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Route Through Sea of Cortes Offers Beauty, Variety

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by Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty of

SAN EVARISTO, Mexico — Rising at dawn to catch the sunrise, cruise passengers nursing cups of coffee watched as the Safari Endeavour glided past the Baja California peninsula's ragged coast.

Fifty yards off the starboard bow, a whale surfaced, blowing a spray of mist and leaving a widening circle of ripples. On the port side, a squawking band of gulls hovered over a rocky islet shared by a colony of croaking sea lions.

They — and the Endeavour — were the only signs of life, or so it seemed to this first-time visitor to the Sea of Cortes, the 700-mile-long finger of ocean separating the peninsula from the Mexican mainland. (It's also known as the Sea of Cortez, Gulf of California and Vermilion Sea.)

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