

Quetzal Adventures

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Baja's Birds and Gray Whales
Golden Gate Audubon Society
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BIRDING & EXPLORING NATURE

Daily Rhythm: The dry-tropical forest and desert gets hot early and we'll begin each day at around 6:30 a.m. to go birding in the morning. We'll usually drive to our next location in mid-afternoon and arrive to our hotel 1 to 2 hours before dinner. Some days may have an optional afternoon outing. Most breakfasts and some lunches will be picnics. All dinners will be served at around 6:30 p.m. at restaurants offering some of the best *cocina Mexicana* in the region. Walking will be done on leveled and gently sloped trails, on the side of the road, around town and park preserves.

Transportation & Accommodations: All meals (not including alcoholic beverages and soft drinks), transportation (except from airport on day one), and lodging are included in the price of the tour. Transportation during this tour will be done by 12-passenger van. We'll spend most nights in small towns with accommodations in comfortable hotels with private bathrooms in each room and electricity (Wifi may be available in some of them). The boats we use at Bahia Magdalena for our 3-4 hour ride to look for gray whales, are stable, broad fiberglass boats that sit up to 6 people on padded benches and equipped with 1 or 2 large outboard motors.

Weather: Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions. Although the days are generally warm, with temperatures in the 60s-80s during the winter, some extremes may be experienced. Dressing in layers that include a warm fleece and windbreaker is recommended. Also, when exploring Magdalena Bay on the Pacific Coast, is recommended you wear a waterproof jacket (and possibly pants) to stay dry while cruising the lagoon and meeting Gray Whales.

Even though you are traveling to a desert environment, our experience has been that people more often err by not bringing enough clothes for the cool weather that can be encountered.

Baja's Birds & Gray Whales 2019 Itinerary

The following is a draft of the trip's itinerary and it can change at any time before or during the trip. Often the main reason for changing the itinerary (or the "Daily Rhythm" above) is to take full advantage of what the natural world, birds and other wildlife are doing at the time of the trip. Other reasons may be safety, weather or an unexpected emergency.

Location	Description
Day 1. San Jose del Cabo	The Adventure begins with dinner and cocktails at our hotel lobby.
Day 2. Estero San Jose	Early morning birding at the Estero, a large body of water with vast wetlands where fresh water from Rio San Jose meets saltwater. The vast wetlands of Estero San Jose are prime habitat for Belding's yellowthroat, one of Baja's most colorful endemics. They are also an important wintering and stopover habitat for several migratory birds, including white-faced ibis, red-necked phalarope, reared, blue-winged, cinnamon, and green teal. After a full morning of birding at the Estero we usually stop at <i>Los Claros</i> , a local's favorite, and the place where fish tacos have been evolving to perfection for years before the rest of the world knew about them. After lunch, we'll head North along the Gulf of California coast towards the charming town of Los Barriles where we'll spend the night.
Day 3. Sierra de la Laguna	We'll get up early to go to one of the least explored parts of Baja California: La Sierra de la Laguna. Here, we'll search for endemic birds in oak woodlands at 2,500 ft. above sea level. We'll look for the unique and very pale "San Lucas" robin, the "Viosca" band-tailed pigeon (both of them endemic subspecies) and the endemic Cape pygmy-owl and Xantus's hummingbird. The Sierra is also important wintering habitat for several migratory birds, including Bell's vireo, gray flycatcher, lark, lazuli and indigo buntings- just to mention a few. After a full day in La Laguna, we'll head North to the iconic town of La Paz where we'll have time to explore the downtown area and enjoy fine Mexican cuisine at one of La Paz's best seafood restaurants.
Day 4. La Paz	La Paz has some of the best mudflats in Western Mexico. We'll get up early and head for the shoreline to look for shorebirds and waterfowl such as Wilson's plovers, flocks of black skimmers, white ibises, brant, Caspian and royal terns. We'll scan the bay in search of magnificent frigatebirds and brown and blue-footed boobies. After an al-fresco lunch by Bahia de la Paz, we'll cross the Baja peninsula to head out towards Magdalena Bay, one of the world's largest breeding and calving lagoons for the California gray whale. We'll spend the night in the iconic fishing town of San Carlos.

<p>Day 5. Magdalena Bay</p>	<p>We'll take a ½ day boat tour in Magdalena Bay and search of gray whales. There is a real possibility of meeting newly born calves who are often curious and approach boats. Other whale behaviours we may see are nursing, mating, spyhopping, and breaching. Our boat ride provides the perfect opportunity for birdwatching. We'll look for flocks of endangered brant as they prepare for their migration to the Arctic circle, and other resident and migratory birds including brown boobies, jaegers, Heermann's, laughing and California gulls along with thousands or cormorants. We'll have dinner in San Carlos where restaurants are known for offering some of the world's best Mexican ceviche. As with all other locations, there's always a non-seafood or vegetarian option.</p>
<p>Day 6. Mangroves</p>	<p>We continue our daily routine and just after sunrise and an early breakfast, we'll visit a mangrove forest in search for yellow-crowned, tricolored, and little blue herons, reddish egrets, neotropic cormorants, and the endemic "Mangrove" yellow warbler. Cruising the tidal channels provides the best opportunity to get close looks at birds in the quiet and beautiful mangrove forest. After an early lunch on a sandy beach overlooking Bahia Magdalena, we'll continue our adventure and start heading south along the Pacific Coast towards the small town of Todos Santos where we'll check-in at one of the town's prime boutique hotels.</p>
<p>Day 7. Sonoran Desert</p>	<p>This is our last stop during the trip. We'll get pampered at our new boutique hotel and spend time birding around town. The Sonoran Desert at this location provides a great opportunity to look for black and Harris's hawks, and for encountering the endemic gray thrasher along with other migratory and resident birds such as Costa's hummingbird, McGillivray's warbler, black-throated, clay-colored, and Brewer's sparrows, and green-tailed towhee. We'll come back to our hotel early and with plenty of time to walk around town. We'll meet for dinner at one of Todos Santos best restaurants to celebrate the end of the trip and look back at all the birds, mammals and wildlife we've encountered during the week.</p>
<p>Day 8. Todos Santos to San Jose del Cabo</p>	<p>We'll have the option for a birdwalk in the morning before heading out to the airport. We'll have a last chance to look for endemics such as Xantus's hummingbird and gray thrasher. Later in the morning we'll head back to San Jose del Cabo where our adventure ends.</p>