

ALUMNI ADVENTURES

Explore the world with Carleton College

Baja by Schooner

Frequently Asked Questions

What's this trip really like?

If you've ever been camping, you already have a baseline understanding of what this trip will be like. No showers, close quarters, that Zen-like feeling of being one with nature, and the necessary flexibility that follows variable weather conditions.

On the boat you can expect a typical day to involve quite a bit of sailing; anchoring in a cove for the evening; hiking, beach-lounging, snorkeling; viewing marine life; and feasting on scrumptious meals. All the while you'll be chatting with old and new friends, taking sailing direction from the crew, and having the opportunity to help with general daily duties.

I've never been on a schooner before, what should I expect?

Well, it's small. The boat's about 80 feet long and you might be surprised by how many humans and their things can fit in such a small space. Below deck is a galley (small kitchen), about 15 berths including those used by the crew, and two lavatories. You'll be given the 5 cent tour when you arrive on board.

Sailing on the schooner is different from sailing on a cruise ship. In a schooner you'll feel the motion of the ocean more keenly, see wildlife up close, and really connect with your fellow passengers.

What is the sleeping situation?

The Seaward berths are all "bunk bed style." At least five of the ten participants will have to sleep in a top bunk. While each person will have an individual bunk bed, participants will be sleeping in close proximity of one another. Chances are at least someone will snore at some point! If you're a light sleeper, we recommend bringing earplugs.

I don't speak Spanish, is that a problem?

It depends on your comfort level. Not knowing the language is not a major problem but if you plan to extend your stay or are traveling to/from Mexico by yourself, you may feel more comfortable with at least a little knowledge of the language. It helps if you know how to order a meal, arrange transportation, and communicate to taxi drivers in Spanish. Some have found it helpful to use the Google Translate feature on their smartphones when attempting to communicate—likewise if you have no cell service a pocket English-Spanish dictionary might be handy. All the *Seaward* crew speak English.

How active is this trip? How physically fit do I need to be?

This trip is as active as you want it to be. No one's going to force you to go hiking or swimming or help out with boat duties but these things add a unique richness to the experience and sitting on a boat for several days without electronic entertainment may not be what you'd hoped. You don't need to be in tip-top shape to attend but you should be a regular exerciser, have steady balance when there's constant motion, not need assistance walking, and be able to get into and out of a top bunk or inflatable boat (if you're planning on going ashore at any time. Please note: there is a rope ladder that you'll need to climb to get on and off the schooner—good upper body strength will help you in the climb.

What kind of weather can I expect?

We've experienced a variety of weather on the boat from rain to strong wind to calm seas to sunny skies. Sometimes it will be cool and borderline cold in the evening, while in the afternoon it will be warm and almost hot. Base layers, helpful in Northfield, are also helpful in Baja California del Sur.

While it would be nice if Mother Nature took requests for good weather, warm water swimming is unlikely in this area. Past participants who like to swim found that a wetsuit kept them warmer than their swimsuit-only peers.

How should I prepare for sea conditions?

Sea conditions are as variable as the weather. Some passengers have experienced motion sickness in very choppy weather, others were bothered by the constant motion of the boat. Please discuss options for motion-sickness medication with your physician.

What's that first day on the boat like?

You'll arrive at the boat around noon on the day you set sail—don't hold us to that exact time, that's an estimate based on previous trips. When you arrive on board you'll meet the crew who will provide an orientation before setting sail.

The crew invites you to participate as much as you like and participate in ways that are comfortable for you. It does make things more fun if you participate in boat chores and sailing but please remember that the crew are the experts so they'll let you know if something's not safe for you to do.

Will I be able to charge my electronics aboard the boat?

Seaward has only one 120v electrical outlet on board, and for much of the trip that's energized solely by Seaward's batteries. It's generally preferred that the outlet not be used routinely. Please be aware that any electronics that need consistent charging, such as CPAP or personal laptops are difficult to operate aboard.

Is there WiFi or cellular access in Mexico or on the boat?

Most past participants have found it refreshing to be off the grid for a week. But we know that traveling today is made easier with cell service. Check with your provider for information on access and how to use your phone abroad. Most travelers have had cell and/or internet access in the hotels or around the cities we'll visit. While out to sea, there is extremely little to no cell and/or internet service.