Baja:
Among the Great Whales

Each winter gray whales migrate south from their arctic feeding grounds to Baja California’s sheltered Pacific coast lagoons. Their migration is the longest of any mammal, covering more than 10,000 miles. Seeing the whales in their natural habitat is one of the great delights of this voyage. During our days in Bahia Magdalena’s lagoons, venture among them in Zodiacs for a water-level perspective.

Join Naturalist-guided walks on desert islands, snorkel with sea lions and kayak in the Sea of Cortez. Whales, dolphins, sea lions, blue-footed boobies, huge cardon cacti, mangroves and sand dunes are among the wonders you’ll encounter.

Day 1: Los Angeles/La Paz/San Carlos/Embark
Arrive in La Paz on our privately chartered Aeromexico MD-80 from Los Angeles, drive across the Baja Peninsula to San Carlos and embark our ship. (D)

Days 2, 3 & 4: Bahia Magdalena
Imagine a vast system of protected coves and channels, surrounded by a fringe of mangrove swamps at one edge of a vast, windswept plain. Such is Bahia Magdalena on the Pacific Coast of Baja California. It is one of the main breeding and calving areas for California gray whales. Each winter, during their long migration, these whales travel south from their Arctic feeding grounds to breed and raise their calves in Baja’s sheltered waters. In this vast water nursery, observe these enormous yet gentle animals from the ship and up close from our Zodiacs. One of nature’s greatest spectacles, these mysterious leviathans will humble and amaze you.

Also walk along sand dunes of incomparable beauty and discover dense mangroves by kayak and Zodiac. Bird watching in the mangroves can be excellent — magnificent frigate birds,
Day 5: Gorda Banks and Los Cabos
The morning is spent at the Gorda Banks seamount, a gathering place for whales, especially humpbacks, as well as dolphins and other sea life. Later cruise past Friars Rocks at Land’s End. For those who wish, we will arrange a visit to the historic town center of San Jose del Cabo. (B,L,D)

Day 6: Islas Los Islotes and Espiritu Santo
At Los Islotes, experience one of life’s great pleasures — snorkeling with curious sea lions. Don flippers, a mask and snorkel (which we’ll gladly provide) and swim among these graceful creatures. With deeply indented bays, Espiritu Santo may be the most beautiful island in the Sea of Cortez. We have a leisurely afternoon to swim, kayak or hike. Brown pelicans, gulls and boobies are all part of the landscape. It is also home to the endemic black jack rabbit — with any luck, we may spot one. There are possibilities for long walks or lazy beachcombing. Finish the day with a relaxing beach barbecue complete with campfire and a star-filled sky. (B,L,D)

Day 7: Exploring the Sea of Cortez
With the luxury of no specific plan, we may search for whales among the islands of the southern Sea of Cortez, an area that has proven to be one of the best for finding blue whales, and often common and bottlenose dolphins. Explore one of the many lovely, uninhabited islands such as Isla San Jose or Isla Santa Catalina to walk among huge cacti, swim, snorkel, and observe the great diversity of bird life — verdins, ladder-backed woodpeckers and Costa’s hummingbirds. Swim and snorkel in the clear bay of our anchorage. Below the surface, observe king angelfish, butterfly fish, damselfish and the beautiful parrotfish. (B,L,D)

Day 8: La Paz/Disembark/Los Angeles
Disembark after breakfast in La Paz and drive to the airport for our charter flight to Los Angeles. (B)