

North America



Photo: Baja Outdoor Activities

Espiritu Santo Circumnavigation (sea kayaking in Mexico) 9 days from \$1,190, Baja Outdoor Activities, kayactivities.com, 888-217-6659

Warm weather, camping on secluded beaches and snorkeling with sea lions; this 9 day trip around pristine Espiritu Santo Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that rises out of the warm azure waters of the Sea of Cortez like an orange colored layer cake, is one of the premier sea kayaking adventures in the world.

And it is relatively inexpensive and easy to get to, just a two hour boat ride from La Paz, Mexico near the southern tip of the Baja Peninsula. It is a leisurely trip with plenty of time to relax on the beach at the end of the

day with a book and a cold beer. Or just gaze out at the sea or explore the desert buttes and mesas of the island.

Baja Outdoor Activities offers two options for this trip, self-catered and fully-catered. I chose and highly recommend the fully-catered option which means that a motor boat (panga) carries all of your gear plus ice chests with cold beer and perishable food and a two person crew. The crew and guide did all of the cooking and dove for fresh seafood throughout the trip. The boat also provides a back up in case the weather turns bad, as it did for us when high winds and big swells made it difficult one day to move on to our next campsite.

See the article, "Never too Old for Adventure (A Perfect Storm in the Sea of Cortez)," and the December 22, 2015 blog entry under "Mexico."

Alaska: Journey to Sitka (adventure cruise) 8 days from \$5,755, Wilderness Travel, wildernesstravel.com, 800-368-2794

"Whales, eagles and bears, oh my," to paraphrase that famous line from the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. Plus seals, glaciers and some of the most dramatic scenery on earth. Alaska is one of my all time favorite destinations and of the several trips I have taken to Alaska in the last 50 years. My recent cruise along the Inside Passage in an historic, eight passenger, wooden yacht was at or near the top of my list.

Not only did this trip offer some of the best wildlife and scenery I have ever seen, the ship was able to get into secluded bays and coves that are

too small for the bigger ships that also cruise the Inside Passage. This also meant lots of opportunities for kayaking in protected waters, including a paddle through the aptly named Fords Terror, a narrow channel that turns into whitewater when the tides change. Shore excursions included up-close bear watching at a fish hatchery and easy hikes to a remote lake and a natural hot springs-fed bath on the banks of a roaring river.

I expected to see spectacular wildlife and scenery; I didn't expect to be served healthy, creative, gourmet meals that rivaled the best I've eaten in the major cities of the world. Maybe I was just hungry – (whale watching can do that to you) but each meal was a delight and a surprise. The chef, who was also the First Mate in the total crew of three, would not be out of place running the kitchen in one of the excellent, if overpriced, restaurants in my tony Venice Beach, CA neighborhood.



Photo: Don Mankin

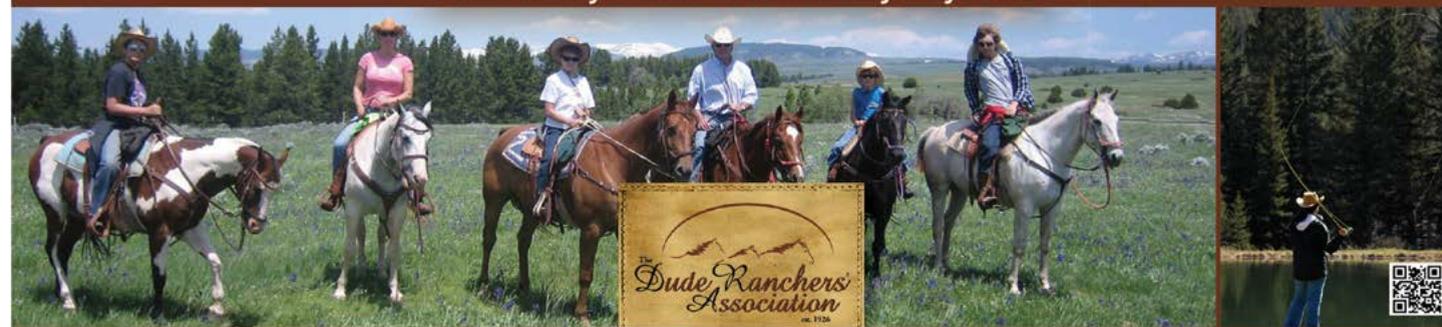
This trip is the subject of the featured travel story in this issue so read the article for more detailed

information. Also see blog entry dated July 27, 2018 under the category "Alaska."

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