

BAJA CALIFORNIA

Desert Wonders, Whales, and Culture

26.00° N - 23.04° N



Feb 23 - Mar 4, 2027



Wild **LATITUDES**
WORLDWIDE NATURE TOURS

BAJA CALIFORNIA

Desert Wonders, Whales, and Culture

Greetings Fellow Traveler,

Baja California Sur... where the desert meets the sea! With the dazzling blue waters of the **Sea of Cortez** to the east, the vast Pacific Ocean to the west, and a richly diverse desert full of endemic species between them, Baja California has much to offer for any nature enthusiast.

Join Wild Latitudes for a 10-day tour of the southernmost part of this fascinating peninsula. We'll begin in **San José del Cabo**, a quiet and authentic town, far away from bustling Cabo San Lucas. Here, we'll soak in local culture and delight in delicious Mexican food while exploring the most productive birding location in the region: **Estero San José**, which teems with avian diversity.

Our next destination will be the lofty **La Laguna mountains**. As we gain elevation the desert scrub gives way to oases and cool forests hosting plants and animals found nowhere else in the world.

We'll then descend towards **La Paz**, a bustling and pleasant city known for its seaside Malecón, local arts, and excellent cuisine. The city also offers an incredible **Eco-Park**, offering rich birding opportunities. We hope to see a diverse collection of waterbirds and Baja endemics here, such as **Xantus's Hummingbird** and **Gray Thrasher**.

Crossing the peninsula we'll board local boats and go looking for **Gray Whales** in their breeding lagoons. This foray into the Pacific takes us to the southernmost breeding population of **Bald Eagles** and a large **Magnificent Frigatebird** colony. Of course our focus will be observing the whales but we'll also be on the lookout for other marine mammals like **California Sea Lions** and **Bottlenose Dolphins**.

Heading across the **Sierra de la Giganta** range, we'll set our sights for the town of Loreto, where we'll spend our last few days. Not only is Loreto a great launching point for our excursions, but the town's architecture and seaside charm is worth a visit alone. We'll explore the **San Javier Mission**, surrounded by desert scrub birds such as **Verdin** and **Scott's Oriole**. Finally, we'll venture out in small boats into **Loreto Bay National Park** to look for birds like **Blue-footed Booby** and **Yellow-footed Gull**, and here we also have the rare opportunity to see the largest animal to ever live on Earth, the massive **Blue Whale**.

We're excited for you to join Wild Latitudes on this epic journey full of remarkable sunsets, rich Mexican culture, and amazing flora and fauna!



Steve Robertson and Ivan Phillipsen
Co-owners and Lead Guides at Wild Latitudes
info@wildlatitudes.com 503-714-3504

TRIP DETAILS

Start Date: Feb 23, 2027

Duration of Tour: 10 days

Number of participants: Max of 10

Fee: \$4,795 per person

Deposit: \$2,250

Single Supplement: \$800

Trip Leaders: Steve Backus

Included:

- Double-occupancy lodging
- Ground transportation
- Breakfasts and lunches
- Excursions and park fees
- Guiding services

Not Included:

- Flights
- Dinners
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal items
- Optional gratuities for guides



ITINERARY

Tentative and subject to change depending on weather, road, or other conditions.

Day 1 - Feb 23 - Arrive in San Jose del Cabo

Welcome to Baja California Sur and *Bienvenidos a Mexico*! We'll begin our adventure in **San Jose del Cabo**, a lovely town with quiet charm. We'll meet each other, go over the details of our trip, and if time allows, go out for some light birdwatching before settling into our lodging for the evening to rest up for a fun-filled trip together.

Lodging: Hyatt Place Los Cabos

Day 2 - Feb 24 - Estero Cabo San Jose

Wherever there's water in the desert, one is sure to find birds and wildlife. The estuary ("estero"), the state's single most productive birding hotspot, never disappoints. We'll spend our morning and afternoon exploring different corners of this wetland area. We'll search for birdlife such as the Baja endemic **Belding's Yellowthroat** in the reeds, look for desert specialists like **Gilded Flicker** and **Phainopepla** in the trees, and walk the

stream side for an array of waterbirds such as **Reddish Egret** and **Cinnamon Teal**.

The town offers splendid culinary options that we'll be sure to take advantage of for lunch and dinner. There are also beautiful beaches where we can look for **Humpback Whales** while shorebirds fly by. We'll gather before dinner in the evening to celebrate our day and to begin filling out our bird and wildlife lists. This will be our nightly custom on the tour.

Lodging: Hyatt Place Los Cabos



Belding's Yellowthroat



Crested Caracara



Misión de Nuestra Señora de Loreto

Day 3 - Feb 25 - Santa Rita Hot Springs and La Laguna Mountains

After a hearty breakfast, we head north from the Cape Region and will stop in the beautiful oasis town of **Santiago** en route to the **La Laguna Biosphere Reserve**. These

isolated mountains create a strikingly different ecoregion than the surrounding Baja California desert. Mountain streams and hot springs lined by stunning ficus trees and palms replace the cactus and scrub of the lower elevations.

In the southern canyon lies **Santa Rita Hot springs**. With beautiful thermal pools feeding into a cool river, this area is very beautiful and relaxing. We'll enjoy a dip while **Common Ground Doves** forage along the paths and **White-throated Swifts** zoom overhead.

Our lodging while we are in this region is very special. Nestled beside the cool waters flowing from the mountains, **El Refugio** is a sustainably run family property that, in addition to being a wildlife hotspot on its own, hosts ecological gatherings to highlight the region's vast biodiversity. We'll work on our bird and wildlife lists while enjoying cold beverages before dinner.

Lodging: [Rancho Ecologico El Refugio](#)



Elf Owl



Loreto Bay



Gray Thrasher



Baja California Rock Lizard



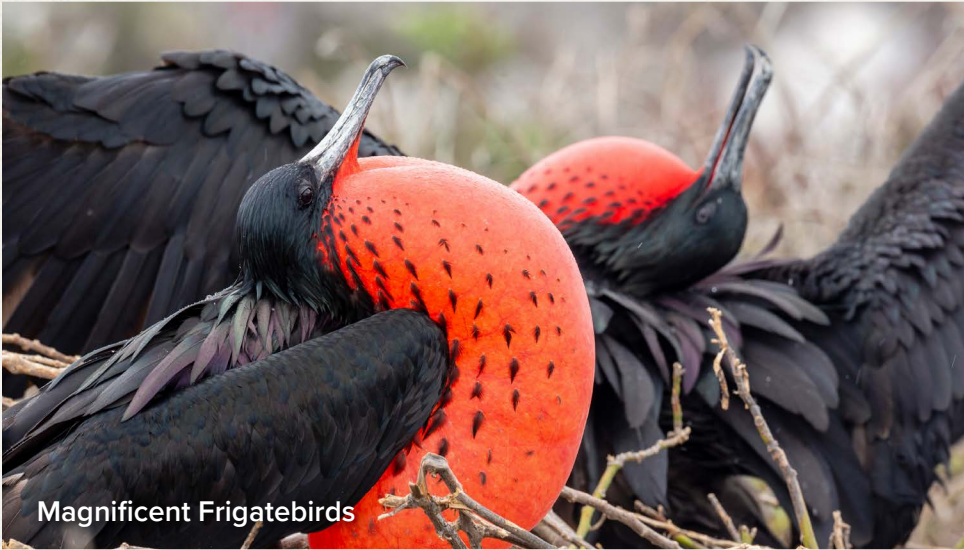
Heerman's Gull

Day 4 - Feb 26 - Birding San Dionisio Canyon

Today we'll slow down and take in all that the mountains offer. Endemic species and sub-species can be found in these montane forests. So we'll be on the lookout for birds like **Baird's Junco**, **San Lucas Robin**, **San Lucas Flycatcher**, and **Narrow-fronted Acorn Woodpecker**, along with the overwintering passerines of the region. This canyon's beauty can't be overstated, and walking through the shady forests is a treat for a trip to the desert! If we're lucky, we might even locate a **Cape Pygmy Owl** roosting for the day.

Nighttime is often busier than daytime in the desert, as many species seek to take shelter from the Sun's heat. At dusk we'll watch for emerging bats, listen for **Elf Owl** and **Dwarf Great Horned Owl**, and search for fluorescent scorpions with a black light to the tune of **Pacific Chorus Frogs**. We'll retire to our comfortable lodge for drinks, bird/wildlife lists, and a delicious, home-cooked dinner.

Lodging: Rancho Ecologico El Refugio



Magnificent Frigatebirds



Zone-tailed Hawk



Gila Woodpecker



Gray Whale



Greater Roadrunner



Brandegee's Hedgehog Cactus

Day 5 - Feb 27 - Triunfo and La Paz

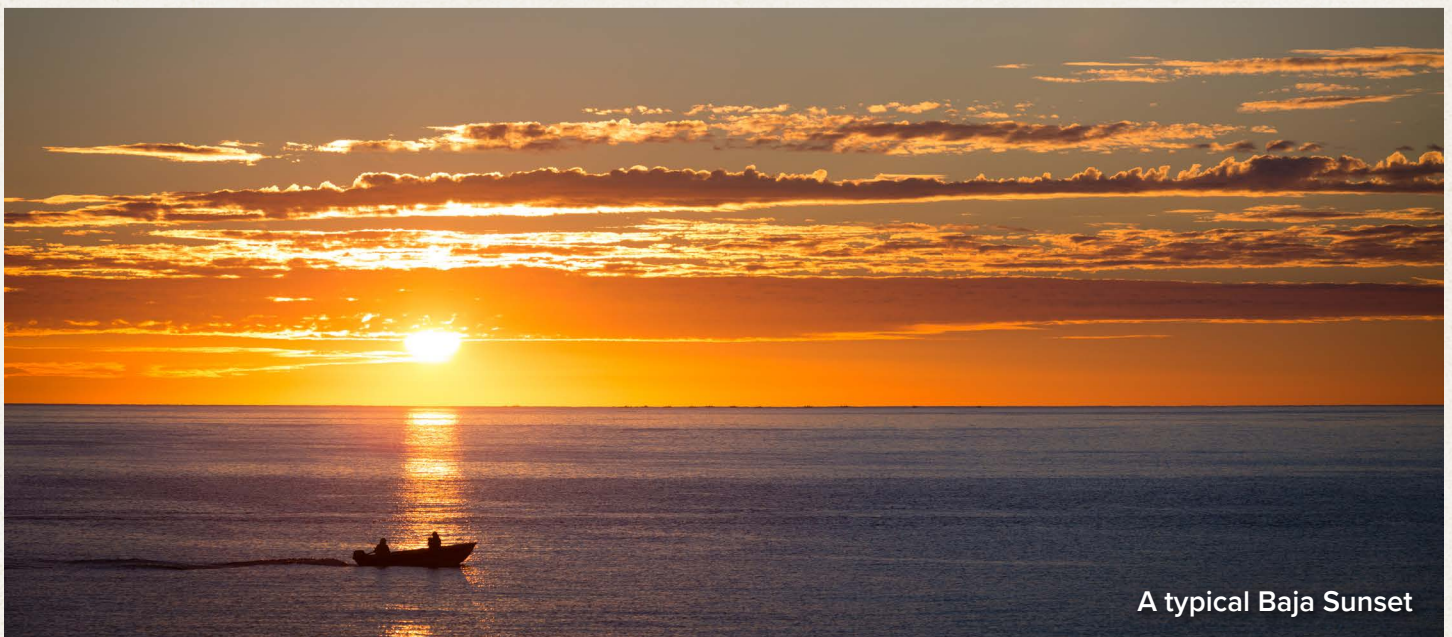
We'll check out of our lodge after breakfast. While descending back to sea-level, we'll visit the historic town of **Triunfo**. The architecture of the buildings of this former silver mine are a gorgeous sight, providing a backdrop for our lunch in town. There are several interesting museums here, as well as the **Cactus Sanctuary**. Our focus will be on the endemic and native cactus to the region, but we'll also be on the lookout for desert birds such as **Pyrrhuloxia** and **California Gnatcatcher** while we learn about the region's fascinating flora.

We'll spend the night in **La Paz**, the capital city of the state. This charming city has many highlights including a vibrant seaside walking path (the Malecon), amazing cuisine, sculptures, and is a great place to just soak up the relaxed vibe of the region. The city itself is a real highlight, so we'll make sure we have time to enjoy the murals, art galleries, and shops during our stay.

Lodging: Seven Crown La Paz Malecon

Our Commitment to Conservation

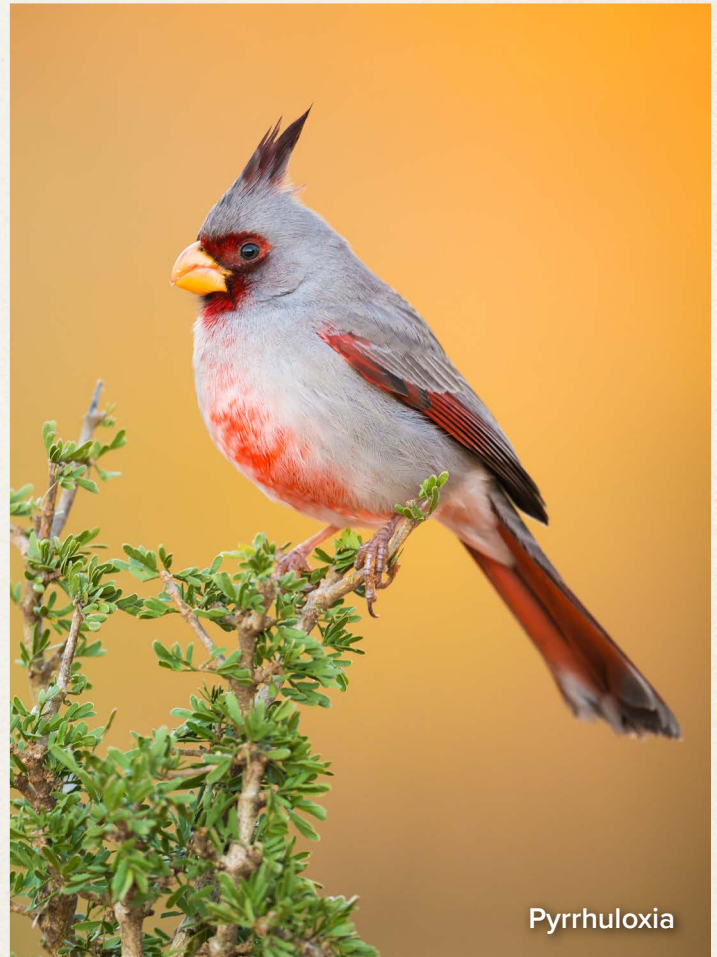
On every Wild Latitudes tour, we aim to make a positive conservation impact wherever we travel. We utilize the services of local guides and, when possible, stay in environmentally-sensitive, locally-owned lodges. Through our partnership with the Rainforest Trust, a portion of all international tour fees goes to purchasing rainforest acreage, for its protection in perpetuity. On every trip, we also make a contribution to a local conservation effort that works to protect a native species or ecosystem.



A typical Baja Sunset



Xantus's Hummingbird



Pyrrhuloxia

Day 6 - Feb 28 - Eco Park and El Serpentario

The second most species-rich hotspot for birding in the state is an **Eco-Park** on the outskirts of La Paz. These water treatment lagoons and surrounding agricultural fields are full of over-wintering waterbirds, offering us great looks at species such as **Black-necked Stilt** and **White-faced Ibis**. Raptors patrol overhead, so we'll be on the lookout for **Crested Caracaras**, **Peregrine Falcons**, and **Northern Harriers**.

After enjoying some of the delicious fare of the capital city, we'll stop at **El Serpentario**, a facility which works to protect and conserve reptiles & amphibians in the area. Many of the species are facing serious threats and are endemic to the region so this is our opportunity to meet many of the unique and incredible native animals we likely won't see in the wild. In the evening, we'll visit other local sites and make sure we have time to enjoy the city before our early morning tomorrow.

Lodging: [Seven Crown La Paz Malecon](#)

Day 7 - Mar 1 - Puerto Chale and Bahia Almejas

Every winter **Gray Whales** make their way from the Bering Sea down to breeding lagoons on the west side of the Baja California Peninsula. The southernmost lagoon, where adults typically mate, is **Bahia Almejas**, and an exciting boat tour of these lagoons is a must for a visit to Baja California Sur. We have potential for some close encounters with these gentle giants... a truly unforgettable experience! In addition, the nearby mangroves host a large **Magnificent Frigatebird** colony, and on the nearby sandbars **Brandt's Cormorants** and **Bald Eagles** can be seen, the southernmost breeding location for the latter species.

After an amazing morning we'll enjoy a casual lunch at Puerto Chale then head towards **Loreto**. We'll cross the gorgeous **Sierra de la Giganta** mountains en route and plan to have some time to enjoy this historic and beautiful town.

Lodging: Hotel Santa Fe

Baja landscape near Loreto



Day 8 - Mar 2 - Loreto and San Xavier

Loreto is a small *Pueblo Mágico* ("magic town," designated by the Mexican government for having significant beauty and/or historical significance) on the shores of the Sea of Cortez. It displays some beautiful 17th century architecture, including the **Misión de**

Nuestra Señora de Loreto. This site, in addition with the nearby **San Xavier Misión**, speaks to the rich Jesuit history of the area. These historic sites are also great locations for birds such as **Zone-tailed Hawk**, **Gila Woodpecker**, and **Scott's Orioles**. We'll spend time exploring these sites and taking in the rich cultural and culinary history of the town.

Loreto also offers incredible birding. Many shorebirds such as **Snowy Plover** and **Hudsonian Whimbrel** forage along the mudflats, while **White Ibis** and **Tricolored Herons** work the nearby tidal ponds. The scrub habitat can offer great looks at **Greater Roadrunners** and **Lark Sparrows** as **Monk Parakeets** fly by.

Note that today and tomorrow's schedules will be interchangeable based on weather.

Lodging: [Hotel Santa Fe](#)



The Sierra de La Laguna

Day 9 - Mar 3 - Loreto Bay National Park

The productive waters off of Loreto are a hotspot for marine diversity, designated as **Loreto Bay National Park**. The Sea of Cortez is home to a recorded 36 species of marine mammals! We'll take to local boats to see what we can find in the bay.

Humpback and **Blue Whales** are well known to the area, along with **Common Dolphins** and **California Sea Lions**. Seabird colonies dot the region. Potentials include **Blue-footed** and **Cocos Boobies**, **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, **Heerman's Gulls**, and **Elegant Terns**. No matter what we find, the landscape of the nearby islands and the views of the Sierra de la Giganta mountains will be stunning.

For the afternoon, we'll peek into wetlands a nearby resort has constructed. These often offer great looks at the desert and water birds we've become familiar with during our trip. The flowers are often visited by the adorable, endemic **Xantus's Hummingbird**. We'll finish off our bird and wildlife lists in the evening, and share a final, fun dinner together in celebration of an amazing journey.

Lodging: Hotel Santa Fe

Day 10 - Mar 4 - Departures

If time allows, we'll explore other local nature hotspots in the region before we say, "*Adios amigos!*" at Loreto International Airport.



Blue Whale

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

YOUR GUIDE

STEVE BACKUS

Steve is an avid birder and naturalist hailing from North Carolina. Through his career and personal travels he has gotten to see incredible corners of our world and loves to share what he has experienced.

An infinitely curious person by nature, Steve is passionate to teach about how life interacts and connects. There's no aspect of the natural world that doesn't weave into this story, and his experiences spanning the arctic to antarctic are part of what he'll share with you.

As a mariner, waterbirds are of particular interest to Steve and his time as a ship's naturalist, a captain of wildlife cruises, a point counter at migration hot-spots, and guide on pelagic birding tours has deepened his appreciation of them. Though our feathered friends are his primary area of expertise, there's no aspect of the natural world that he doesn't enjoy teaching.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

THE PACE AND STYLE OF OUR TOURS

The primary goal of our trips is to experience and learn about the natural world, especially the region's birds and other wildlife, and of course, to have fun! As birding is often a primary focus of our tours, and birds are active in the morning, we will sometimes have early morning outings before breakfast. That said, our style of birding may not be ideal for hard-core "listers." We prefer to spend time observing the species we encounter, and learn a bit about their natural history, rather than rushing through the field to add the maximum number of species to our bird list. We also make diversions for interesting, non-avian wildlife, plants, geological wonders, and cultural activities. The pace of most of our trips is moderate, and we encourage anyone in good health to attend and enjoy the experience. Please contact us about if you need specific information on the types of physical activities on a tour and their physical requirements.

We strive to immerse participants in the local culture and to that end, wherever possible, we stay in locally owned and operated hotels that are designed and run in an environmentally sustainable way. Though some accommodations may be more basic than others, all are safe, clean and comfortable. We also utilize the services of local guides, visit local markets, and other culturally significant sites.

TOUR DATE AND TRIP LEADER CHANGES

Leaders and schedules are determined up to a year in advance of our tours. In the event that we have a change in a tour's dates or leaders, we reserve the right to do so, and will strive to inform participants as early in the process as possible. Additional leaders may be added to tours according to the group size, and will be specified in the tour itinerary. We also reserve the right to cancel any trip for which there are insufficient reservations.

HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE TOUR

When you're ready to sign up for the tour, please let us know by doing one of the following:

- Send us an email at info@wildlatitudes.com
- Call us at 503-714-3504

Then we'll send you the link to our online registration form. You can choose to pay your deposit by credit card or check. See 'Deposit Policy' below.

DEPOSIT POLICY

A deposit is due at the time of registration. ***A deposit is the only thing that guarantees your place on the trip.*** Registration can be made over the phone with a credit card: 503-714-3504. *Note:* there is an additional 3.0% fee for credit card payments. This is only what we are charged by the credit card company.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Checks are happily accepted and should be made out to *Wild Latitudes LLC*. Include the tour name on the memo line of the check and send to:

Wild Latitudes, PO Box 25115, Portland, OR 97298.

PAYMENT POLICY

Full payment is required **90 days** prior to the tour departure date for international tours or any tour involving flights; and **30 days** prior to the tour departure date for local (i.e. in the Portland, Oregon area), van-based tours.

CANCELLATION POLICY

In the event a participant needs to cancel a reservation for any tour, the following policies will apply:

- **90 days** or more prior to tour departure date, the deposit will be refunded, minus an administrative fee of \$100.
- **Less than 90 days** prior to tour departure date, no refunds will be given.

We *strongly* recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself from unforeseen circumstances.

If for any reason Wild Latitudes cancels a tour prior to the start of the tour, full refunds—minus the cost of any internal/in-country airline tickets purchased and/or any non-refundable deposits or expenses already made by Wild Latitudes—will be given to all participants. In the event that the tour is canceled while underway due to unforeseeable events such as but not limited to natural disaster, military activities, social uprising, or other extremely dangerous conditions not within the control of Wild Latitudes, no refund will be issued.