Mexico’s Sea of Cortez
Whales, Sea Birds & More!
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

March 25 – April 1, 2017
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Naturalist Journeys, LLC
Stocked with supplies and a bountiful sense of adventure, follow Steinbeck’s written path in *The Log of the Sea of Cortez* while cruising into the protected waters of Cousteau’s “world’s aquarium” in Mexico’s Sea of Cortez. Crystal clear water abounds near the shorelines, fringed by red desert bluffs. Sail among the islands once explored by conquistadors searching for black pearls. Learn about the impressive geologic forces that created these picturesque islands. Join renowned bird experts on a discovery of the unique habits and characteristics of the winged creatures you encounter. Explore by kayak and paddleboard, keeping your eyes peeled for the abundant and diverse array of sea life, or enjoy leisurely beachcombing with the sand between your toes.

Islands of the Sea of Cortez are much like the Galapagos, a textbook for the study of speciation, which we see in lizards, plant life, and right from the start at Cabo, with some of Baja’s endemic birds including Belding’s Yellowthroat, Gray Thrasher, and Xantus’s Hummingbird. The desert islands in the Sea show us signs of volcanism, sedimentation from eons gone by, and all the colors of the rainbow in these uniquely exposed formations.

Active exploration, turquoise water and snorkeling, and a menagerie of seabirds and wildlife await!

**Tour Highlights**

- Watch for whales or whale sharks, mobula rays, dolphins, and birds
- Witness courtship rituals of nesting Brown and Blue-footed Boobies
- Hike, kayak, paddle board, and explore by skiff
- Burro ride into arroyos with local rancheros
- Search for gentle whale sharks and gray whales at Bahía Magdalena (seasonal, we watch activity and feature what is best)
- Snorkel with sea lion pups and colorful reef fish; on land be dazzled by Xantus’s Hummingbird
- Enjoy the convenience of flying in and out of Los Cabos International Airport

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Tour Summary
8-Day / 7-Night Naturalist Journeys
Reunion Cruise with Greg Smith
Starting at $3375 based on Cabin Type,
from Cabo San Lucas
Airport is Los Cabos International (SJD)

Itinerary

Sat., Mar. 25
San José del Cabo / La Paz — Embarkation
Welcome to Baja, Mexico! You are met today upon arrival at the Los Cabos International Airport in San José del Cabo and transferred to our hospitality area. We are then joined by the cruise’s expedition team for an overland orientation transfer to La Paz, getting our group acquainted with the dramatically beautiful Baja landscape and the week of adventure that lies ahead. As we board our ship, the Safari Endeavor, the captain and crew welcome you aboard with a cocktail before a kick-off dinner with our new mates. (D)

Sun., Mar. 26  Isla San Francisco
Today we begin our explorations in a playground of steep red bluffs and sweeping desert beach. What a treat to kick off our weeklong adventure with a day of play — this is a vacation, after all. Don a snorkel and some flippers and get to know the colorful and bountiful sea life, put on your walking shoes for an exploratory hike along the red bluffs, grab a paddle and explore by kayak, or just relax on the beach with the sand between your toes ... the choice is yours! The rugged beauty of Isla San Francisco makes it an ideal spot for escapades.

All through this journey we are on the lookout for the different whale species that call this sea home. Fin, Bryde’s, pilot, and sperm whales are some of the larger whales we hope to see, while large numbers
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of different dolphin species make their presence known, riding the bow waves. If you choose to go ashore, we look for the Isla San Francisco whiptail lizard, found no other place in the world! Tonight, we enjoy a delicious dinner as we watch the sun set. (B,L,D)

Mon., Mar. 27  Bahía Agua Verde
At Bahía Agua Verde, stunningly clear waters are bordered by sparse craggy mountains hemmed in green. Today we explore the coast by small skiff keeping our eyes peeled for wildlife, the ever-present Osprey nesting on sea stacks, and different species of cormorants and terns. Mobula rays may be taking that leap of faith as they rocket out of the water, landing belly first back into the sea. We then visit with a local ranchero and his family before we take to the canyons and mountains on a mule ride and experience the “real Baja.” Today’s scenic vistas, outstanding exploration by boat and by hoof, excellent birding, and unmatched camaraderie make for a perfect day. (B,L,D)
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Tues., Mar. 28  Captain’s Choice
While it’s unlikely we find any black pearls, today we sail amongst islands once explored by early conquistadors. What fun to imagine what they thought of this stunning land and sea. Our boat’s expedition team is at-the-ready with more adventurous options to choose from today — kayaking, hiking, paddle boarding, or beachcombing. We keep watch during our transit for Brown and Blue-footed Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird, and the endemic Yellow-legged Gull. Discover nature’s diversity and learn about the geologic forces that formed these islands. (B,L,D)

Wed., Mar. 29  Marine Life Search in Bahía de la Paz
Depending on recent marine life reports, we explore Bahía de la Paz (November – mid-January; March; order of days changes) in search of whale sharks — the largest known species of fish. These massive, dappled creatures are known to frequent the bay. We keep watch for the watery “footprints” of these gentle giants, and conditions permitting, gear up for an unforgettable swim alongside this colossal creature or observe from above in the skiff. Those going ashore watch for wintering neotropical birds as different warblers, vireos, and sparrows use these islands as winter retreats. (B,L,D)

Thurs., Mar. 30  Los Islotes / Isla Partida
At Los Islotes, a steep craggy seamount leaping straight from the sea, we observe a sea lion colony from the boat and skiff, or slip into a wetsuit for an early morning snorkel with curious, agile young sea lion pups. After a lively morning, we heave anchor and set sail for Isla Partida for an afternoon of water play or island hikes along desert beaches or into rocky arroyos.

Fri., Mar. 31  Isla Espíritu Santo
Today we quietly tuck into a secluded cove surrounded by long fingers of red rock and a golden beach. We spend our last full day enjoying the feel of warm sand under our feet on a beach walk, investigating nooks and crannies in the rocks by kayak, or exploring a little further afield on a guided hike. We are accompanied by the ever-present frigatebirds patrolling the skies. Watching these pirates of the air sometimes gives us an alert to the presence of flying fish or maybe a feeding frenzy replete with dolphins, whales, and seabirds. The Sea of Cortez is one of the world’s best for marine mammals and we should have plenty of photographic opportunities. Sea lions are abundant here and snorkeling with these agile swimmers gives you ample and up close views as they blast through their watery home.
Tonight we celebrate our lovely week at this evening’s special Farewell Dinner with an entertaining slideshow by your expedition team.

Sat., Apr. 1   La Paz / San José — Disembark
After breakfast, it’s “adios” La Paz, as you disembark the vessel and transfer back to San José del Cabo for flights home.

Pre-Cruise Extension: Deserts & Baja Endemics of Cabo
As long as you are flying to Cabo, why not arrive early to treat yourself to one of the all-inclusive resorts, right next to some great local birding? Peg and Greg have found a local birding expert to host an outing into the surrounding desert, and they have a great idea of where to find the Baja endemic species. Plus, the plants are great, too! Join us on this extension as early as you can get there on the March 23, and enjoy two evenings of the nature, art, and surroundings of Cabo ahead of our cruise.

Thurs., Mar. 23   San José del Cabo
Fly into Cabo San Lucas today and get settled for the next two nights at our all-inclusive resort on the tip of Baja. Our hotel borders the Estero San José and gives us easy access to birding and wildlife viewing along the beaches and estuary proper. It is a fine place to enjoy the sunrise the next morning from this point on the East Cape. After dinner, why not take the hotel shuttle or a taxi the short distance to the art center of San José del Cabo for
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the Thursday night art walk in the Gallery District. This is a unique chance to meet and talk with the artist responsible for the gallery’s shows!

Accommodations at the Holiday Inn Resort Los Cabos All Inclusive (D)

Fri., Mar. 24
Estero San José / Sonoran Desert
After breakfast we start the day birding Estero San José with our excellent, local naturalist. Here we find waders, different waterfowl, and a number of different forms of Savannah Sparrow … but it is the Belding’s Yellowthroat that we are looking for. This endemic to southern Baja has a very limited range and is a must see for birders in the Los Cabos area.

We should find two other Baja endemics today, too: Xantu’s Hummingbird and Gray Thrasher. Xantu’s is a stunningly marked hummingbird which might be found in the hotel’s gardens, while we bird Estero San José, or during our visit to the Vizcaino Desert. Its limited range is a little more extensive than the Yellowthroat, so there should be more than just a few of these for us to see.

The Gray Thrasher is another Baja endemic but has a much broader range. Found throughout most of Baja, there is only one known record beyond this section of Mexico. We explore a relatively small, disjunctive section of the succulent-rich Sonoran Desert looking for this species and learning about adaptations of the plants and wildlife found along the way. The remaining hours until sunset are yours to explore your surroundings here on the tip of Baja.

Accommodations at the Holiday Inn Resort Los Cabos All Inclusive (B,L,D)
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Sat., Mar. 25  All Aboard!
After breakfast we are meet up with staff from our ship and those that did not join us on the pre-cruise extension and make the two hour transfer to La Paz. Here we embark and set sail to explore the Sea of Cortez with its deserted beaches, abundant wildlife, and sense of wilderness. (B)

About the Safari Endeavor

Aboard this spacious expedition vessel, three decks offer ample outside vantage points for taking in daytime sights and the sparkling night sky with new friends. Interior spaces including the intimate lounge, cask wine bar, and cozy library provide comfortable and relaxing spaces to sit back with a book and glass of wine, gather for presentations, or to share experiences from the day. The fully-stocked, marble-topped bar in the lounge is a magnet for activity and mingling.

Ready for adventure at a moment’s notice, the Safari Endeavour is fully loaded with adventure equipment: kayaks; paddle boards; inflatable skiffs; hiking poles; yoga mats; and snorkel gear and wetsuits; plus, a hydrophone for listening to below-surface sounds and a bow-mounted underwater camera. For those moments when attention turns to relaxation, the vessel comes equipped with two hot tubs, fitness equipment, yoga mats, and a massage suite.

There are five cabin categories aboard the Safari Endeavour: Master; Commander; Captain; Admiral; and Commodore Suite. Depending on the category, singles, doubles, or triples can be accommodated.

Common to all cabins are: Flat-screen TV/DVD; iPod docking station; air conditioning; desk and chair; private bath with shower; generous storage; and closet space.
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The Safari Endeavor’s Layout

Cost of the Journey

PLAN AHEAD!
Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance.

OFFSET YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT
Show us the receipt and we’ll take 50% - up to $50.00 - of your carbon offset fee off your final payment.

COST OF THE JOURNEY
The cost of the main tour is that of our cruise company, Un-Cruise Adventures, and range from $3375 – $6575 DBL occupancy, based on cabin size and deck placement, from Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. There is also a per person Port Fee we collect with final payment. Your cruise price, per person (pp), is based on cabin category:

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For suites and other cabins, please inquire. The tour cost includes 7 nights aboard the Safari Endeavor, all meals onboard the voyage including alcoholic beverages, all excursions with professional guides, and miscellaneous program expenses, transfers and baggage handling between airport/vessel on embark/disembark days; entry fees to national parks/preserves; all from-the-ship adventure activities and equipment; wellness amenities: fitness equipment, yoga mats, and a complimentary massage.

Not included is the round-trip flight to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. The tour cost does not include items of a personal nature such as telephone charges or optional activities.

Cost of the two-night extension, March 23 – 25, is $595 per person, and includes two nights all-inclusive at the Holiday Inn and an all-day field trip for birding and desert exploration, with expert local guides.

We recommend a gratuity for local guides and the ship crew, which is left to the discretion of each participant and guidelines will be provided.

TRAVEL INFORMATION
For the cruise, plan to arrive Saturday, March 25 no later than 2:30 PM. Please plan flights out after 1:00 PM on Saturday, April 1. We STRONGLY recommend you arrive the night before — you don’t want to miss the boat!

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Photo Credits
Mule Riders, Un-Cruise; Brown Booby, Peg Abbott (PA); Cacti, Dolphin and Scenic, Un-Cruise; Surfbird, PA; Baja Kayak, Greg Smith (GS); Iguana, Narca Moore-Craig (NMC); Brown Pelican, PA; Kayakers, PA; Whale, GS; Sunset, Sea Lion and Cacti, Un-Cruise; Yellow-legged Gull, PA; Beach Walkers, PA; Cabo View, NMC; Belding’s Yellowthroat, NMC; Xantu’s Hummingbird, GS; Gray Thrasher, NMC; Blue-footed Booby, GS; Ship, Un-Cruise; Scenic at Cabo, NMC; Riders, Un-Cruise; Map of Voyage, Un-Cruise.
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