

# off the fence.

## Whale Adventures With Nigel Marven

4 x 60'

### EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

#### 1. An Incredible Journey Begins

The newborn gray whale calves spend their first months of life in the safety of Baja's San Ignacio Lagoon, suckling and learning swimming skills before starting the first leg of their incredible journey. Nigel is spellbound by the 'friendly whales', mothers and calves that literally beg for his attention, rolling like puppy-dogs as he strokes them from his boat.

While at the lagoon, Nigel talks to the scientists studying the whales, and finds unexpected birds of prey nesting at the water's edge. As the whales start their journey north towards the border with the US, he takes a parallel road trip through the cacti-studded desert, meeting rattlesnakes, lizards and antelope en route.

#### 2. North to the Golden Gate

The whales' journey takes them right up the coast of California, where the hustle and bustle of human activity is a stark contrast to the peace of the Mexican desert. Nigel takes a boat into the Santa Barbara channel to catch up with the greys as they swim past, and meets some even bigger whales, humpbacks, putting on an awe-inspiring acrobatic display. A little further out are the Channel Islands, protected havens for a huge variety of animals, both above and below the waves. Nigel plunges underwater to swim in the forests of kelp, and on the island of Santa Cruz he's led on a merry dance by a unique and diminutive fox.

Continuing north, the whales and the presenter pass Big Sur, an incredible landscape home to an incredible creature - the Californian condor. Like the grey whales, this rare bird came back from the brink of extinction thanks to conservation efforts. Travelling across the Golden Gate Bridge to the far north of the State, Nigel finishes his Californian adventure in Redwood National Park, among giant trees that have been alive since the time of Ancient Rome.

#### 3. Swimming with Giants

As the whales continue into the cold seas of the Pacific Northwest, Nigel enjoys the celebrations of the Quileute Tribe as they hold their annual 'Welcome the Whales' ceremony. With scientists in the old-growth coastal forests of Oregon he meets an amazing owl and a nippy tree vole, before visiting the beaches of Whidbey Island to dig up information on grey whale feeding habits.

Crossing the Canadian border Nigel follows the whales to Vancouver Island, where he witnesses a frenzied killer whale attack and dives down for a whales-eye-view of an underwater land of giants. Finally, in the bays and inlets around Ucluelet, he meets up again with friendly whales as they feed on herring eggs and watches in astonishment as a playful grey shows off, leaping out of the water amidst a cloud of seabirds.

#### **4. Journey's End**

The whales are now on the home straight, and Nigel travels to the Bering Sea in the far west of Alaska to try to see them as they pass. On the Pribilof Islands he meets comical puffins, beautiful cormorants, cute Arctic foxes and fighting fur seals, but the whales prove elusive. But will his luck change when he tries further north, as the native Yupik people take him on a midnight boat ride through the icy seas round St Lawrence?

Back on the mainland, on the outskirts of the gold rush town of Nome, Nigel finds herds of shaggy muskoxen, before flying to Barrow, the most northerly city in the USA. Three hundred miles inside the Arctic Circle, polar bears roam the tundra and walrus float on icebergs offshore. The local Eskimos celebrate a successful hunting season with the spectacular blanket toss event – Nigel joins in but he's not very good at it! As the whales reach their final destination, Nigel takes a boat into the Chukchi Sea to say goodbye, and reminisces about the incredible journey they've shared.