EXPLORING BAJA CALIFORNIA AND THE SEA OF CORTEZ

February 1 to 9, 2020

BAJA WHALE WATCHING

a program of the stanford alumni association
When I first visited the Sea of Cortez in 1991, I was amazed. Practically in our backyard is one of the world’s most biologically diverse environments, home to more than 6,000 distinct animal species and described by Jacques Cousteau as “the aquarium of the world.” We’ve tapped Stanford faculty leader Gail Mahood, whose areas of expertise include volcanology, igneous petrology and geoarchaeology, to lead this expedition to Baja California Sur and the Sea of Cortez aboard the National Geographic Sea Bird. Whether you revel in donning a snorkel and fins for an up-close experience with teeming marine life or prefer to search for pods of dolphins and whales from the ship’s observation deck, you’re in for a truly unforgettable experience. Join us!

BRETT S. THOMPSON, ’83, DIRECTOR, STANFORD TRAVEL/STUDY

Highlights

WATCH and listen to sealife via our chartered expedition ship’s bow-mounted underwater camera and hydrophones.

ENJOY close encounters with sea lions, dolphins and other marine life from our expedition landing craft or kayaks in the waters of the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez.

OBSERVE whales breaching in the lagoons of Bahia Magdalena and look for blue-footed boobies nesting atop nearby coastal rocks.

SPEND time on the islands of Los Islotes and Isla San Francisco, discovering their volcanic origins or beachcombing along their shorelines.
While taking her first geology course, Professor Gail Mahood fell in love with the reasoning involved and the excuse it provided to get dirty and then went on to earn a BA and PhD in the subject. She joined the Stanford faculty in 1979, where she has taught courses in introductory geology as well as in her specialties of volcanology, igneous petrology and geoarchaeology. Her favorite teaching experiences involve taking non-majors into the field, including a trip to the volcanoes of the Eastern Sierra Nevada, a spring break camping trip in Death Valley and a field trip to California’s most recently active (1915) volcano, Lassen Peak, as part of a Stanford Sophomore College course on geologic hazards of California. Professor Mahood’s research specialty is the eruptive histories of volcanoes that gave rise to large, explosive eruptions that spread ash continent-wide, with applications to mineral deposits and geothermal energy. In addition to her teaching, she has held many administrative roles at Stanford and has led five Travel/Study adventures to date. “The trips have provided me the opportunity to visit some of the most iconic landscapes in the world in the company of smart, interesting people whose enthusiasm for learning is inspiring; it doesn’t get any better than that,” says Professor Mahood. Of her visits to the Baja Peninsula, she says, “I love the stark contrast of the sea against a desert landscape of colorful volcanic rocks. And being in a Zodiac in a close encounter with a grey whale and her calf was, at least for me, life-changing in how I perceived these creatures.” During our time in Baja, Professor Mahood will lecture on the global effects of “supereruptions,” how the tectonics of the Baja Peninsula have shaped the landscape, and how ocean processes and climate change affect the whales our travelers will encounter at Bahia Magdalena.
Due to the expeditionary nature of this trip, the exact order of the itinerary may vary in order to maximize our experience.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1
DEPART U.S. / SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO / LA PAZ
Upon arrival in San José del Cabo, transfer to La Paz and check in to our hotel. COSTABAJA RESORT & SPA (D)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2
LA PAZ / PUERTO SAN CARLOS / EMBARK
This morning is on our own to relax and take advantage of our resort’s spa and amenities. Check out in the late morning and after lunch at a local restaurant in La Paz transfer to Puerto San Carlos and embark our ship. Gather this evening aboard ship for a welcome cocktail reception before dinner. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SEA BIRD (B,L,D)

MONDAY TO WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3 TO 5
BAHÍA MAGDALENA
For three days, we’ll observe the California gray whale in one of the whales’ only undeveloped breeding and calving areas that remains in the world. Each winter, these gentle behemoths make the longest migration of any mammal—traveling south from their Arctic summer feeding grounds to breed and raise their calves in these sheltered waters during the winter months. We’ll be able to watch whale activities from the ship decks and also right at water level aboard our ship’s expedition landing craft. If conditions are right, we may experience close encounters with pairs of gray whale mothers and their calves. Explore the ever-shifting sand dunes of Isla Magdalena on a walk across the island to one of the most pristine beaches along Baja’s Pacific coastline. Bird watching here can be excellent—magnificent frigate birds, pelicans, cormorants, terns and great blue herons are some of the species we might see. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SEA BIRD (B,L,D—ALL 3 DAYS)
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6
SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO / GORDA BANKS
Today, we cruise past the spectacular Friars Rocks at Land’s End. Those who wish may opt to visit the historic town center of San José del Cabo. We spend this afternoon at the Gorda Banks seamount or La Fortuna, gathering places for whales, dolphins and other sealife, where we can observe such whale activity as tail lobbing, flipper slapping and breaching. Humpback whales are often sighted here at this time of the year. Our undersea specialist and naturalists are always available to share their knowledge and experience with us. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SEA BIRD (B,L,D)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7
LOS ISLOTES / ISLA SAN FRANCISCO
With their dramatic shorelines and eroded cliff faces, Los Islotes and Isla San Francisco are two of the loveliest islands in the Sea of Cortez and idyllic locales for swimming or snorkeling. Don a mask, flippers and snorkel and experience the thrill of swimming with curious sea lions. Or jump in a kayak to observe the impressive geological past of these islands, noting the tons of compacted volcanic ash covered with solidified lava floods just yards from the shore. Keep an eye out for brown pelicans, gulls and boobies that frequent these islands. Or simply opt for a long walk or some lazy beachcombing. Finish the day with a beach barbecue complete with bonfire under a star-filled sky. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SEA BIRD (B,L,D)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8
EXPLORING THE SEA OF CORTEZ
Today we choose from several options, perhaps spending time on deck looking for whales and bottlenose and common dolphins or traveling by expedition landing craft to explore some of the Sea of Cortez’s numerous uninhabited islands, such as Isla San José, with their sweeping beaches and arroyos. Birdlife is plentiful and the nutrient-rich sea is home to an overwhelming variety of fish species, such as king angelfish, surgeonfish, butterfly fish, damselfish and the beautiful parrotfish. Celebrate the conclusion of our Baja adventure at a farewell reception aboard ship this evening. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SEA BIRD (B,L,D)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9
LA PAZ / DISEMBARK / U.S.
Back in La Paz, disembark our ship after breakfast and transfer to Los Cabos International Airport for flights home. (B)
National Geographic Sea Bird

The National Geographic Sea Bird is a tried-and-true expedition ship, chartered exclusively for Stanford. With a shallow draft and small size, she can easily reach places inaccessible to larger ships. The Sea Bird offers comfortable accommodations in 31 outside-facing cabins, all with large windows. The ship offers inviting public spaces, including a library, lounge and observation deck, and is equipped with various equipment for exploration, such as a hydrophone, bow cam, kayaks, expedition landing craft, a fleet of paddleboards and snorkeling gear, that guarantees a memorable, in-depth experience.

Program Cost*

Rates are per person, based on double occupancy, unless otherwise noted.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Double</th>
<th>Single**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 1</strong></td>
<td>$8,495</td>
<td>$12,745</td>
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<tr>
<td>94 sq. ft. with 2 twin beds and a large window, Main Deck</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Category 2</strong></td>
<td>$9,495</td>
<td>$14,245</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 sq. ft. with 2 twin beds and a large window, Bridge Deck or Upper Deck</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Category 3</strong></td>
<td>$10,345</td>
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<td>Cabins 214, 216, 217, 219: 120 sq. ft. with 2 twin beds that can convert to a double bed, writing table and 2 chairs, 2 large windows, Upper Deck. Cabins 105, 106: 116 sq. ft. with 2 twin beds; writing table and 2 chairs, 2 large windows, Bridge Deck.</td>
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*Stanford Alumni Association nonmembers add $300 per person.
**Single accommodations may be limited to as few as 2 cabins.
**Dates**
February 1 to 9, 2020 (9 days)

**Size**
This program can accommodate 58 participants. Single accommodations are extremely limited; please call for availability.

**Included**
- 1 night of hotel accommodations
- 7-night cruise aboard the *National Geographic Sea Bird*
- 8 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 8 dinners
- Welcome and farewell cocktail receptions
- Gratuities to guides, drivers and ship crew for all group activities
- All tours and shore excursions as described in the itinerary
- Group transfers and baggage handling on program arrival and departure days
- Port fees and embarkation taxes
- Minimal medical, accident and evacuation insurance
- Educational program with lecture series and pre-departure materials, including recommended reading list, a selected book, map and travel information
- Services of our professional tour manager to assist you throughout the program

**Not Included**
- International and U.S. domestic airfare
- Passport and visa fees
- Immunization costs
- Meals and beverages other than those specified as included
- Independent and private transfers
- Trip-cancellation/interruption and baggage insurance
- Excess-baggage charges
- Personal items such as internet access, telephone and fax calls, laundry and gratuities for nongroup services

**Air Arrangements**
You are responsible for booking and purchasing airfare to the start location and from the end location of the program. These air purchases are NOT included in the program cost. To assist you in making these independent arrangements, we will send you details with your confirmation materials on when to arrive and depart.

**What to Expect**
We consider this program to be moderately strenuous. Full days of touring are balanced with free time on board. Daily excursion options can involve one to three miles of walking or hiking on beaches or trails, which are, in some cases uneven and on natural terrain that is rocky and rugged. There will be ample opportunities for kayaking, paddleboarding and snorkeling. You’ll need to be sure-footed on the ship's stairs and ramps, and you must be comfortable boarding small vessels and managing beach landings (the ship’s crew will be on hand to assist). Participants must be physically fit, active and in good health. We welcome travelers 15 years of age and older on this program.

**Deposit & Final Payment**
A $1,000-per-person deposit is required to reserve space for this program. Sign up online at alumni.stanford.edu/trip?baja2020 or call the Travel/Study office at (650) 725-1093. Final payment is due 120 days prior to departure. As a condition of participation, all confirmed participants are required to sign a Release of Liability.

**Cancellations & Refunds**
Deposits and any payments are refundable, less a $500-per-person cancellation fee, until 120 days prior to departure. After that date, refunds can be made only if the program is sold out and your place(s) can be resold, in which case a $1,000-per-person cancellation fee will apply.

**Insurance**
Stanford Travel/Study provides all travelers who are U.S. or Canadian citizens with minimal medical, accident and evacuation coverage under our group-travel insurance policy. Our group policy is intended to provide minimal levels of protection while you are traveling on this program. You may choose to subscribe to optional trip-cancellation and baggage insurance. Information will be provided to travelers with their welcome materials. The product offered includes special benefits if you purchase your policy within 14 days of written confirmation of your participation on the trip.

**Eligibility**
We encourage membership in the Stanford Alumni Association as the program cost for nonmembers is $300 more than the members’ price. A person traveling as a paid guest of a current member will not be charged the nonmember fee. To purchase a membership, visit alumni.stanford.edu/goto/ membership or call (650) 725-0692.

**Responsibility**
The Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University and our operators act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and ship arrangements and exercise every care possible in doing so. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity in connection with the service of any automobile, motor coach, launch or any other conveyance used in carrying out this program or for the acts or defaults of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the program. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, force majeure or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to make such alterations to this published itinerary as may be deemed necessary. The right is reserved to cancel any program prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded without further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the program. No refund will be made for an unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. Baggage is carried at the owner’s risk entirely. It is understood that the ship’s ticket, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the cruise company. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time that passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance. Neither the Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University nor our operators accept liability for any carrier’s cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable ticket in connection with the tour. Program price is based on rates in effect in February 2019 and is subject to change without notice to reflect fluctuations in exchange rates, tariffs or fuel charges.
The scenery, weather, ship and its crew—just everything about it was wonderful!

MARY LOU LYDING, ’68, SEA OF CORTEZ, 2013

BAJA
WHALE WATCHING

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alumni.stanford.edu/goto/travelstudy