

## ITINERARY

### WHALE WATCHING SAFARI Birch Aquarium at Scripps

#### Features include:

- Comfortable private motor coach
- Four nights accommodations in comfortable hotels
- Most meals with one drink each. Meals are chosen according to the local specialty
- Snacks and drinking water
- Two days of whale watching in two different lagoons
- Services of experienced guides and a naturalist from the Birch Aquarium at Scripps
- Taxes and tips of included hotels and meals. *Note: tips of drivers and guides are not included*
- Learning experiences, fun and games during driving times

Surrounded by a natural aquarium, the rugged magical landscape of Baja California Peninsula is home to vast deserts rich in vegetation, pristine beaches, jagged mountains, an array of shore birds and isolated villages. Of special attraction are the gray whales. Each year, gray whales travel thousands of miles from the Arctic Ocean to the warm waters of Baja California lagoons, designated as wildlife refuges, to court, mate, give birth and care for their young. Join the unique, unforgettable experience to view these giant mammals at arm's length some may let themselves be petted!

Whale behaviors at the lagoons change as the season unfolds. Beginning in mid-January, whales arrive to give birth to their young outside the viewing areas. At this time, whales can be observed in the spectacular behavior of courting and mating. In February the lagoons reach the highest number of whales, up to 2,000 at one time! Spouts are visible at all times, mating still occurs and mothers with newborn calves begin to enter the observation areas. In March, as bulls and newly-pregnant whales depart, mother and baby pairs dominate the lagoons. Towards the end of the season, calves gain size and weight and mothers become less protective, offering a greater opportunity for close encounters. Whales remain in the lagoons up to mid April.

**Day 1. San Diego - Ensenada - San Quintin.** Begin in the morning by driving south to cross the busiest border in the world. The scenic road to Ensenada offers breathtaking views. After lunch in Ensenada continue to San Vicente to visit a small Community Museum. The hotel in San Quintin fronts a wide-open beach offering spectacular sunsets.

*Hotel:* Desert Inn, San Quintin.

*Meals:* B/L

**Day 2. San Quintin - San Ignacio.** The day is dedicated to admire the wonders of the desert. The mountainous peninsula is covered by innumerable species of flora, many of which are endemic. Drive in *Reserva Valle de los Cirios* (boo jum tree Reserve) established to protect the natural life, especially the unique tree. Located in the midst of the Central Desert, a combination of sun, sand, gigantic granite boulders, and amusing combinations of boo jums, cardons and elephant trees make Cataviña a superb "desert garden". Enjoy lunch and continue south to San Ignacio, a charming town that developed around its imposing 18<sup>th</sup> century mission, still in use today, in the midst of a lush, tranquil oasis.

*Hotel:* Desert Inn, San Ignacio

*Meals:* B/L

**Day 3. San Ignacio – Laguna de San Ignacio - Guerrero Negro.** Board special vehicles for the two hour drive on a graded road to reach the secluded San Ignacio Lagoon.

Board *pangas* (small boats) for a memorable ride among whales. Lunch is in a *palapa* at the lagoon. Return to San Ignacio for a brief visit to the oasis before continuing to Guerrero Negro to spend the night.

*Hotel:* Desert Inn, Guerrero Negro

*Meals:* B/L

**Day 4. Guerrero Negro - Scammon's (Ojo de Liebre) Lagoon - Cataviña.** Begin the day visiting a natural reserve in an enormous salt marsh where birds migrate from Russia, Canada, and other latitudes. Drive through *La Exportadora de Sal*, one of the largest salt plants in the world and learn about its activities. At Scammon's Lagoon, board small *pangas* again for another exciting encounter with the whales. Stops are made along the return drive to Cataviña to admire the large variety of dense desert vegetation. In isolated Cataviña, the nights reveal an enchanting desert sky. Dinner at the hotel consists of a variety of finger food.

*Hotel:* Desert Inn, Cataviña

*Meals:* B/L/D

**Day 5. Cataviña - San Diego.** The early morning walk in Cataviña's stunning setting includes a visit to a small cave with simple rock art. The return trip stops in a typical San Quintin restaurant for lunch and in Ensenada for shopping.  
*Meals: B/L*

**DATES:** Wednesday, February 17 to Sunday, February 21, 2010  
Wednesday, March 24 to Sunday, March 28, 2010

**PRICE:** \$ 740.00 Double Occupancy  
\$ 920.00 Single Occupancy (subject to availability)  
*Full payment preferred*

*Part of fee supports education at Birch Aquarium.*

*Traveler must be able to endure extended driving periods, drives on dirt roads for up to 2 hours each way and board small fishing boats (pangas) with the possibility of encountering rough seas. Walks are usually short and on relatively flat terrain, however often on uneven ground. There are options for short but steep hikes. If traveler can't join, he/she may spend time around the flat area while the activity is in process.*

**VALID PASSPORT MANDATORY**