

Ultimate Baja Adventure

Explore the marine life, culture, history, flora and fauna of this magnificent peninsula with Museum President and CEO, Judy Gradwohl and Curator of Botany, Jon Rebman, Ph.D.

January 21-28, 2018



Scott Dunn
PRIVATE JOURNEYS

August 2017

Dear Museum Friend,

Last fall I had the opportunity to travel in Baja California with Museum curators and staff and, needless to say, I was captivated by the diversity and beauty of the region. I knew I wanted to go back and see even more of this extraordinary country. With the help of Scott Dunn Private Journeys, we've put together an exclusive trip to do just that—explore the astounding biodiversity, culture and history of Baja.

I hope you'll join me and Curator of Botany, Jon Rebman, Ph.D. from January 21-28, 2018 as we travel through Baja. We'll also be joined by Pahoran Gurrola Mendivil- an expert local guide. Together we'll discover the wonders of the area- from whales to cactus to birds to rock paintings and everything in between.

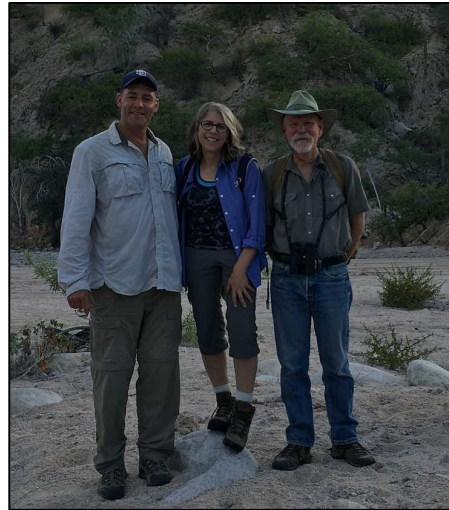
We'll stay at small boutique hotels and eat at variety of wonderful local restaurants. Nearly all your costs- flights, room, and board are included in the price of the trip. A detailed itinerary and pricing is attached. Please keep in mind that this a very active trip for the adventurous spirit!

Baja captured my heart and I know it will yours too. Jon and I look forward to exploring this wonderful place with you.

Sincerely,



Judy Gradwohl
President and CEO



Curator of Botany Jon Rebman, Judy Gradwohl, and Curator of Birds and Mammals Phil Unitt.

JANUARY 21

Rise early this morning and meet at the San Diego Natural History Museum for a chartered bus to the Los Angeles Airport. Then, fly from Los Angeles (LAX) to **Loreto** (LTO) where your expedition begins! Arrive midday and enjoy a charming seaside lunch at an authentic local restaurant. Next, enjoy an afternoon visit to the oasis town of San Javier, (approximately 30 minute drive) see the colonial mission church and visit the local school if you'd like.

Accessed by canyon roads with giant **Cardon Cacti** (*Pachycereus pringlei*) along the way, San Javier feels like the most peaceful place on earth. **San Javier** is the site of a beautiful chapel that was built on a mountain spring in 1699 by Jesuit Father Francisco María Pícolo.

Father Juan de Ugarte took charge of the mission in 1701 and introduced agriculture and cattle breeding, and taught local people to thread and knit wool, not only for themselves, but also for the missionary project in general.



The construction of the current **Mission Church** began in 1744 by Father Miguel Del Barco and was finished in 1759. The church, considered one of the most beautiful and well preserved of the Californias, is baroque in style and features a golden altarpiece, two revered statues and three church bells, dated from 1761 - 1803. You will also visit the "Cross of the Calvary" monument, from which hundreds of religious pilgrims crawl on their knees to the Church to prove their devotion.

The Mission of San Javier is breathtaking in its remote location surrounded by olive groves and fruit trees planted by Jesuit missionaries. Today a small community still lives and works here, and it makes for a fascinating visit. Visit the school and learn about contemporary life, hear all about the area's history or simply stroll around to soak in its magical atmosphere.

En route to and from San Javier, stop along the way to marvel at the stark desert landscape and to check out a variety of plant life. This evening in Loreto, enjoy an authentic Mexican welcome dinner for the group.

Overnight in Loreto at [Posada de las Flores Loreto Boutique Hotel](#)

JANUARY 22

Enjoy a full day scenic drive from Loreto northbound to San Ignacio, with lots of interesting stops along the way. Visit the **gorgeous beaches** at Bahia Concepcion, the surprising and beautiful oasis town of Mulegé, and stop for lunch in quaint Santa Rosalia.

First stop **Bahía Concepción** (approximately 1 hour drive), considered one of the most beautiful spots in Baja. Many first timers arrive and say they are completely overwhelmed by the beauty and serenity of this area. The rugged eastern finger of Bahía Concepción remains mostly unexplored, and almost completely uninhabited.



Next stop **Mulegé** (approximately 45 minute drive), a beautiful **oasis** town located along the tranquil shores of the **Sea of Cortez**. The valley that shelters Mulegé is covered with **Date Palms** (*Phoenix dactylifera*), is incredibly verdant, and is in stark contrast with the rest of Baja making this peaceful seaside village really stand out. The **Río Mulegé** is one of only two “real” rivers in all of Baja. This area, without a doubt, is one of Baja’s most beautiful areas. Countless coves and inlets, most with exquisite white sandy beaches, are seemingly around every corner.



Venture onwards to **Santa Rosalia** (approximately one hour drive), a unique place with a personality completely different from your typical seaside town. The town began in the early 1880’s when copper was discovered in the area. A French mining company bought the mineral rights and drilled hundreds of kilometers of tunnels, built a foundry and a railroad to haul the ore. From the coast, they shipped the smelted ore to Washington State to be refined. The ships would later return from Washington with lumber and other supplies for the town. Today Santa Rosalía is still unique because most of the buildings in the downtown are constructed out of wood, as a result of the French influence.

You’ll also stop by the famous **Iglesia Santa Barbara de Santa Rosalía church**, designed by Alexandre Gustave Eiffel who also designed and built the Eiffel Tower. This pre-fabricated iron church was shipped from Europe in sections and then rebuilt in Santa Rosalía in 1897. Stop in the area for an authentic lunch before continuing onwards to **San Ignacio** (approximately 1 hour drive) where you can enjoy a little bit of time at leisure this afternoon. Tonight, dinner is served at a local restaurant.

Overnight in San Ignacio at [Hotel La Huerta](#).

JANUARY 23

Enjoy a full day of spectacular **Grey Whale** (*Eschrichtius robustus*) watching in the magical **San Ignacio Lagoon** (approximately 45 minute drive), using small skiff and panga boats to truly get up close and personal with the giant whales themselves! Marvel at the enormous adults and their calves who will have made a migration of over 10,000 miles to reach these warm shallow waters.



Every year, between 17,000-24,000 Pacific Grey Whales make journey south from the cold, invertebrate-rich waters of the Bering Sea near Alaska to the Baja Peninsula's beautiful coastal bays. Here, in the warm sheltered waters, they assemble to mate and give birth.

Grey Whales are naturally inquisitive creatures but at San Ignacio they seem to genuinely enjoy human contact; there is no need to look for the whales here as they will find you! There can be few more memorable wildlife experiences than being able to look one of these gentle creatures straight in the eye as it raises its head out of the water next to the boat. If the whales are feeling particularly friendly, you may even be lucky enough to pat one on the head or rub its belly!

Enjoy an included picnic lunch today and dinner in town at a local restaurant.



Overnight in San Ignacio at **Hotel La Huerta**

JANUARY 24

Head out on a morning visit to the **San Francisco de la Sierra Village** (approximately 1 hour drive) and explore ancient local cave paintings.

From 100 B.C. to A.D.1300, the Sierra de San Francisco was once home to an ancient people who have now disappeared but left one of the most outstanding collections of **rock paintings** in the world. They are remarkably well-preserved because of the dry climate and the inaccessibility of the site. Showing human figures and many animal species and illustrating the relationship between humans and their environment, the paintings reveal a highly sophisticated culture. Their composition and size, as well as the precision of the outlines and the variety of colors, make this an impressive testimony to a unique artistic tradition.



Hundreds of rock shelters and huge panels with hundreds of brightly painted figures, are found in a good state of conservation. The style of painting style is realistic, and images are dominated by depictions of human figures and marine and terrestrial fauna, designed in red, black, white and yellow, which illustrate the relationship between humans and their environment, and reveal a highly sophisticated culture. The paintings are on both the walls and roofs of rock shelters in the sides of ravines that are difficult of access.

The sites have remained virtually intact and are all still well preserved. The integrity of the rock painting sites and their surroundings has been maintained largely due to the location's isolation and the low population density that prevails in the region. Enjoy an included lunch in **Santa Rosalia** (approximately 45 minute drive) before returning to **Loreto** this afternoon (approximately 3 hour drive) for some time at leisure before an included dinner.



Overnight in Loreto at **Posada de las Flores Loreto Boutique Hotel**

JANUARY 25

Spend the entire day exploring the **Loreto Marine Park** in the **Sea of Cortez**, using small skiff or panga boats to allow for an intimate wildlife experience. Head out from Loreto Harbor (approximately 15 minute drive) towards the beautiful Coronado Islands, in search of the largest living mammal on earth, the **Blue Whale** (*Balaenoptera musculus*).



Visit **Isla Coronado** to snorkel with **Sea Lions** (*Otariinae*), and stop by **Isla Catalina** for a short hike where giant Barrel Cacti (*Echinocactus grusonii*) can be seen and spend some time **snorkelling** as well.



Between island visits, keep an eye out for more Blue Whales and other commonly seen marine mammals like a variety of **Dolphins** (*Delphinus*), **Manta Rays** (*Manta birostris*) and more! A picnic lunch will be included in a **gorgeous sheltered sandy cove** where you can enjoy an opportunity to snorkel or **swim** in azure waters. There is nothing more awesome and humbling than seeing the mighty Blue Whale on his journey, and as such, we recommend spending a full day with a focus on these marine mammals.

Tonight, reflect on your experiences so far over an included group dinner in town. Chat about the various species seen so far and work together to compile an official list of species seen!

Overnight in Loreto at **Posada de las Flores Loreto Boutique Hotel**

JANUARY 26



Depart Loreto this morning and drive south to **La Paz** (approximately 4.5 hour drive), a city with local Mexican charm and the most wonderful sunsets on the Sea of Cortez. You'll arrive to La Paz mid-day and head out for delicious lunch in this sunny town. Stroll along the "malecon" or boardwalk that runs along the seafront following your meal, before heading out for an afternoon hike to stretch your legs.

This afternoon, enjoy a half day hike with Jon Rebman near La Paz. Jon will lead a botany hike with our expert local guide who will share additional details on birdlife and geology. Tonight, a group dinner is included at a local restaurant.



Overnight in La Paz at [Posada de las Flores La Paz Boutique Hotel](#)

JANUARY 27

Few marine areas in the world can compare with the richness of life found just off the coast of La Paz in the Sea of Cortez, once called “**the Aquarium of the World**” by none other than Jacques Cousteau himself.

Akin to a Galapagos experience, your full day trip out to the nearby islands will be a highlight of the expedition! Set out early this morning for a full day on the water in the **Sea of Cortez** in small skiff or panga boats. Begin the day in La Paz Harbor (approximately 15 minute drive) and head out in search of **Whale Sharks** (*Rhincodon typus*) this morning, including a thrilling opportunity to **snorkel** with them! You'll get in the water alongside the biggest fish in the ocean, the Whale Shark. Growing up to 12 meters in length, it is an honour to swim alongside these gentle, plankton-eating giants and a true once-in-a-lifetime experience.



Next, visit stunning **Isla Espiritu Santo** by boat where it's possible to snorkel with a **Sea Lion** (*Otariinae*) colony and enjoy a gorgeous picnic lunch on the idyllic white sand beaches of Isla Espiritu Santo.



Spend your final afternoon in search for massive **Humpback Whales** (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)! This area is considered one of the best spots in the world for Humpback Whale sightings and their massive presence is truly overwhelming. You'll also look for magnificent **migratory birds** like the infamous **Blue Footed Boobie** (*Sula nebouxii*)! Tonight, reflect on all you have seen as a group over a delicious farewell dinner.

Overnight in La Paz at **Posada de las Flores La Paz Boutique Hotel**

JANUARY 28

Depart your hotel this morning and transfer to the La Paz airport (LAP) where you will bid farewell to your local naturalist guides. Here, board your outbound departure flight to Tijuana (TIJ) and then cross back into the United States and San Diego using the border bridge.

NOTES AND PRICING

INCLUDES:

- 7 nights accommodation in double occupancy rooms
- Group vehicle transfer from the San Diego Natural History Museum – Los Angeles Airport on January 21
- Inbound International Flights from Los Angeles – Loreto on January 21
- Outbound Domestic Flight in Mexico La Paz – Tijuana (with border bridge crossing into San Diego included) on January 28
- Daily breakfast with non-alcoholic beverages
- Daily lunch and dinner with non-alcoholic beverages and local beer
- Bottled waters, juice, gatorade and sodas during all vehicle transfers
- Snacks such as fruit, granola bars and chips during all vehicle transfers
- Daily cultural excursions as stated
- Daily marine excursions using small panga boats as stated
- Daily transportation in 2015 Ford Transit vans with air conditioning (seats up to 16 passengers)
- English-speaking local naturalist guides
- Equipment for marine excursions (snorkel masks, fins, wetsuits and life jackets)
- All national park fees and entrance fees
- All taxes

EXCLUDES:

- Tips and gratuities
- Additional alcoholic beverages

PRICING:

- 8-10 paying participants: \$5,750.00 per person (in double occupancy rooms)
- 11-16 paying participants: \$4,800.00 per person (in double occupancy rooms)
- Single supplement: available upon request
- A deposit of 25% is required at booking. Each traveller will pay their final balance due directly to Scott Dunn 90 days prior to departure (October 21, 2017).

NOTES:

- This program requires a minimum of 8 paying travellers to operate.

REGISTRATION:

- Contact Alison Carey at Scott Dunn Private Journeys, 858.345.1492 or Alison.carey@scottdunn.com.

OTHER QUESTIONS?

- Contact Eowyn Bates at the San Diego Natural History Museum, 619.255.0172 or ebates@sdnhm.org.