

# Baja California Sur, Mexico, Birding Trip

March 4 - 13, 2024



The Baja Sur region of Mexico, formerly an island in prehistoric times, has been a longtime goal of many birders. It's remoteness and ruggedness, arid subtropical climate, and a bit of a fabled area speaks to many! Its west coast Pacific beaches, arid desert like and mountainous regions, to the Sea of Cortez on the eastern shores, makes it a diverse and wonderful area to bird. It has a distinctive flora and fauna, with many affinities to Southwestern Mexico. Although our focus will be directed towards seeing most of the important bird species of the region, there will also be time to enjoy some of the outstanding natural beauty.

Baja California Sur has dry periods in spring and winter, so our March visit should be mostly dry. Average temps are from the 50's to upper 80's.

There are 4 endemic bird species here (Xantus's Hummingbird, Belding's Yellowthroat, Gray Thrasher, and Baird's Junco), and several subspecies that someday may be elevated to species. Dry scrub species, coastal species, and pelagic seabirds are all around! The western and tropical influences are definitely felt. And then there are the whales. Whales give birth to their young here, and the best time is from January to March, and some consider it the best place in the world to see whales up close.

We will roam the Baja Sur region for the best chances of the endemics and local species both on land and at sea. We will take two boat trips for seabirds and whales. And we will of course sample the famous local cuisine!

**NOTE: This trip uses two different airports for arrival and departure!**

**Day 1 – March 4: Arrive in San Jose, Baja, Mexico** by 5:00 PM. Brief kick-off to our tour with dinner.

- **Dinner at the hotel**
- **Night in San Jose**

**Day 2 – March 5: Main Areas: Estero San José, Miraflores, Santiago, Los Barriles**

This morning we visit the **Estuary of San Jose**. We will seek out one of our endemic targets here, where **Belding's Yellowthroat** can be quite common. Other birds to see are: Osprey, Neotropical Cormorant, Belted Kingfisher, Reddish Egret, Little-blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Blue-Winged Teal, American Coot, Common Gallinule, Sora, Least Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Sora and various other ducks and waders like Gadwall, American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Redhead and Ruddy Duck. Along the coast Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Forster's Tern, Western Gull, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Hermann's Gulls, Cooper's Hawk, and Red-tailed Hawk should provide some entertainment as well. Other common desert birds around are Cactus Wren, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Common Ground-Dove, Ruddy Ground-Dove and White-winged Dove. Greater Roadrunner and Groove-billed Ani are possible too, and our second endemic **Gray Thrasher**, while also tracking down other birds like Scot's Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Cassin's Vireo, Grey Vireo, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, California Scrub-Jay, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Thick-billed Kingbird, and perhaps our first

**Xanthus's Hummingbird** of the tour—another endemic! After lunch, we'll start our trek north to **Santiago-Miraflores and Los Barriles** for a birding afternoon.

- **Breakfast at the hotel**
- **Lunch in Miraflores o Santiago**
- **Dinner in Los Barriles**
- **Night in Los Barriles**

### **Day 3 – March 6: Main Areas: Sierra La Laguna, San Antonio, El Triunfo**

We will depart for the northern foothills of the Sierra La Laguna to search for a host of endemic subspecies of birds that will likely be elevated to full species in the near future. These birds include “**San Lucas**” **American Robin**, “**Narrow-fronted**” **Acorn Woodpecker**, “**Viosca's**” **Band-tailed Pigeon**, **Cassin's Vireo**, **White-breasted Nuthatch**, **Oak Titmouse**, the relatively common “**Cape**” **Northern Pygmy-Owl**, and the endemic **Baird's Junco**. Other species included are: **Xanthus Hummingbird** (endemic), Broad-billed Hummingbird, American Kestrel, Elf Owl, Western-screech Owl, Common Poorwill, Scot's Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Western Tanager, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Townsend Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, **California Gnatcatcher**, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, **Gray Thrasher**, Cactus Wren, Bell's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Hutton's Vireo, Black Phoebe, Gray Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, **Thick-billed Kingbird**, **Phainopepla**, California Scrub-Jay, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, **Varied Bunting**, **Lazuli Bunting**, **California** and **Spotted Towhee**.

- **Breakfast: Box lunch**
- **Lunch: Picnic**
- **Dinner at El Triunfo**
- **Night in El Triunfo**

### **Day 4 – March 7: Main Areas. El Triunfo, San Antonio, San Juan de los Planes, Road to Presa la Buena Mujer, La Paz.**

We start the day birding around the town of El Triunfo and San Antonio until midday. Returning to lowlands we will enjoy lunch before continuing north to La Paz, birding the low desert and agricultural fields in San Juan de los Planes. We will see many of the common desert species here like **Costa's Hummingbird**, **California Quail**, **Gila Woodpecker**, **Gilded Flicker**, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Turkey Vulture, Crested Caracara, Red-tailed Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, **California Gnatcatcher**, Gray Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, **Thick-billed Kingbird**, **Phainopepla**, **Greater Roadrunner**, **Northern Cardinal**, **Pyrrhuloxia**, **Green-tailed Towhee**, Loggerhead Shrike, Hooded Oriole, Lark Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, **Varied Bunting**, **Lazuli Bunting**, **California Towhee**, Verdin, Horned Lark and **Gray Vireo**, **Western Meadowlark**.

- **Breakfast at El Triunfo**
- **Lunch in Tescalama restaurant (road to San Juan de Los Planes)**
- **Dinner at La Paz**
- **Night in La Paz**

### **Day 5 – March 8: Main Areas: Chametla, Ecopark (Lagunas de Oxidación) Ensenada de La Paz:**

This morning we will focus on shorebirds and waterbird as we visit the mudflats here that present some of the best shorebird habitat in Baja California Sur. **Yellow-footed Gull**, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Crested Caracara, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, Merlin, Lesser Nighthawk, Great-blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Reddish Egret, Tricolored and Little-blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, **Black Skimmer**, Caspian and Forster's Tern, **Least Grebe**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, Ridgway's Rail, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's Snipe, White-faced Ibis, White Ibis, Sora, Least and Western Sandpipers, Willets, Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits, American Oystercatcher, **Wilson's**, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers winter here. Nearby, the sewage ponds and agricultural fields where **Vermilion Flycatcher**, **Common Yellowthroat**, Common-ground Dove, Morning Dove, White-winged Dove, **Cactus Wren**, and American Pipit are among many birds that will keep us busy for the rest of the day.

- **Breakfast at the hotel**
- **Lunch in La Paz**
- **Dinner in La Paz**
- **Night in La Paz**

### **Day 6 – March 9: Main Areas: Isla Espiritu Santo-Boat Trip (all day)**

This morning we will board boats and venture in the Sea of Cortez to see one of the most beautiful islands in Mexico, the National Park Isla Espiritu Santo and other marine species such as the birds for this day are: Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Yellow-footed Gull, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Laughing Gull, Heermann's Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Brandt's Cormorant, **Blue-footed Booby**, **Brown Booby**, **Red-billed Tropicbird**, **Craveri's Murrelet**, American Oystercatcher, **Red Phalarope**, **Black-Storm-Petrel**, **Least Storm-Petrel**, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, **Sooty Shearwater**, **Black-vented Shearwater**, **Pink-footed Shearwater**, **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Red-tailed Hawk** and Common Raven, Where we will also have the opportunity to enjoy the spectacle of the sea lions, dolphins, and if we are lucky, we will observe the largest fish in the world, the whale shark.

- **Breakfast at the hotel**
- **Lunch at the Isla Espiritu Santo**
- **Dinner in La Paz**
- **Night in La Paz**

### **Day 7 – March 10: Main Areas: La Paz, Desert, Cd. Constitución, Puerto San Carlos Magdalena Bay.**

This morning we travel to Bahía Magdalena. This is one of the four wetlands located on the west coast of the Baja California peninsula. We would be birding on our way at few spots in the desert and agricultural fields of Cd. Constitución along our way to Puerto San Carlos in Bahía Magdalena. During our way we will enjoy watching birds such as Mourning Dove, **California Quail**, Northern Harrier, **Harris's Hawk**, Crested Caracara, Red-tailed Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Burrowing Owl, **Gilded Flicker**, Gila Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Greater Roadrunner, Vermillion Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Violet-green Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, **California Gnatcatcher**, Phainopepla, **Gray thrasher**, **Lazuli**

**Bunting, Lark Bunting**, Lark Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, and many other characteristic birds of the South Californian desert, to end our day near the Pacific in the majestic Magdalena Bay.

- **Breakfast at the hotel**
- **Lunch at Cd. Constitución**
- **Dinner at the hotel**
- **Night in Puerto San Carlos**

**Day 8 – March 11: Main Areas; Magdalena Bay, Puerto San Carlos.** Boat trip to whale watching (**Gray Whale**), and waterfalls as **Surf Scoter**, other birds are present like Eared Grebe, shorebirds as **American Oystercatcher**, Marbled Godwit, Willets, Western Sandpiper, White Ibis, **Reddish Egret**, Tricolored Heron, as well as **Pacific Loon**, **Brandt's Cormorant**, Double-crested Cormorant, Osprey, **Ridgway's Rail**, **Yellow (Mangrove) Warbler**, Orange-crowned Warbler, **Bald Eagle**, Savanna Sparrow, White-Crowned Sparrow, among many others. **Free afternoon**

- **Breakfast at the hotel**
- **Whale watching boat trip**
- **Lunch at Isla Margarita**
- **Dinner in the hotel**
- **Night in Puerto San Carlos**

**Day 9 – March 12: Main Areas: Puerto San Carlos, Cd. Constitución, Cd. Insurgentes, Loreto.**

By this point in the tour, we should have picked up most of our target species, and will largely leave the morning open for any remaining needs, before birding our way to Loreto. This quick tour should help you pick up most of the peninsular specialties, and a host of other bird species. With any luck we'll see between 175-200 species of birds by the time you head home.

- **Breakfast at the hotel**
- **Lunch at the hotel**
- **Dinner in Loreto**
- **Night in Loreto**

**Day 10 – March 13: Transfer to the Loreto International Airport**

- **Breakfast in the hotel**
- **To airport and flight home**

**Travel Times:**

- San José del Cabo - Miraflores: 43 min, 41 km
- Miraflores – Santiago: 20 min, 20 km
- Santiago – Los Barriles: 28 min, 30 km
- Los Barriles – Sierra La Laguna: 34 min, 37 km
- Sierra La Laguna - San Antonio: 30 min, 30 km

- San Antonio – El Triunfo: 10 min, 8 km
- El Triunfo – San Juan de los Planes: 31 min, 32 km
- San Juan de los Planes - La Paz: 50 min, 48 km
- La Paz - Puerto San Carlos, Bahía Magdalena: 3 hrs, 3 min, 267 km
- Puerto San Carlos – Loreto: 2 hrs, 29 min, 204 km

**Included in Trip:**

Bird Guide  
 Lodging  
 Food (breakfast, lunch, and dinner)  
 Ground transportation (Sprinter van) with insurance  
 Driver  
 Boat trips (2 - Espiritu Santo Island and Magdalena Bay)  
 Access fees to Natural Protected Areas  
 Water in van  
 Tips for restaurants

**Not Included in Trip:**

Airfare to destination/home  
 Alcoholic Drinks  
 Snacks and drinks (other than water)  
 Personal items and souvenirs  
 Tips for guide, driver, boat captain

**Max Participants:**

8

**Trip Fees:**

\$3680.00 Double  
 \$3,880.00 Single

**Airports:**

**Arriving:** San José del Cabo International Airport

**Departing:** Loreto International Airport

**Our Guide: Jonathan Vargas**

A native of San Blas Nayarit, Mexico, he studied biology at the Autonomous University of Nayarit, and obtained his master's degree in Marine and Coastal Sciences at the Autonomous University of Baja California Sur. During his professional training he carried out research studies on shorebirds at Pronatura Noroeste A.C., the Avian Ecology Laboratory at Weber State University, Utah, and at Point Blue Conservation Science, California, United States. He attended the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Coastal Solutions Program Fellow, class of 2019-2020. He collaborates with several national and international organizations dedicated to the research and conservation of birds. He has participated in several research projects with shorebirds and migratory birds in the Northwest of Mexico. He is the volunteer coordinator of the Urban Bird Program in the city of Ensenada, under the coordination of CONABIO, and is a member of the Snowy Plover Monitoring Network in Mexico (a.k.a. CHORLNEV). He is a well-known nature photographer and guide specialized in bird watching, and dedicates himself to the research and



conservation of birds in Mexico. As Founder and Director of Pajareando y Conservando, his main focus is applied research for bird conservation, and the sustainable use of natural resources through birdwatching.

Web site: [Pajareando y Conservando](http://Pajareando y Conservando)

