the "Nacional de Seguridad Maritima" laws. The multiple level decks are ideal for wildlife viewing and accommodations are private staterooms with single berths, double/quad occupancy. Each stateroom comes complete with full bathroom facilities.

Expedition Includes:

All amenities onboard the ship (i.e. meals, accommodations, trip equipment, snorkel gear, kayaks and ships library), tourism fees, pre-immigration clearance and an Expedition Notebook.

Expedition DOES NOT Include:

Airfare, airport transfers, Travel Insurances, Day 7 evening meal, crew gratuities, spending money and items of a personal nature.

Expedition Cost:

- **\$1495.00** CAD per person
- Expedition is open to 15 participants, based on dbl occupancy.

We highly recommend that participants purchase trip cancellation insurance, in the event of an unexpected cancellation. We also recommend that you have adequate medical insurance to cover any unforeseen situations that may arise.



Lela and Stasia dissect a Humboldt squid found washed up on shore.



The MV Narval at anchor.



The MV Narval at Los Isolotes. Breeding grounds of the California sea lions.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Reservations and Payments:

Unfortunately we do not accept credit cards. Payments can be made by cheque or money order and mailed to:

Panterra
9601 Sixth Street
Sidney, BC
V8L 2W1

Deposit - In order to reserve a space on the expedition a \$495.00 deposit is required.

Balance - of \$1000.00 is due by Feb.1, 2011.

Cancellation and Refund Policy:

If you must cancel your trip the refund policy is as follows:

Prior to 30 days, if a replacement reservation is found a full refund less \$150.00 administrative fee. If a replacement reservation is not found the full amount paid is retained.

30 days or less, the trip fee is non-refundable. **Panterra** is not responsible for any additional costs that may arise from a trip alteration or delay, caused by circumstances beyond our control.

Medical Forms and Liability Release:

Each participant is required to complete the "Participant Information Form" which covers medical information and release of liability. This form must be submitted with the initial deposit. This form can be obtained from the Panterra website www.panterra.com. Go to "Adventure Travel With a Purpose", towards the bottom of the page click on "Participant Information Form".

Participant Responsibilities:

Although no experience is required on our trips, as with any adventure there is always an element of risk. We ask that you welcome adventure with an open mind and be able to have fun and embrace the unexpected. We are dedicated to providing safe, environmentally sensitive and well organized trips.

While our trips are not considered to be strenuous or physically demanding and we do not require a high level of fitness, good general physical condition is necessary. We do not require any previous experience, however it may be beneficial in some situations that may arise. If you have any physical limitations or concerns, please contact us.

If you would like to learn more about our expeditions, viewing the places we visit, the marine life we encounter and the kinds of activities we will be involved in, you are invited to browse through the "Daily Journal - Sea of Cortez" section of the website.

If you would like more information on the ship, the MV Narval, please go to our website and click on the heading "Adventure Travel With a Purpose" then scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on "MV Narval - Ship Information"



A pair of Blue-footed Boobie birds.



Who's checking who out!

For more information or to book your spot on the expedition please contact:

Robinson's Outdoor Store
Gayle Robinson - 250-385-3429
Email: info@robinsonsooutdoors.com
Website: www.robinsonsooutdoors.com

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