



PHOTO: ALEXANDRA KHOSHABA

At the base of the arroyo on Ensenada Grande.



Alexandra Khoshaba takes a 5-mile hike to the bluffs overlooking the archipelago coves of the UNESCO world heritage site, Ensenada Grande, part of Espiritu Santo.

Adventures in Wellness

IN DECEMBER 2017, Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic (Nat Geo) formed a partnership with Los Angeles-based Exhale Spa, creating 4 to 5-day wellness-gearred itineraries. Perfect for those looking for a quick and speedy rejuvenation, the expeditions embark from La Paz, Mexico, a 2.5-hour drive from the San Jose del Cabo airport. In alignment with other Lindblad/Nat Geo itinerary offerings—Antarctica, Galapagos, the Amazon—the region, the thriving flora and fauna within, and the overall tone of the itinerary are what make each experience unforgettably unique.

The sense of excitement I experienced this past January while on the National Geographic *Sea Bird* evoked the exact same sentiments I felt when reading about Jacques Cousteau as a little girl. By invoking the child-like sense of adventure in my heart, I'm able to separate myself from the external world, focusing on my mind-body-soul connection.

THE GALAPAGOS OF THE NORTH

Across the turquoise seas within bioluminescent bays lie the islands of Espiritu Santo Archipelago National Park. A designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, Espiritu Santo is unspoiled paradise and home to the most biodiverse environment in North America. The Sonoran Desert landscape is one so rich in wildlife that it's no surprise the region is known as the Galapagos of the North. It is here that you are welcomed aboard the National Geographic *Sea Bird*, where inner explorers awaken to the calling spirits of the islands of Espiritu Santo.

The *Sea Bird*, an expedition sailing vessel, sets the stage for a “perfect wellness storm”. Acting as our base camp for the adventure, there are many excursion offerings for guests of all ages to choose from, ranging from Exhale Spa fitness classes to stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking, and open-water swimming with wildlife.

A FLOATING WELLNESS CENTER

Start your day off with a sunrise Yoga class by Exhale Spa, followed by a smoothie, massage, or facial at the onboard Wellness Center. For those who don't rise early, rest assured, there are at least two more yoga offerings (Beach Boot Camp/Restorative Yoga) each day. After finding your morning balance, take a 5-mile “backcountry” hike on Isla Partida, up from the beach to the sprawling bluffs atop the archipelago, keeping a watchful eye out for crawling cacti (think: barbed wire) as there is no clear-cut path on this hike!

For anyone looking for less activity, opt for a photography tour of the islands, led by a Nat Geo Naturalist aboard a Zodiak expedition craft. There is so much to see and do that four days on the *Sea Bird* feels like a week-long itinerary, jam-packed with adventure. As daring as this experience was, there was a surprising serenity also present throughout, giving the four-day itinerary a “yin-yang” theme—a perfect recipe when striving to make a mind-body-soul connection.

If I were to write a book, this experience would be the chapter entitled “Serendipity”. Sometimes, when a person is in the right place, at the right time, when conditions allow, magic happens.



PHOTO: JEFF LITTON

A mother killer whale feeding on manta rays near the Sea Bird.



Sea Bird guests enjoy an open water swim with sea lions.



A paddle board yoga lesson with the Sea Bird in sight.



The Nat Geo Sea Bird embarks in La Paz, Mexico.

Other Wellness Adventures

If sailing is not your cup of tea, try one of these land-based wellness destination favorites instead!

The Carillon Wellness Resort & Spa, Miami Beach, Florida
The former Canyon Ranch property-turned-luxury resort and residences offers 40+ fitness classes a day, clean eating at each meal, four outdoor pools, indoor climbing wall, and world-class hydrotherapy spa.

Miraval, Tucson, Arizona

Experience the world renowned equestrian therapy program. Allow the peaceful vibes of Tibetan Singing Bowls to recharge your spirits. Rejuvenate in the award-winning spa. Try a Farm to Table Cooking Class. This is the “Ultimate Ladies’ Weekend” destination.

BodyHoliday, St. Lucia, West Indies

For an unconventional twist on a bachelorette party, try BodyHoliday in St. Lucia. Give the following activities a try: windsurfing, kayaking, qigong, or SUP yoga, all while taking in the majestic beauty of the Pitons.

The Marbella Club, Marbella, Spain

A luxury resort with world-class golf and wellness programs. Perfect for small groups of distinguished travelers, looking for the best of the best.

EXCEPTIONAL ADVENTURE

On the morning of January 9, there was a loud cry from the bow of the ship. We were just finishing a Sunrise Yoga session toward the aft, when guests started running and yelling. At first, the yelling was a loud, jumbled commotion. As I made my way to the bow, the voices became clearer. Someone yelled, “mid-ship, portside!” I stopped dead in my tracks, as that’s where I was standing!

I looked over the railing at the churning sea where two killer whales surfaced in front of my eyes. One of the two made eye contact with me, while still enjoying her morning snack of manta rays. The other whale was clearly looking for something. That something surfaced moments later. It was her calf, a baby killer whale, mere feet away. I was hit with their sea spray, as they ate and played alongside the *Sea Bird*.

We pushed our breakfast to the wayside that morning, while our captain carefully maneuvered around the islands, ensuring a great view for all 62 guests, and the eight crew onboard. The guests were absolutely awestruck, as was the Expedition team. It had been five years since the last killer whale sighting in that area of the Sea of Cortez.

It had been some time since an experience took my breath away. So much so, that I almost forgot what it felt like. During that sighting, there were vivid emotions from my past, fusing into alignment with my present. The experience brought tears to my eyes, and fulfillment to my heart. I dreamt of this experience many times throughout the course of my life, and then it just happened, and somehow, was so much better than I could’ve imagined. Wellness Mission *accomplished!*

One can choose many paths when starting a journey to wellness. Whether it’s exercise, travel, adventure, a combination of the three, or something else entirely, you must find what pulls at your heart strings. Passion is a driving force of human nature. Using passion as its primary guide, Lindblad Expeditions ignites the magic that so many of us seek while traveling. 

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Barrington born and raised, Alexandra Khoshaba is a travel advisor specializing in Adventure and Wellness travel for Travelex International, a Virtuoso member agency. In her free time, she enjoys hiking with her fiancé, Will, and their two dogs. For more information, please visit: www.travelexinternational.com, or email Alexandra at: alexk@travelexinternational.com.