Mexico | Baja
Swimming with Whale Sharks

Trip Summary
While it may be true that few mainstream adventurous travelers have heard about Las Animas Ecolodge, an hour’s boat ride south of Bahia de Los Angeles along the Sea of Cortez, all who do come for a visit just can’t seem to stop talking about it. Comfortably accommodating on average only a dozen visitors per week, guests sleep in well-appointed beachside yurts with the sound of the gentle surf lapping a private beach just yards from the door. From August into November, the main attraction is snorkeling with the Whale Sharks that congregate annually to feed on algae, plankton and krill. Swimming alongside these 40-foot docile creatures as they slowly feed can be a life-changing experience. Join Dan and Carol Austin on this one-of-a-kind President’s Trip and experience what all the hype about Baja is for yourself!

Itinerary
Day 1: San Diego / Sea of Cortez / Las Animas Ecolodge
Early morning meet up at Brown Field Municipal Airport in San Diego • We fly from San Diego by private air carriage to San Felipe to clear Mexico customs • Then we continue our flight taking in jaw-dropping aerial views of the Sea of Cortez and the magical Midriff Island Region • Eventually we land at Bahia de Los Angeles (LA Bay) where we transfer to our boats • Scenic boat ride past desert islands and magical bays to Las Animas Wilderness Ecolodge, arriving in the early afternoon • We have time to explore our home and its surroundings by boat, snorkel and swimming, of course keeping an eye out for the gentle Baja Whale Sharks we’ve come to see! • Enjoy dinner at the lodge and settle into your comfortable, private beachside yurt • Overnight at Las Animas Wilderness Ecolodge (L, D)

Days 2 – 5: Sea of Cortez / Las Animas Ecolodge
Throughout the next four days, our mornings will be spent in search of the rare, elusive whale shark • With the help of radio reports from local fishermen, we’ll likely come across anywhere between 3 to 8 whale sharks! • Although Mother Nature can’t guarantee sightings every outing, the track record here has been very high! • When we find these gentle giants, we’ll swim and snorkel alongside them, marveling at their overwhelming size and beauty! • Head back to the lodge for a fresh, delicious lunch • Our afternoons give us plenty of opportunities for more fun in the sun • You may choose to snorkel with the nearby sea lions or take advantage of world-class sea kayaking, incredible hiking, fishing, birding, offshore island exploration by boat, or sailing • You might also opt to just relax in a hammock, beer in hand, while taking in the peace and serenity of this truly untouched wilderness area • Evenings are filled with fantastic food, a campfire at the beach, star-filled skies, tranquility and solitude • Overnight at Las Animas Wilderness Ecolodge (B, L, D)

Day 6: Las Animas Ecolodge / San Diego
After a scrumptious breakfast and some free time this morning, we reluctantly wish our goodbyes to Las Animas Ecolodge and board our boat to head back to LA Bay • Along the way, we’ll enjoy a packed lunch and hopefully view more whale sharks, dolphins, sea lions and other whales on our

The toughest part is going home.SM
return trip • The afternoon brings an incredible, scenic flight along the shores of the Sea of Cortez on our way to San Felipe for a brief landing and then onward to San Diego • Upon landing in San Diego, clear customs and give your hugs goodbye to your fellow travelers • End of Services (B, L)

*Trip itineraries are subject to change without notice due to road, weather and other factors outside of our control, for the safety and enjoyment of our guests, as deemed necessary and appropriate by Austin Adventures.

Activities

Swimming with Whale Sharks: Baja animals demonstrate great tolerance and curiosity to our encounters. It is very important to keep in mind that we are seeking out wild animals in their environment. We ask you to bear in mind the need for caution and respect on your whale shark tours. Do not presume that your guides have any control over their actions or appearances whatsoever. We keep our schedule flexible to maximize wildlife encounters.

Other Activities: Many activities can take place directly from the lodge’s private beach including: Sea kayaking, swimming, hiking, fishing, birding, offshore island exploration by boat and sailing. These activities come at no extra cost to you and are included in the tour price.

Discovery:
Whale sharks are the world’s largest fish! These harmless plankton eaters tend to feed close to the sea water’s surface and are known to reach lengths of up to 60 feet! There are only four places on the planet Whale Sharks make predictable appearances at certain times of year. The Midriff Island region of the Sea of Cortez in Baja California, Mexico is one of these four spots and closest to the United States. Your days on this adventure will be filled with snorkeling with Whale Sharks, cruising isolated islands and coves looking for the up to ten species of whales that frequent these waters – including fin and blue whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and manta rays. The daily whale shark tour schedules are known to vary depending on what it is the whale sharks are doing and when they wish to swim with us. Average summertime water clarity ranges from 35′ – 60′ or deeper while water temperatures hover between 78°F – 80°F. The region enjoys a cooler micro-climate with daytime temps up to 90 - 98°F and evenings a pleasant 76° – 78°F.

Austin Adventures guides are experienced facilitators and regional experts. They will take the time to explain the details of each activity, answer any questions, and demonstrate the use of all equipment. Each activity has been carefully planned to include options for all levels. Most importantly, your guides will help you select the distance that’s right for you.

Meals
The hallmark of an Austin Adventures vacation is our exceptional dining. All meals: breakfasts, lunches, snacks, dinners, refreshments and receptions are included as indicated by itinerary. (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner). Alcoholic beverages are also included in the trip price.

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Distinctive Accommodation
Nights 1 – 5: Las Animas Wilderness Ecolodge
Las Animas is a year-round, mosquito-free (and Zika-free) destination ideally suited for anyone seeking total immersion in nature and a desert-to-sea environment. Dubbed the “Galapagos of Mexico” by writer John Steinbeck, this section of the Sea of Cortez offers the highest concentration of whales and rare seabirds in Baja.

The self-sustaining, solar-powered retreat offers eight well-appointed beachside yurts with in-room solar shower and composting toilet, twin and king-size beds with comforters and high thread-count linens, and covered patios with hammocks. Lodging is built around a large centrally located palapa with a spacious covered deck which serves as kitchen, central dining area, cantina bar, and communal lounging and game area featuring a new state-of-the-art satellite system with fairly dependable Internet and phone connection.

One might think access to such an off-the-grid ecolodge destination might take hours (or even days) of arduous travel time. Not so. The lodge, owned and operated by Baja AirVentures, maintains a private fleet of modern aircraft to fly guests from San Diego, CA, to the sleepy fishing village of Bahia de Los Angles (population 500). After the two one-hour flights, boats shuttle guests another hour south along the shores, islands, and incredible bays to Las Animas Ecolodge situated on a private, turquoise cove rimmed by a mile-long crescent white sand beach.

Comfortably accommodating on the average only a dozen visitors per week, guests sleep in well-appointed beachside yurts with the sound of the gentle surf lapping a private beach just yards from the door. Here nature takes full stage and it isn’t uncommon to see rays, sea lions and dolphins cavorting just off-shore, or a sea turtle scurrying back to the water after depositing a nest full of eggs.

Incredible food. Small groups. Rustic comforts, all found amongst the rare and protected natural habitats offered at Las Animas – Baja’s ultimate ecolodge. Experience the original, untouched Baja. This oasis, hidden inside a breathtaking private bay, offers a natural alternative to the crowds and hotels of Southern Baja. Come; experience a uniquely genuine Baja retreat.

The toughest part is going home.℠
Arrival & Departures
Please plan to arrive to San Diego, California at least one day prior to your departure. Day 1 begins with a 7:00 AM meet-up at San Diego’s Brown Field Municipal Airport where you’ll meet your pilot as well as the rest of the group, and then take off for paradise. Your trip ends with your flight back to San Diego on Day 6, arriving around 4:00 PM. Please book flights out of San Diego for no earlier than 7:00 PM, or choose to stay one more night in this oceanside host city.

Trip Price
From $2,995 plus 13% tax and 3% marine park fees

Trip Length
6 days / 5 nights

2019 Dates
October 28 – November 2

Host City
San Diego, CA (SAN)

Reservations & Availability
1-800-575-1540

Gentle giants, whale sharks filter-feed, swimming with their wide mouths open, collecting plankton and small fish

The toughest part is going home.™
Trip Reservations

Reservations, Deposits and Balances Due
To make a reservation, contact Austin Adventures with your choice of trip and dates. A $750 deposit is required to confirm your reservation. Some Custom and International programs may require additional deposits. Full payment is required at the time of booking if your trip departs within 90 days. Choose one of the following contact methods:

Toll free: 800-575-1540
Phone: 406-655-4591
Online: austinadventures.com
Email: reservations@austinadventures.com
Mail: Austin Adventures, P.O. Box 81025, Billings, MT 59108

* You may also book your Austin Adventure with your preferred travel professional.
** We accept most major credit cards and personal checks (U.S. funds made payable to Austin Adventures). Please do not send cash.

Included in the Trip Price
- Private beachside “glamping” yurts.
- All breakfasts, lunches, and dinners while on the trip.
- All beverages, including alcohol.
- Daily guided excursions with professional guides.
- Roundtrip private air carriage from San Diego.
- All land and boat transfers in Baja.
- Free use of all sporting gear.
- Austin Adventures T-shirt, luggage tags and luggage service.
- Pre-departure and packing information.

Not Included in the Trip Price
- Gratuities to pilot, boat captains and lodge staff.
- 13% tax and 3% marine fees.
- Pre-and post-trip accommodations and associated expenses.
- Air and land transportation to/from host cities.
- All types of personal insurance.
- Personal expenses.

Pre-departure Information
After receiving your reservation and deposit, we’ll send you a pre-trip planner with general information about the area you’ll be visiting, a packing list, exercise guidelines, a guest information questionnaire and a liability release agreement for you to sign and return within 10 days.

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Private Custom Trips
Maybe your vacation schedule doesn't fit our list of trips and dates. Or perhaps you'd prefer a slightly different itinerary or level of luxury and activity. A Custom Adventure is the perfect answer. You pick the date and destination and brief us on the size of your group, what activities you want, your “must haves” and just how you like to relax and unwind. No detail is too small, no idea too outrageous. Our staff of experts will help create a tailor-made vacation that's just right for you and your group. In short, if you can dream it, we can make it happen.

Room Occupancy, Single Supplements, and Shared Room Assignments
All trip prices are based on double occupancy. Single rooms are available for an additional charge, referred to as a “single supplement.” If you're traveling alone and wish to share a room, make the request at the time of booking. Austin Adventures will attempt to find a suitable roommate for you. If you book 90 days before the trip and we cannot find you a suitable roommate, we will take care of the single supplement. *some restrictions may apply

Minimum Age
The minimum age on our non-family designated adult and teen adventures is sixteen years old.

Cancellations and Refunds
The following cancellation policies and cancellation fees are in effect:
***As with deposits on some international and custom programs, refund schedule may vary, speak with your Adventure Consultant for details.
Cancellation 91 days or more before trip departure – Full trip payment refunded less a $300 per person administration fee
Cancellation 61-90 days before trip departure – Full trip payment less 25% per person is refunded
Cancellation 31-60 days before trip departure – 50% of the trip payment is refunded
Cancellation 0-30 days before trip departure – No refund is given

Our Guarantee
Exceeding your expectations is our number one priority. In the unlikely event that you are dissatisfied with something during your trip, immediately notify your guide(s). If he or she is unable to resolve the issue, call our main office and give us the details of the problem, and a chance to correct it. We will do our best to find a resolution. If we are unable to do so during your trip, we will work with you upon your return home to arrive at a fair and equitable solution, including up to a full refund.

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