Join Rachel Ashton

on a fabulous adventure to snorkel with sardine baitballs!

7-15 December 2028



All of the marine-wildlife photos are screen grabs from Rachel's film, taken with a GoPro, to give an idea of what it is like.

Each October to December, the Pacific waters off Mexico's Magdalena Bay showcase a thrilling and magical wildlife spectacle: the second-largest sardine run in the world, which attracts marlins, sharks, sea lions, and even whales. Pure heaven for marine-wildlife and snorkelling enthusiasts!



HIGHLIGHTS

- Close encounters with an array of marine wildlife, including marlins, sharks, dolphins, sea turtles, and sea lions, which are attracted to the sarin baitballs.
- Maximum time at sea each day, with exclusive use of local pangas (six people per panga), with as much time as we want in the water with the sardine baitballs.
- Fabulous underwater photographic and filming opportunities.
- Specially chartered live-aboard boat for the exclusive use of our small group of 11 plus Rachel (comfortable cabins, each with ensuite facilities).
- Experienced crew and great food.
- Spectacular action that occurs in very few places on Earth.
- Use of a spotter plane to search for activity.
- Baja California's glorious landscape as a backdrop.

This exclusive trip has been put together by Wildlife Worldwide

To book and for more information, please contact Rachel Ashton T: +44 (0) 7791-058-342 E: rachel@markcarwardine.com

DESCRIPTION

Magdalena Bay, Baja California, in sub-tropical Mexico, is a hotspot for sardine runs, second only in size to those occurring in South Africa. We meet in Cabo San Lucas on the southern tip of Baja California peninsula and travel north overnight to Magdalena Bay. We will spend the next few days around the outside of the bay. We leave the 'mothership' daily in pangas (small boats) driven by local fishermen. They have switched from fishing to eco-tourism, and we benefit from their vast experience of finding baitballs. Nobody knows these waters better than them! Previously they would have homed in on baitballs as a sure way of catching fish, but now it is to enable us to get in the water to see the incredible activity going on beneath the waves (we also have the help of a spotter plane). Also, being low down on a panga, you get a better perspective of dolphins or surfacing whales. The sea conditions in October are typically good, as are the air and sea temperatures.

We have early starts, and pack in as much snorkelling as possible. We never know quite what we will encounter, but on the vast majority of our trips out, we enjoy fairly calm seas with a low swell and loads of animals. Striped marlin, silky sharks Bryde's whales are the stars of the sardine run, but there is lots more to see, such as bottlenose dolphins, common dolphins, humpback whales, Ocean sunfish, California sea lions, with various species of turtles and seabirds. It can be very, very exciting!

The days end with spectacular sunsets, and the evenings are wonderfully peaceful – the boat is anchored close to land and you can relax on deck and stargaze (there is no light pollution).

This trip, in a nutshell, is perfect for people with a passion for both marine wildlife and being in the water. It's exciting to be able to plunge in and see what's happening below the surface as opposed to only getting tantalising glimpses of marine life from the deck of a boat.









SNORKELLING WITH SARDINE BAITBALLS

We get instructed how to behave while in the water (such as not to dive through the baitballs and be mindful of not getting too close). We drop from our panga a few metres from the sardines. The predators are fixated on the sardines and don't seem to be bothered by snorkellers. Sometimes the baitballs move with predators in pursuit, and we have to swim as fast as we can. Other times, the sardines are suspended in one place, and we can just lie in the water to watch the mesmerising action. Our panga is always nearby, and we can return to it whenever we wish. We can encounter a superpod of common dolphins, a couple of thousand strong, and we can get in to hear their squeaks and see them swimming beneath us and on the surface. Seeing a Bryde's whale lunge-feeding underwater is the icing on the cake – with a bit of luck, we can enjoy that unforgettable spectacle.

PLEASE NOTE… The main goal of this expedition is to snorkel alongside large bait balls and an array of marine wildlife. You don't need to be a diver to participate, but you should have basic snorkelling skills and feel confident swimming in open water that may sometimes get choppy. Sometimes we can be snorkelling among large numbers of silky sharks, or we might encounter other species, such as thresher and blue sharks. Putting on your snorkelling gear, swimming in deep water and repeatedly lifting yourself in and getting out of the panga can be physically challenging. To assist with getting in and out of the water, there is a small ladder on the panga. However, please be aware that this remains an active exercise, and a reasonable level of physical effort will still be required.





LEADER

Rachel Ashton has worked with zoologist and wildlife photographer Mark Carwardine since 2004, assisting him on many of his wildlife adventures. She has organised and co-led whale-watching trips to Baja California – probably her favourite place on Earth – around 50 times. A keen diver and snorkeller, she is passionate about marine wildlife. She has also organised and led trips to snorkel with sperm whales in Dominica and manatees in Florida, as well as with whale sharks and California sea lions in Baja.

She started out in advertising and marketing in Australia, before a happy career switch to BBC Wildlife magazine in Bristol, where she ultimately became Features Editor. She also wrote the captions for the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition for 15 years.

She returned super-excited from this baitball snorkelling trip in October 2025, which is a thrilling blend of being not only on the ocean but in it, too, with spectacular marine wildlife. This, with relaxing evenings on the boat and the enjoyable company of like-minded people, makes for a wonderful experience. *(Please note that all the wildlife photos here are screen grabs from the film she made with her GoPro, just to give you an idea of what the trip is like.)*





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ITINERARY *(this may vary according to conditions)*

7 DEC: Fly from the UK to Houston, USA, for the night in a comfortable airport hotel. (Transfers are not needed as you can reach the hotel from the terminal through an underground pass.)
8 DEC: Fly to San José del Cabo, Baja California. Transfer to Cabo San Lucas for a night in a comfortable hotel.
9 DEC: Meet at See Creatures dive shop, which is next door to the hotel. Transfer to Cabo San Lucas marina (5 minutes away) and set sail on the Gallant Lady late afternoon, heading north to Magdalena Bay.
10 DEC: We arrive around lunchtime and have our first snorkelling session this afternoon.
11-14 DEC: Full days snorkelling, from early morning until late afternoon.
15 DEC: Arrive back in Cabo San Lucas, disembark around 8.30am and transfer to the airport.
16 DEC: Arrive back in UK.



Typical Superior Suite (X5)



Premium Suite (X1)



Salon

GROUP SIZE
11 guests plus 1 leader.

WEATHER
Daytime air temperatures are likely to be around 24˚C-27ºC (75˚F-80˚F), with night-time lows of 10˚C (50˚F). Water temperature is around 15˚C-22˚C (60˚F-72˚F). The weather is usually good and sunny, although overcast skies and rain are not impossible.

ACCOMMODATION
The first night, if you have the flight package, is at Houston Airport Marriott. In Cabo San Lucas, we stay in the comfortable Casa Bella Hotel for the second night. This boutique hotel is set back from the busy part of Cabo (which is the lively waterfront area).



The hotel is a perfect location being right next door to the dive shop, SeeCreatures, where we meet to board the boat. The Gallant Lady *(left)* is a luxurious 35m vessel, meanwhile, with six beautifully appointed ensuite cabins. There is one cabin larger than the rest with a king size bed (Premium Suite). There is a spacious lounge and a sun deck with panoramic views, and a dining area.

PRICES PER PERSON
SUPERIOR SUITE: £4,395 excluding flights; £5,995 including economy return flights from London to San José del Cabo; £4,395 single supplement for boat and hotels.
PREMIUM SUITE: from £4,895 excluding flights; from £6,495 including economy return flights from London to San José del Cabo; single supplement £4,895 for boat and hotels.

Price includes: flights as indicated; accommodation as indicated; 6 nights accommodation aboard Gallant Lady; meals and transfers as indicated; non-alcoholic drinks aboard the Gallant Lady; guided activities throughout; guide services of Rachel; slideshow produced by Rachel to take home.

Price does not include: upgrade from economy if buying the flight package; single supplement in hotel and boat; passport and ESTA/visa expenses; excess baggage charges; cancellation, baggage and travel insurance (compulsory); USD35 port fee (in cash); alcoholic drinks; snorkel equipment (wetsuit, mask, snorkel and fins are available to hire); meals on land (there are muffins and coffee/teas available for breakfast at the Casa Bella in Cabo San Lucas); items of a personal nature such as laundry and telecommunications charges (wi-fi is available on the Gallant Lady for USD100); medical expenses; gratuities for crew and pangamen.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE PER PERSON:
- Non-refundable 20% deposit due on booking.
- Second-stage payment 20% due 7 May 2028.
- Balance 7 September 2028.

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