

DISCOVER THE WORLD OF PANTERRA



Young Naturalist Expeditions 2011

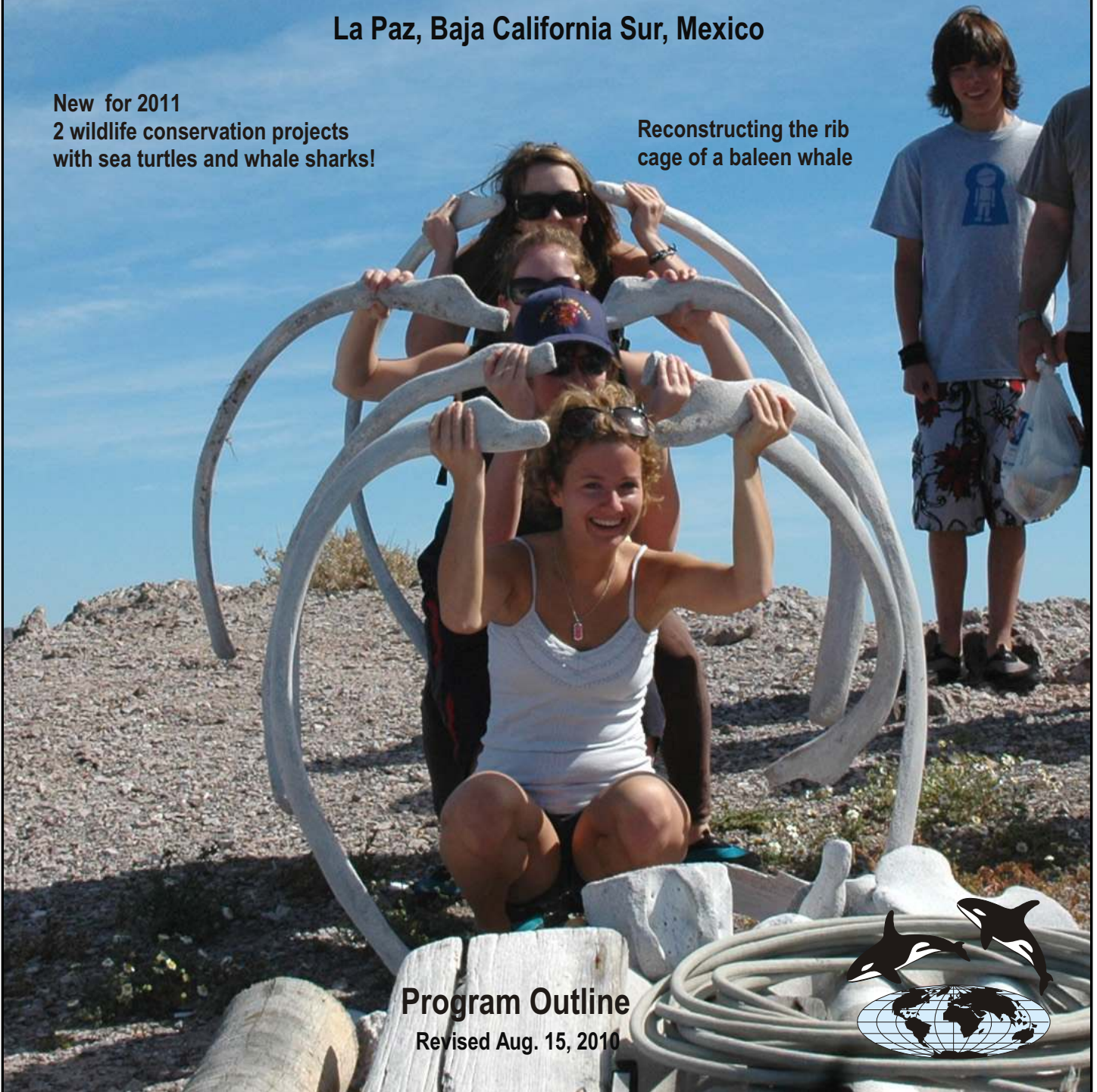
JOURNEY TO THE SEA OF CORTEZ

La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico

New for 2011

2 wildlife conservation projects
with sea turtles and whale sharks!

Reconstructing the rib
cage of a baleen whale



Program Outline

Revised Aug. 15, 2010





The dissection of a squid after finding several washed up on the beach. Do you know squid have three hearts?

For over 20 years the **PANTERRA** group has specialized in programing that introduces participants to the marine environment. Our goals are to impart a knowledge and awareness of the earth's natural history, demonstrate environmental conservation through educational endeavours, enrich the lives of youth by building valuable life skills and inspire an interest in further learning.

The program offers two options. The first is the Panterra Expedition Workbook which puts the students to work exploring, discovering, identifying and recording the marine organisms encountered. High School students can receive credits upon completion of the workbook. The second option is experiential, offering the students an Expedition Notebook which they can record their encounters and experiences. Either option is a great way for students to explore career interests in the many fields of natural sciences.

Anticipate encounters with whales, sea lions, seabirds and an amazing diversity of undersea life. Explore the geology of a desert island. Assist in a sea turtle monitoring program or help a scientist with her whale shark research; all of these activities are designed to make the science textbooks come alive. The Young Naturalist Expeditions are the result of many years of experience introducing students to the natural wonders of the marine environment.



The ultimate outdoor classroom.



Planktonic marine organisms collected during a nightlight study session.

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.



Hammerhead shark caught by the local fishermen.

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.

Starting with the simplest of oceanic plant life phytoplankton, to the top of the food chain the shark and killer whale, this is where the educational component of our "Journey to the Sea of Cortez" begins.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES



Damselfish feeding on algae.

SNORKEL in shallow, crystal clear waters and observe the amazing diversity of undersea life. If your group participates in the whale shark research, you'll be snorkeling with them!

KAYAK through mangrove lagoons, over coral reefs, and in quiet bays. The kayaks are amateur "sit-on" type boats that are made of heavy duty plastic and requiring no previous kayak experience. They should not be confused with the professional sea-going type.



An afternoon kayak.



Hike through a cactus forest.

DESERT ISLAND NATURE HIKES take you on adventures 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 an actively mined salt bed 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.



California sea lion haulout.



Breaching humpback whale.

MARINE LIFE ENCOUNTERS - Observe and interact with, in their natural environment, some of the largest whales on earth. Species encountered may include Blue, Finback, Sperm and Humpbacks, to name a few of the most common.

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

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

Encounter manta rays as they swim by the boat 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.



Low tide exploration - SL crab.



Oyster Catcher chicks.



A pod of Common Dolphins.



Designed into the program are two wild-life conservation projects. The first is a sea turtle monitoring program; and the second is assisting a whale shark scientist with her research. Both projects offer hands-on experience and the opportunity to swim alongside the animals. This is based on weather permitting and date of trip.



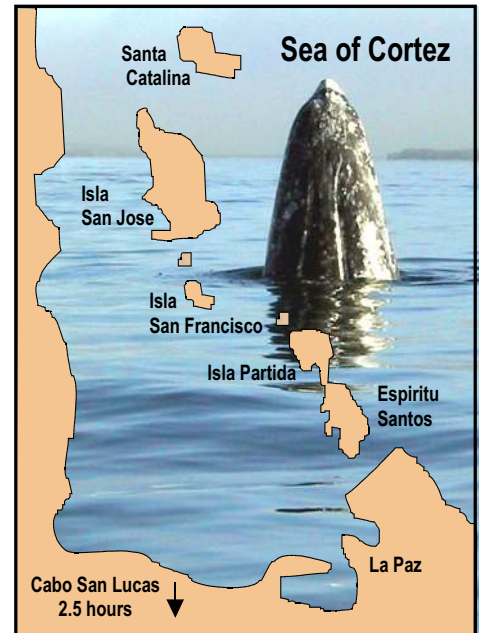
ITINERARY

On Day 1 the group will arrive in Cabo San Lucas and take a short 2.5 hr ride to La Paz where the ship, the MV Narval, is docked. Once onboard, the program will begin with a safety and orientation briefing, accommodation assignment, followed by an authentic Mexican dinner.

On Days 2 - 7 we will depart on our journey exploring specific areas in the Sea of Cortez. Some of the islands to be explored include Isla Espiritu Santos, Isla San Francisco, Isla San Jose, Isla Partida, and Isla Santa Cruz. Due to wind, tide, current and sea conditions, accessibility of some of the areas may be limited or simply not possible.

On Day 7 you will arrive back at the docks, in La Paz, at approx. 2:00 pm and spend the afternoon shopping and bartering with the local vendors. Later in the afternoon/early evening we will venture out for an evening dinner at one of the local restaurants.

On Day 8 we will depart La Paz for the Cabo International Airport where we will catch our departure flight home.



TRIP INFORMATION

CLIMATE - During the months of Feb. - July the average temperature in the Sea of Cortez ranges from 20-38° Celsius, getting progressively warmer toward the summer months. In the Baja the days are warm and beautiful. The evenings cool down and often require light pants and a jacket.

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

CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION - Required documents: A notarized letter of authorization ("*Consent to Travel Form*" provided by our office) allowing students to travel from point of departure through the United States to Mexico, with the school supervisors and/or Panterra representative(s). This letter must accompany a *valid passport*. Drivers Licence are no longer acceptable documentation for travel to Mexico. A *Mexican Tourist Visa* to enter and depart Mexico is also required and will be issued to you during the last leg of your flight.

EDUCATIONAL STAFF - Our senior marine naturalist has over 20 years of experience in the Baja spending much of her time exploring the area. Accompanied by a second biologist/naturalist we will work with the students on the completion of the Expedition Workbook. Our goal is to blend adventure travel with environmental awareness, providing the students with an unforgettable educational experience.

SHIP CREW - The Captain(s), engineer and crew are onboard to operate the vessel insuring 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 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 wild-life viewing and accommodations are private staterooms with single berths, double/quad occupancy. Each stateroom comes complete with full bathroom facilities.



The MV Narval (117') at anchor.

cont'd from Trip Information

PROGRAM INCLUDES - Roundtrip air from selected points in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan, airport transfers in Mexico, and all amenities onboard the ship (i.e. meals, accommodations, trip equipment - snorkel gear, kayaks, science equipment, resource library, Expedition Workbook/Notebook), Medical/Dental Travel Insurance and trip T-shirt.

DOES NOT INCLUDE - Travel Cancellation/Interruption Insurance, Day 1 and Day 8 meals while in transit, Day 7 evening meal out, spending money and items of a personal nature.

PROGRAM COST - ***\$3195.00** CAD per student
Group size: 16 students accompanied by 2 cost free supervisors
*Cost is based on a minimum complement of 16 students

BAJA GIFTS PROGRAM - 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 teachers participating in the Panterra programs in 2001. Their response was incredible!

The program has grown from a few of us simply giving money to the donation of boxes upon boxes of clothing and supplies. In 2008/9, we donated over 500 gift bags, 20 Afghans/quilts, 45 Mexican blankets and 12 large First Aid Kits to isolated communities in the islands.

If your class is 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 program.

If you would like to learn more about the "Journey to the Sea of Cortez" program, 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 Panterra website. Past participants have compiled these photo journals as part of the program curriculum. Our website address is www.panterra.com.



Students from Meadowridge School distribute their gift bags and then take a moment to play with the kids and their new toys.

BOOKING INFORMATION

To insure that no misunderstandings occur, and keeping in mind that Panterra incurs costs well before the group departure, the following is the Payment Schedule and Cancellation and Refund Policy.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

1. Initial Deposit - \$495.00 per student - the group deposit is required to confirm the booking.
2. Payment 2 - September 15, 2010 - \$1350.00 per student
3. Payment 3 - 90 days prior to departure - \$1350.00 per student

Schools or individual students joining the program late or in the fall of the school year of travel will be given an alternate payment schedule. Payments from participants must be made directly to the school. The school will then issue one cheque per payment. Panterra does not accept credit cards.

Additional charges and fees are applicable in the following situations:

- A \$25.00 process fee will be charged to late payments. If we have not received your payment in full 30 days prior to departure Panterra reserves the right to cancel your participation in the program with loss of all monies paid to date by the participant.
- A \$25.00 process fee will be charged for the late submission of any of the following forms:
 - Participant Information Forms (due at the time of Payment 2)
 - Consent to Travel Form (to be completed and submitted to the school no later than 60 days prior to departure). This form is to accompany the teacher supervisor.

cont'd from Booking Information

***CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY**

The program cost is based on a full compliment of 16 paying participants. Once a commitment has been made the booking is confirmed. We recognize that occasionally, valid circumstances may arise warranting the replacement of a students' spot on the trip. Therefore the following policy applies to cancellation with replacement:

- A replacement has been found 45 days prior to departure.
- A \$200.00 cancellation fee will be charged to the students/supervisor dropping out of the program.
- A written letter of cancellation must be submitted to Panterra along with the replacement Participant Information Form no later then 45 days prior to departure.
- If the student cannot find a replacement, Panterra will not issue any refunds.

* It is highly recommended that participants purchase a "Travel Cancellation/Interruption Insurance" to cover any unforeseen circumstances that may cause the cancellation of their son/daughter's participation in the program, that is not covered by Panterra. Please contact our office for more information or refer to our website, "Young Naturalist Expeditions - Journey to the Sea of Cortez - Frequently Asked Questions".

ADDITIONAL NOTES

PHYSICAL FITNESS - Our trips are designed for everyone; it accommodates all levels of experience and abilities. Most of our participants are first time kayakers, snorkelers, students who simply have limited experience. Our expeditions are not considered strenuous or physically demanding, and a high level of fitness is not required. You can, however, anticipate a few hours of exercise each day. All we ask is that you embrace the adventure with an open mind and are able to have fun with it during the trip.

CONDUCT - As a school trip and representatives of both your family and school we kindly ask you not to indulge in the consumption of alcohol, smoking or any behavior unacceptable to your family and school on any portion of the trip to include during flights, airport waits and ground transportation. This trip is intended to be an educational and cultural experience unlike anything you have ever encountered.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING - Because we are visiting and interacting with people of a culture different than our own, some of the clothing that is normally worn at home and school may not be appropriate for the trip. Spaghetti strap/low cut shirts, short shorts, miniskirts, string bikinis, etc. are not acceptable clothing for the places we will be visiting. We recommend crew neck, short sleeve t-shirts and board or hiking style or other types of baggy, longer shorts. They are the most comfortable and appropriate for the activities that the students will be participating in and the people we will be meeting along the way. Should you forget appropriate clothing we will have t-shirts and shorts available for sale at our onboard Gift Shop. In the Frequently Asked Questions of the website, located at the bottom of the "Young Naturalist Expeditions " webpage, is a Suggested Clothing List. This list should be used as a guideline.

PLEASE NOTE: It is imperative that all participants and their parents/legal guardians carefully read through ALL OF the written information pertaining to the program located on the www.panterra.com website to INCLUDE the following: Young Naturalist Expeditions, Journey to the Sea of Cortez - program outline, Participant Information Form, MV Narval, Daily Journals and the Frequently Asked Questions.

IN CLOSING ...

No warranties, representations, terms or conditions apply to any program unless expressly stated in the Program Outline, Participant Information Form, Consent to Travel Form and the www.panterra.com website.

Panterra reserves the right to increase the program fee equal to and in the event of a US/Canadian/Pesos currency change of more than 10%. Panterra does not take responsibility for any events beyond its' control. If you have any questions concerning the program or do not understand any of the written information please contact our office at 1-800-665-6639.

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