

## **Our Glorious AFS Itinerary**

### **Feb 22 – Arrive Cabo San Lucas**

Trip starts next day at noon but we'd like you to go a day early to relax and explore Cabo San Lucas if possible. The Hilton (fun resort activities), Hyatt, Marriott are great but also good budget ones like Fairfield & Hampton Inn, etc. Hotels.com shows 120 hotels. (I'd like us to choose 2 hotels so vans can easily collect us on 23rd as they prefer 1 or 2 transfers only. Details later in Trip Tips). You'll love playing in Cabo. The nightlife is Alive!

Overnight – Your hotel on own

### **Feb 23 – Let the Adventure Begin!**

Land trip starts today at noon. Two pick-up points will be made for our staff to drive you north to La Paz. Enjoy the views of sparsely populated and scenic Baja California peninsula before arriving in this charming tourist town. After a trip briefing, afternoon free to explore downtown and seafront. Great shops and market to bargain in, trendy cafes with the best lobster tacos. Relax in our 4-Star Hotel Catedral.

...This evening, take a float in the infinity pool or have a designer cocktail in the rooftop bar as you relish in the natural beauty of the sunset. Delight your palate with Chef's tasting in the hotel restaurant, sample small plates in the Atrium bar or explore La Paz to enjoy local cuisines and take in the nightlife. Hotel has free WiFi, rooftop terrace, pool, fitness center and is within a 5-minute walk of La Paz's highlights!

Overnight – Hotel Catedral (B, L)

### **Feb 24 – Whale Sharks research at Balandra Beach!**

After breakfast, check out of hotel to go to pier and board our boats. You'll be briefed on research protocols and learn about whale sharks as well as other marine life. Lunch break on Balandra, voted best beach in Mexico.

Balandra Bay is a natural protected area of pristine beaches, mangroves and stunning scenery. Explore the nature trails and then snorkel in the crystal clear waters where whale sharks come to feed on krill and plankton – not AFSers! Not really whales, but more shark, these mammals are the largest fish in the world. The gentle giants can grow 40 feet long, weigh 15 tons and live 100 years. They aren't hunters but filter feeders so no worries– in 2016 these fish were classified as endangered.

We'll split the group into 2 groups and observe safety rules – no chemicals, perfumes, sunscreen which burns their eyes, stay 3 feet away from head and 10 feet from their stunning tails! It's a thrilling privilege. Time later to relax and head back to La Paz.

Overnight – Hotel Catedral (B, L, D)

### **Feb 25 – La Paz to Magdalena Bay “Jewel of the Pacific”**

Magnificent Magdalena is home to a staggering number of marine birds (pelicans, boobies, herons, cormorants), sea turtles and the migratory Grey Whales. Early departure, but we'll stop for breakfast at a traditional Mexican Ranch and head across the desert to the breathtaking bay.

Our turtle research camp has been all set up with necessary amenities. (I recall when a coyote nearly stole my tennis shoe). Get settled in for 3 days then enjoy Happy Hour on the beach followed by a delicious dinner from our chef. Full briefings are given each night on the region and sea life.

You'll sleep well. It's magic under the stars by the sea!

Overnight – RED Research Camp (B, L, D)

### **Feb 26 – Sea Turtle Monitoring!**

Wake up early with coffee and meet our team of fisher-conservationists and help them prepare the huge nets. At breakfast, learn about the biology, monitoring and tagging protocol for our data collection. Every 2 hours, you'll have the chance to accompany the monitoring team in our panga boats to check the nets for big turtles.

Overnight – RED Research Camp (B, L, D)

### **Feb 27 – Whale Expedition Day!**

We'll head down to the beach to finish measuring and weighing our sea turtles before recording data and releasing them back into the sea. At breakfast, we'll have a lecture about the grey whales, their incredible migration and the importance for breeding and calving in the waters of this Bay. Then we'll board our pangas

and head out in search of the whales. Grey whales often approach our boat and the mothers are known to push their young calf's closer. If you're lucky, you'll get a chance to touch one of these magnificent creatures. It's an incredible interaction between two species.

On this observation sailing, you'll learn so much. There are no guarantees in nature, but we hope you'll witness "the greatest show on earth". Who knows what other creatures will surface like wild dolphin, rays and a plethora of cool fish. The majestic grey whales will take center stage, some at 40 tons. We'll get up close and personal with them for your best photos ever!

Later enjoy a picnic lunch on a secluded barrier island before heading back to our boats for more whale watching. I love Magdalena Bay because the waters are calm compared to dozens of other countries I've visited for this experience.

Back at camp, you 'budding chefs' can head to the kitchen for a Regional Cuisine Cooking Class. The rest can head to the beach to learn artisanal fishing techniques.

Overnight – RED Research Camp (B, L, D)

### **Feb 28 – More Whales & Back to La Paz or Enjoy Dinner**

Today we bid farewell to our crew and camp staff before heading out again on a sailing to search for more whales. The Sea of Cortez has Orcas, Sperm, Blue, and Humpback whales as well as giant manta rays and 600 species of fish.

Enjoy a ceviche picnic lunch along the dunes and then we head back to La Paz.

Overnight – Hotel Catedral (B, L)

### **March 1 – Espiritu Santo Island Adventure!**

We save the Best for last. Espiritu, UNESCO World Heritage Site, is turquoise water with multitudes of fish species. Only an hour from La Paz, this natural paradise will amaze you with its beauty. It is famous for the resident sea lion colonies. As we head out to sea, we'll don some light wet suits and jump in to snorkel with the sea lions and tropical fish. See lion pups somersault, twirl, glide and flip around you just begging you to play. Bring your water camera for these true kodak moments.

After a tasty lunch, our excellent nature guides will interpret the natural & cultural history of this place and then lead you through some stunning nature trails into the heart of the island. An unforgettable day.

Overnight – Hotel Catedral (B, L)

### **March 2 – Depart for home**

After breakfast, transfer by vans (approx. 3 1/2 hours) back to Cabo San Lucas for your flight back to USA.

**Fitness Level Two** – I have no trouble walking and if necessary, can walk for 3+ miles. Uneven surfaces are not a problem. I do not need a cane or walking device.