

WEEKEND WHALE ADVENTURE

With Orange Coast College

Surrounded by a natural aquarium, the rugged magical landscape of Baja California Peninsula is home to vast deserts rich in vegetation, pristine beaches, jagged mountains, an array of shore birds and isolated villages. Of special attraction are the gray whales. Each year, gray whales travel thousands of miles from the Arctic Ocean to the warm waters of Baja California lagoons, designated as wildlife refuges, to court, mate, give birth and care for their young. Join the unique, unforgettable experience to view these giant mammals at arm's length; some may let themselves be petted!

Whale behaviors at the lagoons change as the season unfolds. Beginning in mid-January, whales arrive to give birth to their young outside the viewing areas. At this time, whales can be observed in the spectacular behavior of courting and mating. In February the lagoons reach the highest number of whales, up to 2,000 at one time! Spouts are visible at all times, mating still occurs and mothers with newborn calves begin to enter the observation areas. In March, as bulls and newly-pregnant whales depart, mother and baby pairs dominate the lagoons. Towards the end of the season, calves gain size and weight and mothers become less protective, offering a greater opportunity for close encounters. Whales remain in the lagoons up to mid April.

ITINERARY

Day 1. Costa Mesa – Ensenada – San Quintin.

Board the motor coach at a designated site in OCC Campus. Meet the group leader and begin the journey south. Cross one of the busiest borders in the world, learn about its multiple activities and enter Mexico. Begin the Mexican experience walking through a colorful lively market reminiscent of the markets in Central Mexico. The scenic road to Ensenada offers breathtaking views. Stop for lunch and a brief city tour. Continue to San Vicente to visit a small Community Museum. The hotel in San Quintin fronts a wide-open beach offering spectacular sunsets.

Hotel Misión Santa María, San Quintin.

Meals L

Day 2. San Quintín - Guerrero Negro.

The day is dedicated to admiring the wonders of the desert. The mountainous peninsula is covered by innumerable species of flora, many of which are endemic. Drive in *Reserva Valle de los Cirios* established to protect the natural life, especially the unique boojum tree. Stops are made for nature walks and in Cataviña for lunch. At parallel 28, Baja California Sur begins with the city of Guerrero Negro.

Hotel Half Way Inn, Guerrero Negro

Meals B/L/D

Day 3. Guerrero Negro - Scammon's (Ojo de Liebre) Lagoon - Cataviña.

Begin early in the morning driving through *La Exportadora de Sal*, one of the largest salt plants in the world, to reach the pier. At Scammon's Lagoon, board small *pangas* for TWO exciting encounters among whales with a brief rest stop between the outings. On the way back to town drive through a salt marsh where birds migrate from Russia, Canada, and other latitudes. Return to Cataviña stopping on the way for a walk in an area rich in desert vegetation. In isolated Cataviña, the nights reveal an enchanting desert sky. Dinner at the hotel consists of a variety of finger food.

Hotel Mision Cataviña

Meals B/L/D

Day 4. Cataviña - San Diego.

Located in the midst of the Central Desert, a combination of sun, sand, gigantic granite boulders, and amusing combinations of boojums, cardons and elephant trees make Cataviña a superb “desert garden”. An early morning walk in this stunning setting includes a visit to a cave with paintings. Lunch is in a typical San Quintin Restaurant with fresh seafood or Mexican specialties. A brief stop is made in Ensenada.

Meals B/L/D

INCLUDED SERVICES

- Comfortable private motor coach
- Three nights accommodations in comfortable hotels
- Three breakfasts, four lunches, three dinners. Meals are chosen according to the local specialty.
- Snacks and drinking water
- TWO Whale Watching Excursions
- Services of experienced guides
- Taxes and tips of included hotels and meals.
- Creative learning experiences during driving times
- 2 Faculty members traveling in courtesy

Price does not include courtesies to group leader, drivers nor special excursions staff

DATE Friday February 14 to Monday February 17, 2020.

PRICE \$ 695.00 Double Occupancy – Minimum 24 Passengers
\$ 655.00 Triple Occupancy – Minimum 24 Passengers
\$ 640.00 Quadruple Occupancy – Minimum 24 Passengers
\$ 140.00 Single Occupancy supplement (subject to availability)

\$ 640.00 Double Occupancy – Minimum 34 Passengers
\$ 605.00 Triple Occupancy – Minimum 34 Passengers
\$ 585.00 Quadruple Occupancy – Minimum 34 Passengers
\$ 140.00 Single Occupancy supplement (subject to availability)

Maximum capacity is 36 passengers

VALID PASSPORT MANDATORY

Passport must not expire within six months of travel date.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Travelers must be able to board small fishing boats from a pier giving a step approximately of knee height, with possibility of wading into shallow water up to the knee and of encountering rough seas. Walks are usually short and on relatively flat terrain, however often on uneven ground. There are options for short but steep hikes. If traveler can't join, he/she may spend time around the flat area while the activity is in process. Driving time on bus varies from 1 ½ -5 hours/day. Bathroom facilities on route range from modern to rustic.

PLEASE NOTE

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information featured on this itinerary. Itineraries are based on our best information at this time. Circumstances beyond our control may require us to adjust itineraries or other details. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding.