

SEA OF OKHOTSK



INTRODUCTION

Embark on this incredible expedition to the Sea of Okhotsk. Barely known to Westerners, Russia's Sea of Okhotsk is bounded by the Russian continent to the north and the Kamchatka Peninsula to the east. Once home to a number of indigenous peoples, their translation for this sea was roughly 'Hunters Sea' or the 'Sea of Hunters' - a nod to the incredible abundance of wildlife found here.

Rooted in this rich history of the region is also a dark past. Between 1932 and 1953 it was estimated over 3 million prisoners were transported across Okhotsk to the gulags of the Kolyma goldfields. The town of Magadan was built to process these prisoners, however very little evidence of its sordid past remains.

Beyond its dark history, the Sea of Okhotsk is undeniably abundant with a rich wildlife. From Ribbon seals and Stellar sea lions to puffins, guilemots, auklets and fulmars - Seabird colonies and marine mammals reign supreme in the region. More excitingly, although extremely rare, if you are fortunate enough in one of your many landings you may even catch a glimpse of the elusive Kamchatka brown bear.

Come join us and explore this solitary sea, abound with a rich variety of wildlife and deep rooted expedition history.

ITINERARY

TRIP CODE

ACHESOK

DEPARTURE

14/06/2022

DURATION

12 Days

LOCATIONS

Russian Arctic




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DAY 1: Sakhalin Island, Port of Korasov

This morning we will all congregate at the Mega Palace Hotel and take a coach transfer to the Port of Korsakov some 40 minutes south of the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. (Full details of all these arrangements will be provided upon receipt of booking.) After a security check (we have Russian speaking staff to assist in this process) you and your luggage will be transferred to the Spirit of Enderby. Once on board you will be shown to your cabins and there will be a chance to unpack and explore the vessel. We plan to get underway soon after you have embarked. There will be briefings and introductions to the ship, staff and crew after we have departed and we will also take the opportunity to conduct a number of safety briefings. Today we are at sea clearing the southern tip of Sakhalin Island into the Sea of Okhotsk.



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DAY 2: Tyuleniy Island

We arrive at little known Tyuleniy Island off the south-east coast of Sakhalin Island. This small island is a stronghold for Northern Fur Seals and, since 1990, an increasing number of Steller Sea Lions. Up until the early 1900s fur seals were slaughtered in their thousands on this island. The Japanese who occupied Sakhalin Island at that time took as many as they could. An international convention, signed in 1911, on the research and management of fur seals changed these practices and the numbers have slowly been recovering, reaching a record in the 1950s of about 120,000 animals. In the 1960s a substantial field research station was constructed on the island and scientists monitored the population annually. In the 1990s Steller Sea Lions started breeding on the island and their colony now numbers about 2,500 animals. Sea conditions permitting, we plan a landing here. This will be an opportunity to photograph the seals and sea lions as well as talk with the researchers.



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DAY 3: Piltun Bay

It was the discovery of oil and gas in this region which put Sakhalin Island on many people's maps. The first commercial wells were built in Piltun Bay and they were not without controversy and protest. Biologists had been aware for a long time of a western population of Gray Whales that were (are) thought to migrate not to California (as most Gray Whales do) but possibly to somewhere in the South China Sea. Piltun Bay is an important habitat for this population so there were strict environmental practices imposed on the multinational developers. Researchers based at the disused lighthouse in Piltun Bay monitor the population during the summer months. We visit Piltun Bay today, where the oil and gas platforms are very obvious, but we go in search of the Gray Whales that live here, travelling by Zodiac inshore to the shallower waters where they are known to feed. If conditions are suitable we will cross a river bay to explore an estuary where large numbers of Harbour Seals hang out.



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DAY 4: Iony Island

There are 15 islands in this little known archipelago. Lying as they do in the western sector of the Sea of Okhotsk close to the continent, they are amongst the last places here to become ice free each year. This late ice can sometimes restrict how far we can explore. On the other hand if there is ice around, it increases our chances of seeing some of the seals including Bearded, Ringed, Largha and Ribbon Seals that breed here. Potentially this area is one of the best to get observations and photographs of the beautifully patterned Ribbon Seals. The seas around the Shantar Archipelago are also renowned for Bowhead Whales. Our chances of seeing these depend on the ice, the majority of sightings are in fact from later in the season, but we will be looking very hard. If we can land there will be birding, botany and photography excursions led by our team of on board naturalists. We have set aside two days here to maximise our chances of getting ashore and also having the best wildlife experiences.



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DAY 5: Shantar Archipleago - Day 5 to 6

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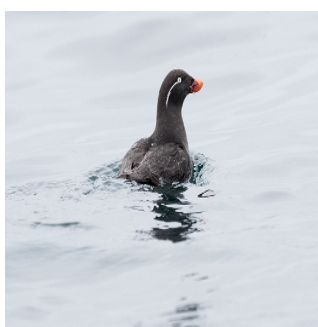
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DAY 7: Mal'minskie Island

The sight that greets you when you approach these three small offshore islands is 'birds'. There are birds everywhere, in the air, in the water and on the land. Numerous species breed here including large numbers of Spectacled Guillemots, perhaps the largest colony of these birds anywhere, as they are only found in the Sea of Okhotsk. Other birds include Ancient Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Parakeet Auklet, Horned and Tufted Puffin, Crested Auklet and both Common and Brunnich's Guillemot. It is little wonder with the abundance of birds that there is a good population of Steller's Sea Eagles on the island and adjacent mainland. Landing on the island is restricted to a small gravel spit and there are limited places to walk, however on the mainland we can stretch our legs and explore the taiga forest.



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DAY 8: Okhotsk Town

This town has featured in Russian Far East history since the earliest Cossack explorers came from the west. Prior to their arrival the indigenous people undoubtedly had seasonal camps here to harvest the salmon. Vitus Bering travelled overland from St Petersburg to Okhotsk in 1725, and again in 1733, and it was from this small town that both of these expeditions travelled to Kamchatka and beyond. Because of the hostility of the Koryak people in the north towards the Russian invaders, the Sea of Okhotsk was the main access route to Kamchatka. Today Okhotsk is the region's fishing centre. The port exports significant quantities of salmon and other fish. We visit the town, landing by Zodiac up the river near its centre. The local people are generous and welcoming, and will provide some entertainment in the town centre with a cultural display. This is a chance to experience genuine Russian Far East culture and embrace their hospitality.



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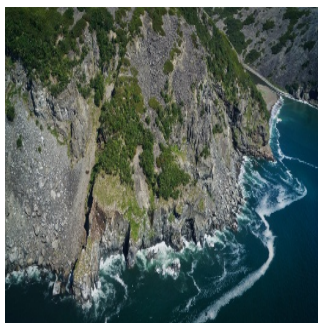
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DAY 9: Talan Island

An internationally known, but very difficult to get to, bird island, Talan lies offshore some 50 miles west of Magadan. It is infamous largely because of the hundreds of thousands of Crested Auklets that nest here. A lot of research has been done here in the past and there are a number of huts and obvious signs of human activity. There is also an extraordinary number of Black-legged Kittiwakes nesting along the cliffs, and not surprisingly a large population of Steller's Sea Eagles. If weather conditions are suitable we will circumnavigate the island by Zodiac before landing at the western end. We plan to return in the evening after dinner to witness the huge flocks of Crested Auklets amassing offshore before returning to the island. If the conditions are right it is one of those sights, and nights, you will never forget.



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DAY 10: Koni Peninsula

This is a mountainous region to the south-east of the town of Magadan. Approximately one third of it is protected by its inclusion in the Magadanskiy Zapovednik (a Federal Nature Reserve). This reserve protects among other animals brown bear and Snow Sheep. There are numerous places to land and the climate is very much affected by the Sea of Okhotsk. Very few visitors have ever landed on, or explored, the Koni Peninsula. Many of our landings are expeditionary, in that although we have landed at a number of places along the coast, many will be new and unknown to us, so we are never quite sure of what we will find. That is part of what makes our style of travel so interesting. We spend the day here with at least two landings at different sites.



DAY 11: Yamskiye Islands

These islands are also included in the Magadansky Zapovednik and are claimed by some biologists to be the largest bird colony in the North Pacific. According to bird counts there are an estimated 7 million birds nesting on Matykil Island, the largest in the group. Birds include Common and Brunnich's Guillemot, Crested, Parakeet and Least Auklets, Tufted and Horned Puffins and Northern Fulmars. The most abundant of these is the Least Auklet. The islands are also a well known breeding ground for the Steller Sea Lion and we will see large numbers both in the water and hauled on the few beaches on the island. We Zodiac around the coast as no landings are permitted, but you get a much better appreciation of the islands and the abundance of the wildlife by cruising the shoreline.



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DAY 12: Magadan

The name Magadan is synonymous with Stalin’s oppressive Gulags or prisons. It is estimated that between 1932 and 1953 more than 3.5 million ‘prisoners’ were shipped across the Sea of Okhotsk to Magadan or Nagaevo, as it was then known, to work in the Kolyma Goldfields. It is thought that only 500,000 survived the terrible conditions including the cold, lack of food, and inhuman treatment by the guards and officials. Nowadays there is very little evidence of this town’s tragic past. The local museum has an excellent display about the Gulags (sadly almost all information is in Russian) but the most poignant reminder is the ‘Mask of Sorrow’, a large monument, dedicated to those who suffered here, on a hill overlooking the town. Today it is a town of about 100,000 people. Fishing is important and gold mining is experiencing a revival with mechanical dredges and machinery successfully reworking the areas once worked by the prisoners with their hands. The port is kept open throughout the winter by icebreakers as it is the lifeline for those living here. The infamous Kolyma Highway, also known as the ‘Road of Bones’, connects Magadan with Yakutsk and the rest of Russia. We plan to arrive in the Port of Magadan early morning. There will be a complimentary shuttle to a central hotel in the city. In case of unavoidable delays with either weather and/or formalities we kindly ask you not to make any onward flight reservations until after 1300 hours. Those staying on board will arrive in the Port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy on 27 June; we kindly ask you don’t make any onwads plans until after 1200 noon. Note: During our voyage, circumstances may make it necessary or desirable to deviate from the proposed itinerary. This can include poor weather and/or opportunities for making unplanned excursions. Your Expedition Leader will keep you fully informed.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board ship
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Inclusions	All accommodation on board vessel All meals whilst on board All shore excursions and activities by zodiac Guiding and lectures by experienced expedition team Free use of rubber boots and snowshoes Comprehensive pre-departure material EXCLUSIONS International airfare Pre and post land arrangements Travel insurance Visa and reciprocity fees (if applicable) Excess baggage fees and items of a personal nature
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request. Contact us for more information.
Notes	Please note this itinerary may be subject to change depending on weather and ice conditions.
Price Dependent upon	Departure date, seasonality and availability.

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SUSTAINABILITY

Being environmentally accountable is a crucial part of our organisation. Chimu is currently striving towards using less paper, taking several initiatives to do so and tracking our progress along the way. Our goal: A paperless organisation. For this reason, all information given to you will be sent electronically. We encourage those who choose to travel with us to support our aspirations and actions and ask that you reconsider printing out documentation. To view these documents, you can download them to your iPad or portable computer before and during your trip.

Chimu is passionate and dedicated to sustainability measures and understands the crucial part sustainability plays within the tourism industry.

We use local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprint. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting. Our guides are all highly qualified (most with university degrees) or equip with many years of experience and are paid above the standard wage. Whether it be our knowledgeable local guides, locally produced meals or the transport on tour, we do not use imported goods when local products are available. We aim to minimise our impact on the environment and give as much back as possible to the communities we work in.

While visiting the many national parks, heritage sites, museums and landmarks our travellers are encouraged to explore remain culturally aware and sensitive. We further encourage you to buy appropriate souvenirs and discourage the buying of anything wrongfully made or taken from the environment i.e. shells and endangered species products. Information on how you can be environmentally conscious, and travel responsibly will be made available in our Travellers Guides and provided during your

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travels by guides and staff.

For more information on our sustainability policies, including how we are striving towards being a paperless organisation, click [HERE](#)

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