Exploring Mexico’s Baja Peninsula: Nature, History and Culture
Saturday, December 26, 2015 – Friday, January 1, 2016

JOHNS HOPKINS
CENTER for TALENTED YOUTH
Program Itinerary

Saturday, December 26: Arrive In Todos Santos
Welcome to Mexico’s Baja! Bordered by both the wild Pacific Ocean and the protected Sea of Cortez, this finger-like desert peninsula is a haven for exotic plants, birds and animals (both terrestrial and marine) and home to lovely, friendly people whose warm hospitality, artistic endeavors and strong traditions draw visitors from around the world. Upon arrival in San Jose del Cabo, deplane and continue into the terminal building. Go through immigration and submit your completed form given during flight. Be sure to keep the bottom half of the form in your passport as this is your tourist Visa and will be needed when leaving the country.

Continue on a 90-minute drive on the Baja Highway, first driving west along the bottom of the peninsula, and then, turning north along the Pacific Coast to Todos Santos where you’ll check into your hotel. Relax and enjoy some free time before the welcome dinner consisting of gourmet tacos.

Overnight: Casa Bentley  
Meals: Dinner

Sunday, December 27: Todos Santos
An undiscovered gem, casual and relaxing, Todos Santos sits in the shadows of the Sierra de la Laguna Mountains, surrounded by gorgeous beaches and lush gardens. After breakfast, head out to Los Cerritos, known for one of the best surf breaks in Baja. With a smooth, sandy bottom and small waves breaking close to shore, Cerritos is the perfect place to learn how to surf. (Don’t fear there are fun, challenging areas for intermediate and expert surfers, too!)

When you’re tired of surfing, a trained biologist and aquaculture engineer will take you on a tide pool discovery walk to explore a secret marine world only visible during low tide. After, drive to a nearby beach for a horseback ride along an endless stretch of sand. Also, your guide, an avid birder and naturalist will lend fascinating insight into the Baja ranching culture all while keeping an eye out for gray whales, humpback whales, sea turtles many, many birds!

Overnight: Casa Bentley  
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Monday, December 28: Todos Santos

The whales of Todos Santos love people watching so come out on the water and meet the neighbors! In this great adventure we'll not only look for the humpback and gray whales that visit Todos Santos each year, but we'll take some fishing poles so that we can try our luck at catching some mahi mahi or tuna for dinner tonight.

In anticipation of a possible sea turtle hatchling release, Wildlife Biologist Stephanie Rousso will provide an introduction to sea turtle activity in Baja California Sur and her own turtle conservation work. Formerly with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Stephanie is the recipient of the prestigious Rufford Foundation Small Grant for Nature for her work with turtles in Baja. Todos Santos is the northern-most nesting ground on the Pacific Coast for two marine turtle species, and Mexico is home to five of the world’s seven turtle species.

Take a walk with a local anthropologist, as she shares about the Guaycura people—an indigenous culture that persisted for approximately 1,000 years—and who are now gone but rock art paintings still remain. After, kids will meet Mexican friends, as part of our Friends across Borders Meeting. Through playing a game of soccer, sharing in a mutual activity, or taking a swing at a piñata, the kids all enjoy the eye-opening, and truly rewarding, experience of making a new friend from a culture very different from their own.

If luck is with us we’ll have a turtle hatchling release tonight. But even if there are no turtles, we’ll have a great time at our cookout with new friends and their families.

Overnight: Casa Bentley
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Tuesday, December 29: Todos Santos to La Paz

Well, is it a whale or is it a shark? Hint: It is the world’s largest living fish species (whales are mammals, sharks are fish). In other words, it’s a whale of a fish! Snorkeling with these mammoth animals (up to 59 feet and 15 tons!) is a truly incredible life experience. Dr. Ramirez, the leading whale shark expert in Baja California Sur, will start our day with a lecture on these incredible creatures that she has been tracking and researching for years. She will introduce us to the history and personalities of any whale sharks that we may encounter. We’ll bring our snorkel gear so that Dr. Ramirez can lead us in swimming with these gentle giants should the opportunity present itself. And while your mother probably told you to stay away from sharks, these gentle giants are only interested in plankton—all human flesh is safe!
Continue to beautiful Balandra Bay to kayak through the crystal blue waters into the vibrant mangrove system that is rich in bird and fish life. Your guide and Stephanie will provide loads of information about the nature of mangroves and their role in the ecology of Baja. Kayaking is the perfect way to explore what the UNESCO folks call the Sea of Cortez’s “striking natural beauty in a dramatic setting formed by rugged islands with high cliffs and sandy beaches, which contrast with the brilliant reflection from the desert and the surrounding turquoise waters.” We’ll have a terrific picnic lunch on some of the incredible white beaches for which Balandra Bay is rightfully famous.

There’s nothing like a day on the water to work up an appetite! Everyone will love tonight’s fun dinner at the lively El Bismarkcito, a La Paz institution. They’re famous for their fabulous tacos, and can accommodate any vegetarian requests.

*Overnight: Seven Crown La Paz Centro Hotel*
*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

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**Wednesday, December 30: La Paz to Todos Santos**

Jacques Cousteau once called the Sea of Cortez— one of the planet’s most bio-diverse ecosystems— “the aquarium of the world” and “the Galápagos of North America.” Our adventure to Los Islotes today is a trip highlight—an unforgettable nose-to-nose encounter with the local sea lions that thrive in these nutrient-rich waters. Today encounter a permanent sea lion colony who will welcome you to their home, a spit of land off of Isla Espiritu Santo. They will likely invite you for a game of chase or perhaps a good belly rub. Your guides-naturalists will provide information on the different sea lion family groups and all facets of their lives!

*Overnight: Casa Bentley*
*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*
Thursday, December 31: Todos Santos
This morning you head for the cliffs for a walk high above the shoreline, from Punta Lobos to Playa Las Palmas. The views are spectacular—an odd-seeming juxtaposition of arid desert and deep blue sea. In the company of our observant local guide watch for resident sea lions, birds, whales and the unusual cacti that rise from the sands. When we reach Playa Las Palmas, it’s fun-for-all time at the beach! Join in boogie board races, play Frisbee, or just relax and take in the happy family vacation scene. A picnic lunch is served on the beach.

Enjoy a walking tour of Todos Santos, a town with a rich and varied history, from the early missionaries, through the booming sugar years, through its current incarnation as an artists’ colony, agricultural center and surfing hotspot. Or, if you prefer, relax at the hotel pool-side.

We’ll end this trip with a bang! Local lawyer-turned-chef Iker Algorri will teach your family to make some of the favorite dishes they’ve had throughout the week so that you can continue the flavors of Mexico at home. And we’ll end the night in classic Mexican style – with mariachis – and you’ll be a part of the show! The guides will be teaching your kids a classic mariachi song throughout the week, and this will be their chance to perform with the professionals. And don’t forget, if you bring your horn or stringed instrument, the mariachis would love to have you join in the fun. This is a terrific end to a wonderful trip.

Overnight: Casa Bentley
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Friday, January 1: Depart Todos Santos
A Thomson Family Adventures representative will help with your transfer to the airport in San Jose del Cabo for your international flight home. Hasta luego…!

Meals: Breakfast
Program Information

Trip Length: 7 days/6 nights

Cost per person: $3,800 per adult • $3,600 per teen • $3,400 per student 11 and under

Program Includes:
- All entrance fees for sites indicated in the itinerary
- Accommodations based on double and triple occupancy at comfortable and distinctive tourist level hotels
- Meals as per the above itinerary
- Services of a bilingual guide who will accompany you from the time you arrive in Todos Santos until the time you depart Todos Santos
- Land transportation and airport transfers
- All excursions as listed in the itinerary
- Bottled water for the land portion of your tour
- Trip journal for ages 6-17, including bird lists, mammal lists, sketchpads and address lists
- Services of a Rafiki, the fun person on the trip, who provides opportunities for educational and recreational activities (based on a minimum number of 10 participants)
- Tips for guides, Rafiki, drivers, hotel porters and wait staff
- Travel Insured International policy covering the package price up to $10,000 per person

Not Included in Program Price:
- International airfare to and from San Jose del Cabo
- Soda, beer, wine and spirits (where we include dinner, you will need to pay the bar tab)
- Fees for passports, visas and immunizations
- Meals and expenses en route to your destination
- Laundry, phone/fax/email, and other items of a personal nature
- Additional activities not listed on this itinerary
- Departure taxes
- Connecting rooms/cabins unless noted on the itinerary
- Travel insurance for international air; we recommend purchasing supplemental insurance to cover your flights
- All other services not specifically mentioned in the "Included Features" section above.
Cancellations and Refunds
Notification of cancellation must be made in writing to CTY. Cancellations are subject to the following per person charges:

- Cancel 121 days or more before departure: Full refund less $500 deposit
- Cancel 120-46 days before departure: 50% of tour price
- Cancel 45-30 days before departure: 65% of tour price
- Cancel 29-0 days before departure: No refund.

Program Notes
All prices listed are in U.S. dollars. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed price and itinerary as described, they are subject to modifications due to certain conditions (political, climatic, environmental and cultural). Rates are per person based on double occupancy. Single supplements are available. All reservations are subject to CTY Policies, Terms and Conditions found on our website at www.cty.jhu.edu/family/travel.

ACCOMMODATIONS (Subject to change until the final itinerary)

Casa Bentley (or similar)
This boutique hotel is located in historic Todos Santos, a 15 minute walk to the beaches and within easy walking distance to the famous Hotel California, the elegant Restaurant Santa Fe, and only steps away from great art galleries, charming patio restaurants and stores filled with authentic Mexican handicrafts.
The colorful rustic Portuguese style hotel offers seven spacious rooms with private baths. Amenities include ceiling fans, free Wi-Fi in public areas, hairdryers, beach towels and umbrellas, laundry service, massage services, and a pool.

Seven Crown La Paz Centro Hotel (or similar)
The Seven Crown La Paz Centro Hotel is located in downtown La Paz, Baja California Sur just 2 blocks from the Malecon. This hotel features 50 Guest Rooms and Suites, a swimming pool, wireless internet access, and exceptional service.
Registrations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Your registration is not processed until a deposit is received. Please make ___ reservations for the following people to join the Exploring Mexico’s Baja Peninsula Program. Enclosed is a deposit of $_____________ ($500 per person). An invoice for the remaining balance will be sent once the program is confirmed.

**Participant Information (please print)**

Name of CTY Student Attending CTY Student ID# (Required) Grade/Age

Name of Additional Student Attending Grade/Age

Name of Additional Student Attending Grade/Age

Name of Adult Attending Relationship to Student

Name of Additional Adult Attending Relationship to Student

Street Address City/State Zip Code

Home or Cell Telephone Work Telephone E-mail Address

**Registration and Deposit**
The undersigned agrees that their signature represents acceptance of General Policies, Terms & Conditions found at [www.cty.jhu.edu/family/travel](http://www.cty.jhu.edu/family/travel). To register, print this form and mail or fax with payment to CTY Family Academic Programs, P.O. Box 64300, Baltimore, MD 21264; FAX 866-832-8621.

Signature

**Method of Payment**

- Checking account
  - Bank account holders’ name:
  - Bank account number: ______________________ Bank routing number (9-digits on bottom of check): ______________________
  - I authorize payment of $________________________ Signature of account holder: ______________________

- MASTERCARD 
- VISA 
- DISCOVER
  - Card account number ________________/______________/______________/__________ EXP Date ________________
  - Name of card holder ______________________
  - AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE ______________________

- Check/money order payable to JHU/CTY. ($25 fee for all returned checks.)