Baja California Sur, Mexico

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

March 8-17, 2027

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 dessert like and mountainous regions, to the Sea of Cortez on the eastern shores, makes it a diverse and wonderous 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.

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, including "San Lucas" American Robin, "Narrow-fronted" Acorn Woodpecker, "Viosca's" Band-tailed Pigeon, Cassin's Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Oak Titmouse, and the relatively common "Cape" Northern Pygmy-Owl. 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.

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. 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 considers 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!

This tour is organized and lead by the San Blas Jay Birding Tours.

NOTE: This trip used two different airports for arrival and departure.



Xantu's Humminbird

ITINERARY

Day 1. Mon, March 8 - 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. **Tue, March 9 - Main Areas: Estero San José, Caduaño, Santiago and Los Barriles**



. Belding's Yellowthroat

This morning we visit the **Estuary of San Jose,** where we will seek out one of our endemic targets, **Belding's Yellowthroat.**. Other birds to see are: Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, Reddish Egret, Little-blue Heron Tricolored Heron, Blue-Winged Teal, American Coot, Common Gallinule, Least Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Sora, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Lesser Scoup, Ring-necked Duck, Redhead and Ruddy Duck. Along the coast we should see 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. 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**, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, **California Scrub-Jay**, and perhaps our first **Xantus'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 Santiago
Dinner in Los Barriles
Night in Los Barriles

Day 3. Wed, March 10 - Main Areas: Sierra La Laguna (Ecotourism Ranch El Refugio)



Gray Thrasher

We will depart for the 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 and the relatively common "Cape" Northern Pygmy-Owl. Other species included are: American Kestrel, Scot's Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Western Tanager, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, California Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Bell's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Black Phoebe, Gray Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Thick-billed Kingbird, Phainopepla, California Scrub-Jay, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Black-headed Grosbeak, Varied Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, California and Spotted Towhee.

Breakfast: Box lunch
Lunch: pick nick
Dinner at El Triunfo
Night in El Triunfo

Day 4. Thu, March 11 - Main Areas: Sierra La Laguna, San Antonio and El Triunfo. Today we will climb back up to **Sierra La Laguna**, where we will explore the forest in search of **Baird's Junco** and other specialties. Returning to lowlands will enjoy lunch before continuing north to **La Paz**, birding the low desert. We will see many of the common desert species here like **Costa's Hummingbird, California Quail, Gila Woodpecker,** Ladder-backed Woodpecker, **Gilded Flicker**, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Mournig Dove, White-winged Dove, **California Gnatcatcher, Gray Flycatcher,** Ash-throated Flycatcher, Greater Roadrunner, Northern Cardinal, Pyrrhuloxia, Green-tailed Towhee, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, **California Towhee**, Verdin, Horned Lark and **Gray Vireo**, Western Meadowlark.



. Cassin's Vireo (San Lucas)

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. Fri, March 12 - Main Areas: Chametla, Ecopark (Lagunas de Oxidación) Ensenada de La Paz:



.Costa's Hummingbird

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, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, 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**, 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 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Lesser Scaup, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Crested Caracara, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's Snipe, White-faced Ibis, White Ibis, Vermilion Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat and American Pipit are among many birds that will keep us busy for the rest of the day.



Yellow-footed Gull

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

Day 6. Sat, March 13 - 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 marine species such as 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**, American Oystercatcher, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, **Sooty Shearwater**, and we will also have the opportunity to enjoy the spectacle of the sea lions, dolphins, and if we are lucky, the largest fish in the world, the whale shark!



Blue-footed Booby

Breakfast at the hotel
Boat trip to Isla Espiritu Santo
Lunch at the Isla Espiritu Santo
Dinner in La Paz
Night in La Paz

Day 7. Sun, March 14 - Main Areas: La Paz, Cd. Constitución and Puerto San Carlos (Magdalena Bay).



Greater Roadrunner

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, Northern Harrier, **Harrris's Hawk**, Crested Caracara, Red-tailed Hawk, Vermillion Flycatcher**, Cassin's Kingbird**, **Violet-green Swallow**, Barn Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, **California Gnatcatcher**, **Phainopepla, Gray thrasher**, 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.



Verdin

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

Day 8. Mon, March 15 - Main areas: Magdalena Bay, Puerto San Carlos.

Boat trip watching Gray Whales, and birds such as Surf Scoter, Eared Grebe, American Oystercatcher, Pacific Loon, Brandt's Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Osprey, Ridgway's Rail, Mangrove Yellow Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Bald Eagle, Savanna Sparrow (Belding's), White-Crowned Sparrow, among many others. Followed by a free relaxing afternoon.



Ridgway's Rail

Breakfast at the hotel
Boat trip
Lunch at Isla Margarita
Dinner in Puerto San Carlos
Night in Puerto San Carlos

Day 9. Sun, March 16 - 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.



Peregrine Falcon

Breakfast in the hotel
Lunch at Cd. Constitución
Dinner in Loreto
Night in Loreto

Day 10. Wed, March 17 - Transfer to the Loreto International Airport

Breakfast in the hotel
Transfer to Airport for 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



INCLUDES:
Pre-tour follow-up video call
Bird Guide and Local guides
Lodging
Food (breakfast, lunch, dinner)
Tips in restaurants
Van transportation with driver
Transportation to and from airports
Access fees to Protected Natural Reserves
Water in vans

TRIP FEES:
Double: $5,245 USD
Single: $5,495 USD

MAX PARTICIPANTS:
8

NOT INCLUDED:
Airfare to destination/home
Tips (Guide, Driver, Boat crew, Local guides)
Alcoholic beverages
Snacks and drinks (other than water)
Personal items and souvenirs



Our Guide: Jonathan Vargas

Jonathan is a Mexican ornithologist, bird guide, and nature photographer devoted to bird conservation, research, and sustainable birding tourism across Mexico. Originally from San Blas, he is now based in Morelia. He received his Master's in Marine and Coastal Sciences at Weber State University and research on shorebirds at Point Blue Conservation Science. He is a certified Nature Interpreter through NAI, and a diploma in Ecotourism Destination Development from the University of the Environment in Mexico. His conservation and research work have resulted in multiple scientific publications, including co-authoring two articles with Steve Howell on endemic bird species of the Islas Marías. He has participated in major birding events such as the San Quintín Bay Bird Festival, the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival (as a guide), the Chiapas Birding and Photo Festival, and the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival (as a speaker). As a fellow of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology through the Coastal Solutions Fellows Program, he has led shorebird conservation efforts in Bahía de Todos Santos since 2017, contributing to the recovery of the threatened Snowy Plover through multi-sector collaboration. Jonathan founded the Urban Bird Program in Ensenada (2018) and expanded it to Cuitzeo Lake in 2024, where he established a Christmas Bird Count circle. He is an active member of national and international monitoring networks and serves as an eBird reviewer in Mexico. He is also the founder of "Pajareando y Conservando" and the birding company San Blas Jay-Birding Tours, a leading birding tour operator in Mexico. Currently, Jonathan is developing a conservation and citizen science project in Cuatro Ciénegas, Coahuila and seeking funding to continue his work at the WHSRN site Cuitzeo Lake. His efforts have been recognized by local governments in Ensenada (2021) and Los Cabos (2022). www.sanblasjaybirdingtours.com









