



The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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EXPLORING THE SEA OF CORTEZ: A LIVING SEA & DESERT ISLES

Designated by UNESCO as a marine world heritage site and dubbed “the world’s aquarium” by Jacques Cousteau, the waters and islands of the Sea of Cortez are places of legendary biodiversity. This is an expedition of pure discovery, sailing to islands that lie in close proximity to the peninsula but have a palpable feel of rugged isolation. This geographic isolation is the major contributing factor to the long list of endemic plants and animals. And the seas, roiling with productivity, beckon whales—this is, arguably, the best time and place in the world to see a vast variety of whale species plus massive pods of dolphins, leaping Mobula rays, and seabirds.

DAY 1: Home / Loreto / Embark

Arrive into Loreto and transfer to National Geographic Venture to set sail on the Sea of Cortez. (D)

DAY 2-7: Exploring the Sea of Cortez

As writer and longtime Lindblad naturalist Stewart Aitchison describes it - “The Sea of Cortez—it’s a romantic name that conjures up visions of fiery sunsets, leaping dolphins, and deserted beaches.” It is all this and so much more. Our routing is designed with flexibility in mind to maximize opportunities for wildlife sightings. It will most likely include the islands and activities listed below, although the order may vary. (B,L,D daily)

Isla San Esteban and San Pedro Mártir: Walk up a desert wash to search for desert songbirds such as the handsome black-throated sparrow, listen for the cascading song of the canyon wren, and search for the endemic pinto chuckwalla—a plump, harmless desert lizard. Later visit Isla San Pedro Mártir, a 1,000-foot-high guano-covered island that is home to thousands of seabirds: brown pelicans, magnificent frigatebirds, Brandt’s cormorants, and California sea lions.

Isla San Marcos: At Isla San Marcos there is a beautiful shoreline for swimming, snorkeling, and kayaking. In the afternoon we are again in rich waters, near the mouth of Bahía Concepción. Here we are on the lookout for pods of dolphins—with common and bottlenose dolphins being the most frequently encountered species. With luck these beautiful animals may join us as we go, riding the bow wave, sometimes twisting and turning, and sometimes leaping from the water.

Isla San José: One of the larger islands in the Sea of Cortez, San José offers several landing possibilities depending on conditions and the whim of the moment.

ITINERARY



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Photograph the ochre cliffs of the island's eastern shore, hike an enchanted, cactus-laden arroyo, and visit the abandoned salt works to the west. Snorkel with sea lions and discover rare wildlife among desert islands. Bahía Loreto Marine Park: This morning we'll search for the waters south of Isla Carmen, an area offering the possibility of encountering fin whales, which researchers have recently concluded may be part a resident population. Bottlenose and common dolphins are frequently encountered. In the afternoon we visit one of the islands of Bahía Loreto Marine Park, with ample time for kayaking, snorkeling, stand-up paddleboarding, and possibly hiking. In the evening, enjoy a beach barbecue under the desert sky. Los Islotes and Isla San Francisco: At Los Islotes, don flippers, a mask, and snorkel (which we'll gladly provide) and swim with curious sea lions. We have a leisurely afternoon to swim, kayak, or hike at Isla San Francisco. Look skyward for yellow-footed gulls, brown pelicans, and bluefooted boobies.

DAY 8: Disembark / Loreto / Home

Disembark and explore Loreto, where we will have the opportunity to visit the first mission in Baja California, as well as the nearby museum to learn more about what makes this town so special. Enjoy free time to explore quaint shops and vibrant side streets. After lunch, transfer to Loreto Airport for flights home. (B,L)

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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YOUR SHIP: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC VENTURE

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

Launched 2018 Designed with over 50 years of expedition heritage, National Geographic Venture is able to explore the same remote locations as National Geographic have sought out for decades while setting a new standard in comfort and style. She will follow National Geographic Quest in featuring step-out balconies (available in 22 of the 50 spacious cabins), plus 6 sets of connecting cabins for families and groups; a Sun Deck bar, and a designated mudroom for expedition gear. Comfortably accommodating 100 guests, Venture has a shallow draft depth, allowing us to navigate the same inner reaches and provide the same intimate experiences of the charismatic regions we explore. Her twin expedition craft landing platforms allow you to get on and off the ship quickly to take advantage of wildlife sightings and to ensure we maximize our time off the ship exploring. Designed with decades of expedition experience in the region, the purpose-built vessel also features open decks, generous windows, and specialty tools for exploration--the ideal platform for sailing into the fast-moving channels and shallow coves of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest and for exploring the tropical waterways of Central America. Remotely Operated Vehicle Capable of reaching 1,000 feet, far beyond the range of

any Scuba diver, the ROV allows you to literally view parts of the undersea that are as unexplored as the moon. Chances are you, like many of our guests, will be struck by how surprisingly colorful undersea life is in these unlikely places. And this glimpse may fundamentally change how you view the ocean. Kayaks National Geographic Venture is equipped with 24 two-person kayaks--a fleet large enough to ensure everyone who wants to can paddle at every opportunity. Consequently, prior kayaking experience isn't necessary--many of our guests have their first kayaking experience in extraordinary locations. Our custom-designed floating platform lets us deploy kayaks from the ship, or any location we want--including far from shore. Kayakers are usually free to explore where they want within boundaries set by the undersea specialist and officer of the watch. Underwater camera Our undersea specialist will dive often during your expedition, even in Alaska, with cold-water gear, to shoot high-definition, Cousteau-like footage of the deep. Colorful nudibranchs, swimming, plant-like crinoids, and mysterious fish with antifreeze blood that thrive in the frigid sea will give you an entirely new appreciation of the marine environment. Video microscope Naturalists will use the video microscope to help explain all elements of the environment, including tiny organisms that are the building block of the marine ecosystem. Spellbinding live views of krill at 80x magnification fills the high-definition screens in the lounge with vivid detail, and fills every onlooker with a sense of wonder at the importance of otherwise unobservable creatures. Hydrophone This underwater microphone is deployed to listen to the vocalizations of marine mammals. Real time transmissions

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of their eerie, haunting sounds can be broadcast through the ship or recorded for later playback. Few experiences in nature are as captivating as watching humpback whales feed close to the ship as their vocalizations play through the ship's PA system. Electronic charts An electronic chart showing the ship's location, course, and speed is almost always on display in the lounge. Open bridge You'll find our captains are engaged, knowledgeable members of your expedition who are eager to share their passion with you. Venture's open bridge features comfortable spaces to sit, enjoy the view, drink your morning coffee, or simply chat with the officers. Snorkeling gear & wetsuits On warm weather itineraries where there will be snorkeling, you'll select a mask, snorkel, fins, and wetsuit that remain yours for the duration of the expedition. There's no need to pack and tote your own gear, although guests who prefer to are welcome to bring



their own.

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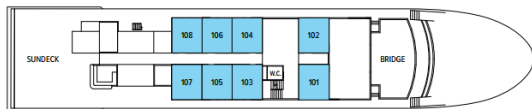
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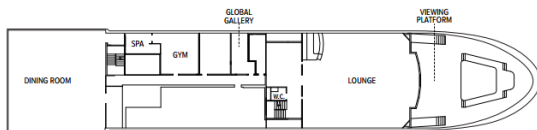
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PRICING



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