



Pre-Departure Information

BAJA: EXPLORING THE SEA OF CORTEZ



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WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Itinerary for instructions. Please feel free to review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets if you have any questions about the timing of your arrival and departure flights or would like to confirm we have the required minimum number of participants to operate the trip.

PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** (www.wildernesstravel.com) or e-mail us at: info@wildernesstravel.com.

Travel Information

PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for six months after your date of exit from Mexico. In addition, we recommend your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say “Amendments and Endorsements,” and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. The service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services Office** (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

VISAS

US citizens do not need a visa for Mexico. A free tourist card will be issued to you on the flight into Mexico. Half of this will be collected by immigration officials upon arrival. The other half must be presented when you depart the country. Keep this document with your passport.

If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, check with a local consulate for entry requirements.

MONEY

We suggest you bring US cash and exchange for pesos; traveler’s checks are not recommended, as they can be difficult and time-consuming to cash. Most merchants in La Paz and Loreto will accept dollars. Be sure to bring some small-denomination cash (\$1, \$5, \$10, \$20) because it can be difficult to change larger bills. Small denominations are useful for rentals, restaurants, tipping, and other incidentals. American coins are generally not accepted. Some businesses in La Paz and Loreto accept major credit cards and travelers checks but you will be surprised how many do not. There are ATMs in La Paz and Loreto where you can withdraw funds either in pesos or dollars. You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, international and domestic airport taxes, and personal items such as phone calls, beverages, etc.

Before you travel, ask your bank if your PIN number will work in ATMs in the countries you are traveling in. Some foreign ATMs do not accept PIN numbers longer than four digits, and they often don't have a zero button or won't accept PINs that start with zero. Note: San Ignacio is a pesos-only economy—there are no ATMs here and credit cards are not accepted.

If you plan to use your credit cards abroad, it is a good idea to call your credit card company before you depart and advise them that you will be using the card in the country or countries you are visiting. This will let them know that your card is not being used in a fraudulent way by someone else.

TIPPING

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward guides for outstanding service. The current standards suggest 5-15% (per couple) of the cost of the trip. As a range of reference, that is \$655-1965 per couple or \$500-850 for singles. Tips are given discreetly to the captain (in cash, please, no personal checks) in the envelope provided, and are divided among the crew. Credit cards are not accepted on board. The crew of three consists of the captain, cook, and naturalist guide. The guide pays all the tips to local guides during the trip.

SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks. Please be very specific when advising us of your diet requests/needs.

COMMUNICATIONS

Time Zone

Baja is on Mountain Standard Time, one hour ahead of Pacific Standard Time. Daylight Savings Time in the US may affect these times.

Telephone

The international dialing code for Mexico is 52. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use. Cell phones work in some areas while in Baja, but don't count on them to work all the time.

Email & Internet Access

There is no internet on the boat and no cell access on the boat once it is away from the dock.

ELECTRICITY

Mexico has 110V current and plugs with two flat prongs (type A) or two flat prongs with a round grounding pin (type B), the same as in the US. There is regular 110 electrical outlets on the boat and in each cabin, so you can plug in battery chargers, computers, CPAPs, etc. We suggest you don't bring hair dryers, as you will be limited in your use of them. We don't run our generator at night to maintain silence. Electricity is still available at night, but we're on batteries then and are restricted in the use of high-draw appliances. If you use a CPAP Machine, do bring a battery back-up, just in case.

Medical Information

The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>) Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

INOCULATIONS

No inoculations are required for entry into Mexico. Entry requirements and international health situations are subject to change; check with the Centers for Disease Control for updates. We recommend you discuss the following with your physician:

Hepatitis

The vaccines HAVRIX and VAQTA (two injections, six to 18 months apart) give long-term protection against Hepatitis A and are worthwhile if you travel regularly to developing countries.

Tetanus Booster

A booster is strongly recommended (effective for 10 years).

Typhoid

The CDC recommends the shot or the oral vaccine, Vivotif Berna, a course of four capsules, one every other day for a week, with full effectiveness reached in a week. You may not be able to take the oral vaccine simultaneously with mefloquine (for malaria prevention).

STAYING HEALTHY

You can reduce your risk of getting a cold on the trip by washing your hands often and not touching your face with unwashed hands. If you arrive on the trip with a cold or feel the symptoms of a cold, avoid close contact with others and move away from people before coughing or sneezing. The CDC recommends coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow or upper sleeve, not your hands.

Helpful Information

PHOTOGRAPHY

Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to wtphotoblog@gmail.com or tag us **@WildernessTravel** on social media.

Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

A NOTE ABOUT UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

Past clients have enjoyed taking photos of the underwater treasures and sharing them with other trip members after the snorkeling excursions. We recommend bringing a waterproof camera or waterproof housing for your camera. For more information, visit **Best Underwater Compact Cameras** (<http://www.toptenreviews.com/electronics/photo-video/best-waterproof-cameras/>).

MISCELLANEOUS

Smoking: Participants may not smoke below decks or within any enclosed area of the vessel. Smoking is allowed on the leeward rail only.

BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Please bring your own shampoo, soap, body wash, moisturizer, sunscreen, and any other toiletries you might need. These products wash off your skin while snorkeling, and can cause damage to coral reefs and wildlife. We **HIGHLY** recommend bringing products with natural and biodegradable ingredients. Dr. Bronner's comes in liquid and bar form, is environmentally friendly, and can be used as body soap, shampoo, hand soap, etc. We also like Wilderness Wash, Campsuds, and Acure Organics Biodegradable wipes. In general, try to stay away from products with phosphate, surfactants, triclosan, and antibacterial ingredients. For sunscreens we recommend mineral-based products with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, Raw Elements, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores. Avoid all sunscreens that contain oxybenzone and octinoxate, which are harmful to coral reefs.

Packing List

THE ESSENTIALS

- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- Expense money

WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

LUGGAGE

- Medium-sized duffel bag or soft-sided roller bag, with small padlock (must be unlocked for travel). We discourage hard-sided suitcases as they are difficult to stow on the boat.
- Daypack, large enough for a fleece jacket, rain gear, water bottle, camera, and other items you want with you during the day

NOTES ON CLOTHING

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only. Try to keep your clothing and gear to a minimum. Lightweight clothing is recommended for the warm, dry climate of Baja California. Long-sleeved shirts can be worn during the day for sun protection. There are really only two seasons in Baja: the hot summer season from mid-May to October and the mild winter season from November to mid-May. Baja lies in a coastal desert where the possibility of rain is slim (although not impossible).

NOTE: It is cooler in January and February, so do bring some warmer clothes, especially for the Magdalena Bay side.

CLOTHING

- Short-sleeved and sleeveless shirts
- Long-sleeved shirts (great for sun protection). Quick-drying fabrics like nylon are ideal.
- Lightweight long pants. Synthetic “travel” fabrics dry easily. We recommend 1 warm pair for nighttime and 1 lightweight pair for daytime sun protection if needed (nylon windbreaker type pants work well). Jeans are not recommended because they can be hot and take a long time to dry if they get wet.
- Walking shorts; fast-drying nylon travel fabrics are the best
- Underwear/ socks. Synthetics dry faster.
- Fleece jacket or sweater for cooler nights
- Lightweight windbreaker with hood
- Texas or other sturdy waterproof sandals for beach walking and kayaking
- Shade hat with wide brim and tie-down strap (for wind)
- Bathing suit (one or two), beach coverups
- Sleepwear
- Casual clothes for town and travel

EQUIPMENT

The boat provides masks, snorkels, fins, and shorty wetsuits for guests free of charge. The shorty wetsuits on board accommodate most sizes and are adequate for all the snorkeling adventures. However, you should bring your own wetsuit if you want a particular fit or full 2-3 mm wetsuits if you get unusually cold. The water temperatures are in the low 70's.

Wilderness Travel is not responsible if your size is not available, particularly smaller and larger sizes.

- 2 1-qt. water bottles
- Good quality sunglasses with retention strap and case. A spare pair of sunglasses is invaluable should your first pair be broken or lost.
- Personal toiletries (see section on environmental concerns)
- Hand laundry soap such as Woolite, as there are no laundry facilities on board for guests
- Assorted plastic bags for organizing items in your duffel bag
- Net dive bag to carry snorkeling gear
- Small “dry bag” for carrying items in your kayak

PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member should bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher. The tropical sun is strong: take special care while snorkeling! We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headache
- Topical antibiotic (such as Neosporin) for cuts, bites, or sores
- Insect repellent. DEET content of about 30-35% is ideal (higher DEET content is not recommended). Wipe DEET off your hands before touching plastic surfaces such as binoculars because it can damage plastic. Aerosol repellents are useful for spraying on
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. "Liquid band-aids," such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Anti-bacterial gel for hand washing (at least 60% alcohol to be effective)
- Antihistamine such as Benadryl
- Imodium for diarrhea. If you wish to bring an antibiotic for diarrhea prophylaxis, please consult your physician.
- Anti-seasickness medication such as Dramamine
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses
- Shampoo and conditioner

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Camera, spare batteries, spare memory cards
- Reading/writing material
- Travel clock
- Personal wash cloth
- Quick dry towel and/or beach towel (the boat has bath and beach towels), if you do not wish to use the ones provided
- Full wetsuit, if you are susceptible to cold or do not wish to use the shorty provided
- Lightweight rain gear with hood, and rain pants to protect you from spray while out on the skiffs
- Mask, snorkel, and fins, if you do not wish to use the ones provided
- Daypack
- Money belt or neck pouch
- Sun hat
- Binoculars
- Personal kayak gear, such as gloves and booties

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Weapons, illegal drugs, and other items that could interfere with the safe operation of the ship or the safe and secure environment of our guests and crew are prohibited. Drones are not allowed on this trip.

Note: Marijuana is illegal under US Federal law and in Mexico and therefore is illegal on our boat.

Revised: March 10, 2020