



# WWF EXPEDITIONS



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## The Science Behind 'The World's Aquarium'—an Expedition through The Gulf of California: Cabo Pulmo and La Paz

April 8 – 13, 2018

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The Gulf of California supports an amazing diversity of marine life, including many species of reef fish, sharks, whales and marine turtles. As tourists flock to the Gulf's beautiful landscapes and unique reefs, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego (SIO) are working through a formal partnership established in 2016 to ensure that the Gulf remains a healthy and productive marine area that can support local communities as well as the abundant wildlife within and near its waters.

On this expedition, travelers will accompany scientists as they monitor shark, grouper and sea turtle populations to test the efficacy of this long-standing conservation idea of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and have longitudinal research to back up a conservation strategy not only for Mexico's Pacific coast, but across the globe.

Our marine safari will begin at the entrance of the "Aquarium of the World" in Los Cabos. From San José del Cabo, we will travel to the best example of marine conservation in the Gulf: Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park. The park harbors the northernmost rocky-coral reef of the Mexican Pacific and hosts different species, such as whale sharks, manta rays, humpback whales and sea turtles, as they migrate along the Gulf. Days will be spent exploring the park by private boat, snorkeling or scuba diving. There will also be opportunities to visit local communities and talk with the park director.

We continue up the peninsula to the bay of La Paz where experts will take us to the beautiful island of Espiritu Santo to meet with Grupo Tortuguero, which partners with WWF and SIO to monitor endangered hawksbill sea turtle. While visiting the island we will also have a chance to swim with the local sea lion colony and keep a lookout for humpback whales. Our time in La Paz will conclude with a day spent on—and in—the water looking for whale sharks, one of the region's critical species we are working to protect. Sea lions, dolphins, whales and sharks are among the other species we will hope to encounter in this area.



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## Itinerary at a Glance

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Day	Date	Location	Accommodation
1	April 8	Arrive Cabo San Lucas - Cabo Pulmo National Park	Villa Del Faro Hotel
2	April 9	Cabo Pulmo National Park	Villa Del Faro Hotel
3	April 10	Cabo Pulmo National Park – La Paz	Costa Baja Resort
4 - 5	April 11 - 12	La Paz	Costa Baja Resort
6	April 13	Depart La Paz or Cabo San Lucas	

## Itinerary in Detail

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### DAY 1, April 8: ARRIVE CABO SAN LUCAS - CABO PULMO NATIONAL PARK

Upon arrival at San José del Cabo International Airport, you will be met by a local representative and at 1:00 PM the group will be transferred to the Villa Del Faro Hotel located in Cabo Pulmo National Park. After settling into your room, there will be a welcome reception and trip briefing before dinner this evening in the hotel.

*Overnight Villa Del Faro Hotel*

(D)

### DAY 2, April 9: CABO PULMO NATIONAL PARK

This morning we will have the option to snorkel or scuba in the Eco Reserve, referred to as “The World’s Aquarium”. With over 14 different dive sites in the Reserve, we can expect to see a myriad of marine life, from hundreds of fish species to bull sharks, manta rays to eels, and if we’re lucky, humpback whales. Our guides will carefully choose our dive sites based on weather conditions, time of year and divers’ experience.

Over lunch, we will hear from local partners and accompanying experts about the formation of the Cabo Pulmo Eco Reserve, preservation of marine life within the Reserve, sustainable fishing practices in the area, and how to promote sustainable tourism.

In the afternoon we may choose to seek out more dive sites in the Reserve, explore Cabo Pulmo, or enjoy Villa del Faro’s private beach before dinner in the hotel.

*Overnight Villa Del Faro Hotel*

(B,L,D)

### DAY 3, April 10: CABO PULMO NATIONAL PARK – LA PAZ

After breakfast, we will return to the Eco Reserve to explore two more incredible dive sites and have another opportunity for rare humpback whale sightings! We will also be treated to a private conversation



with the Reserve's Park Director, who will discuss contemporary opportunities and challenges for conservation. Alternatively, guests can choose to remain at Villa del Faro and snorkel at the hotel beach or explore the surrounding areas.

We will have a late lunch in Cabo Pulmo before a 3-hour drive to La Paz with stops along the way. Although La Paz is one of the most significant cities of southern Baja, its tree-lined streets and calm, clear bays inspire serenity. Dinner is on our own and the Trip Leader will recommend dining options and facilitate reservations if needed.

*Overnight Costa Baja Resort* (B,L)

#### DAY 4, April 11: LA PAZ

Today we travel by boat to the postcard-worthy island of Espiritu Santo. The first stop is a visit with Grupo Tortuguero, who partners with WWF & Scripps to monitor sea turtles. We will meet with Grupo Tortuguero's head researcher and involved community members for an inside look at how hawksbill sea turtles are measured, tagged, and released. Through these studies, we can learn about the sea turtles' biology and how protected areas support the conservation of the species.

The next stop is lunch at an Eco Camp at the bay of El Candelero on Isla Espiritu Santo, where we will picnic on the beach. While there, we can take a kayak or paddleboard for a spin, and wade out into the crystal-clear waters that surround the island.

After lunch, we'll head to Los Islotes, also known as the Sea Lion Colony, where we will suit up in snorkeling or diving gear and hop into the water with over 400 playful sea lions. Be sure to keep an eye out for dolphins, whales and sea turtles on the boat ride back to La Paz.

*Overnight Costa Baja Resort* (B,L,D)

#### DAY 5, April 12: LA PAZ

Today we head out to sea in search of whale sharks. These magnificent creatures are friendly and only frequent the bay certain times of the year; one of which ends in April! Guests will have the chance to don snorkel gear and jump in to swim along with the world's largest fish, an experience that is sure to check some bucket list boxes.

Due to increased preservation regulations and WWF's efforts to promote sustainable tourism, only 5 guests may be in the water at any time with the whale sharks. While we take turns jumping in to get up close and personal, others will have a chance to learn about these incredible creatures and conservation efforts from local and accompanying experts while enjoying a snack on the boat.

*Overnight Costa Baja Resort* (B,L,D)

#### DAY 6, April 13: DEPART LA PAZ

After breakfast at the hotel, transfers to Los Cabos International Airport (SJD) or La Paz International Airport (LAP) will be provided.

(B)

To register or if you have questions, please contact Karl Egloff at 202-495-4119 or [karl.egloff@wwfus.org](mailto:karl.egloff@wwfus.org).

## About Marine Protected Areas

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During the year of 2017, collaborative investigations have continued to examine the importance of marine protected areas (MPAs) for megafauna with a specific focus on top predatory fishes, such as groupers and sharks, and sea turtles inhabiting the Gulf of California. This joint effort opens a new range of possibilities from using innovative technology for a better understanding of our marine ecosystems to a better designing of management measures for Mexican marine protected areas.

In a world where human activity impacts nearly every square inch of the ocean, MPAs function as refuges for exploited species, habitats, and ecosystems, permitting the restoration of population biomass and biodiversity within their protective boundaries. MPAs also contribute to the welfare of marine life beyond their limits through the export of resources and reproductive output, commonly referred to as a spillover effect, resulting in increases in species abundance in surrounding waters. For larger and often more mobile species that may not permanently reside in a defined area, MPAs can additionally serve as important temporary feeding grounds and locations of protected reproductive activity. Thus, MPAs provide a service for not only the conservation and restoration of species and populations across localized spatial scales but also across larger regions.

## Accommodations

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### VILLA DEL FARO HOTEL



Villa del Faro is an elegant boutique eco hotel on Baja's East Cape with spectacular sunsets and only the sound of waving palms and rolling surf. Each accommodation is a separate, comfortable, private house – a casita, with individual patios, views of the gardens, fountains, and ocean, with thoughtful amenities in all. Each one is unique, full of handcrafted Mexican furnishings and art. The restaurant is surrounded by lush gardens and is for the exclusive use of hotel guests.

### COSTABAJA RESORT & SPA



The CostaBaja Resort & Spa is the first and only luxury hotel & spa in the city of La Paz. Situated on the Sea of Cortés, this boutique hotel offers commanding views of the marina, the ocean, and the nearby mountains, and is located just south of Espiritu Santo Island, where you will find the greatest marine life in the world. Rooms are equipped with private balconies and wireless internet and guests will have access to CostaBaja's fitness center and multiple on-site restaurants.

## Meet Our Expert

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### Georgina Saad, WWF Mexico



Georgina Saad is the coordinator of the Priority Marine Species Program of WWF Mexico. She is a marine biologist and has worked for over 15 years in the conservation of marine resources in the Baja California peninsula in areas such as fisheries management, community and environmental education. Her main role is to work with experts and authorities to find solutions to reduce the damage to vulnerable species such as the gray whale, the white shark and yellow turtle, among others. Her bachelor degree was from the State University in BCS, Mexico, and she has a master's degree in marine management from Dalhousie University in Canada. Before joining WWF, she worked as a naturalist & kayak guide for 5 years in the Gulf of California.

To register or if you have questions, please contact Karl Egloff at 202-495-4119 or [karl.egloff@wwfus.org](mailto:karl.egloff@wwfus.org).

## What to Expect

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April is an excellent time to visit southern Baja with dry, warm days and cooling ocean breezes in the evening. Expect temperatures in the mid-80s during the day and low-60s in the evening. The average April sea temperature is about 70°F.

We will make every reasonable effort to operate the trip as advertised, but alterations will more than likely occur, mainly due to weather, currents and tides or to take full advantage of wildlife encounters or cultural events. We will discuss our planned itinerary daily with our local expert guides and will always choose the best available option. Snorkeling and diving tours are subject to change or cancellation at any time due to unforeseen circumstances or circumstances beyond our control.

### SNORKEL & SCUBA DIVING

During this trip you will have multiple opportunities to snorkel or scuba dive, at your option. These activities will include a private charter boat, equipment and dive master. Travelers will be able to select the activity they prefer. Each activity will be at an additional cost (see below in Expedition Information). Scuba diving will require additional gear rental, proof of certification and dive insurance. Your Iconic Adventures Trip Advisor will be happy to discuss activity options during registration.

## About WWF Expeditions

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WWF Expeditions is an invitation-only conservation travel program for our closest supporters, along with friends and family, to see firsthand the positive impact World Wildlife Fund is making.

These custom-designed journeys are led by WWF experts and offer exclusive opportunities to discover the wildlife and ecosystems we protect; meet community members whose lives are being improved because of our work, and immerse yourself in the worlds of our field staff and partners on the ground. Come explore the best of the natural world and see how *together* we are making a difference for our planet.

## About Our Travel Partner

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At Iconic Adventures, a passion for travel is the internal compass that guides our business values and the way we live. We have experienced first-hand the positive impact amazing travel experiences have had in our personal and professional lives, and we want to bring that same experience to our clients.

## Expedition Information

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DATES: April 8 – 13, 2018

BASE COST: \$3,665 per person, double occupancy

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$1,315 per person

SCUBA SUPPLEMENT: There will be an additional cost snorkel and scuba dive, which will be payable directly to the local dive shop during the trip. The cost will vary based on the total number of snorkelers and scuba divers for each activity. We expect a range between \$60-\$150 per snorkeling excursion and between \$150-\$225 per two-tank dive for scuba divers. Your Iconic Adventures Trip Advisor will be happy to discuss activity options with you during registration.

GROUP SIZE: Limited to 12 guests and 8 guests are required to operate this trip.

INCLUDED: Scheduled arrival and departure airport transfers; accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities listed in itinerary; snorkeling during the Espiritu Santo and whale shark excursions; private vehicle transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary; non-alcoholic beverages with meals; full-time guide for duration of program; all gratuities to porters, guides, drivers, hotel and wait staff; all permits; government, service and room taxes; carbon offset for tour.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to and from start and end points of the trip (Cabo San Lucas and La Paz); alcoholic beverages (except on the first and last night of the trip); passport and visa fees; immunization costs; items of a personal nature (phone calls, souvenirs, laundry, internet, etc.); airline baggage fees; medical evacuation insurance and travel insurance; dive insurance (for those diving; DAN or PADI insurance is required) and certification; diving refresher courses, diving and all dive gear; snorkeling and snorkeling gear (except for the Espiritu Santo and whale shark excursions); tips for non-group services.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: We strongly recommend protecting your investment with a comprehensive active travel insurance policy that covers you for medical, accident (including SCUBA diving for divers), medical evacuation, as well as additional expenses such as trip cancellation/interruption, baggage and personal effects protection. This insurance will protect you from financial disappointment in the event that unforeseen circumstances prevent you from participating in the trip, or for other reasons.

It is required that scuba divers have DAN (Divers Alert Network) for dive and snorkel insurance, hyperbaric treatment and medical evacuation. More information can be found at [www.diversalertnetwork.com](http://www.diversalertnetwork.com).



Iconic has partnered with TripMate, providers of TripAssure travel insurance, to ensure each of our guests has access to the best travel insurance for the types of trips we take together.

TripAssure offers multiple coverage options to suit your unique needs and provides industry-leading support and concierge services. While you're en route, you'll have access to 24-hour emergency medical, business assistance, and emergency travel and concierge services. Learn more about the different coverage options at [www.tripassure.com](http://www.tripassure.com), and you can always contact your Iconic Trip Advisor at 970.367.6970.

Although every possible care is taken to safeguard you and your property, World Wildlife Fund and Iconic Adventures are not liable for any accidents, injuries, illnesses or death incurred; any loss of, or damage to, your property; or any unforeseen changes or interruptions to the trip. In the event of early

departure from the trip, no credit on any unused portions will be given and the cancellation policy will apply.

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS:** A passport is required for international travel, and many countries require that passports must be valid for at least six months after the date of entry. Certain destinations may require a visa for entry, US citizens can check requirements at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov); citizens of other nationalities should check with the appropriate embassy.

**RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENTS:** Full balance is due at sign-up.

**CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS:**

- 60 or more days before departure: \$500 cancellation fee; remaining balance is refunded.
- 0 - 59 days before departure: 100% of program price is forfeited.

**GETTING THERE & GETTING HOME:**

**Arrival:** Please arrive into Los Cabos International Airport (SJD), before 1:00 PM on day 1.

**Departure:** We recommend departing from La Paz International Airport (LAP), if possible. You are free to depart from La Paz after 9:00 AM on the final day. If departing out of Los Cabos International Airport (SJD), please plan to fly out after 2:00 PM.

Iconic Adventure's air department staff is available to make your flight reservations, as they are intimately familiar with the special requirements of this program. They can also make any necessary extra night hotel arrangements for you.

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE TRAVEL WARNING:**

Please note the following travel warning was issued by the U.S. Department of State for parts of Mexico including Baja California Sur. More information may be found at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

Baja California Sur (includes Los Cabos and La Paz): Criminal activity and violence, including homicide, remain an issue throughout the state. Exercise caution as Baja California Sur continues to experience a high rate of homicides. According to Government of Mexico statistics, the state of Baja California Sur experienced an increase in homicide rates compared to the same period in 2016. While most of these homicides appeared to be targeted, criminal organization assassinations, turf battles between criminal groups have resulted in violent crime in areas frequented by U.S. citizens. Shooting incidents, in which innocent bystanders have been injured, have occurred during daylight hours.

"Mexico." *Travel.State.Gov*. Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 22 Nov. 2017.  
Web. 7 Dec. 2017.