

KAYAK EXPEDITION NOTES AND ITINERARY

These notes will give you a brief idea of what you may experience on this new and remote voyage. Our emphasis is on exploring pristine landscapes, unique wildlife encounters and learning about the fascinating geology that has shaped this region. **However we stress that this is an expedition style cruise. Our adventures and daily program may be influenced by the changeable weather and sea conditions of the region.** The Commander Islands in particular is famous for foggy, overcast conditions and we expect many itinerary changes as a result. We'll delight in taking advantage of these spontaneous opportunities and there is always an element of the unexpected. We ask you to join us in the spirit of expedition cruising as we discover this extraordinary region with you.

Our journey is a ship-based exploration of the east Kamchatka Peninsula, Commander Islands and Chukotka Peninsula. The spectacular terrain combined with a lack of suitable infrastructure makes travel to most areas difficult except by sea. We believe travel by expedition ship is the safest, most efficient and enjoyable way to unlock the secrets of one of the world's last wilderness frontiers.

Using our mothership as a floating base camp, we hope to paddle two times a day, spending as much time on the water as possible. We will normally leave the ship immediately after breakfast for the first paddle of the day, and then often after lunch we will have time for a second paddle before returning to the ship for dinner. Most paddles range from two to four hours. We endeavour to have at least one extended paddle where we are away from the ship for most of the day. The flexibility of kayaking with a small private group ensures our own unique experiences, quite different from those encountered by the other passengers on board. However, we have the option to forego paddling and join the other passengers for shore excursions or zodiac cruises on any given day.

Until 1990 foreigners were forbidden entry to Kamchatka and even Russians needed to jump through a daunting series of bureaucratic hoops to get there. Kamchatka is a spectacular world of turbulent rivers, towering volcanoes, hot springs and snow, taiga and tundra, wild animals and friendly people. Summer's warmth fosters the growth of a profusion of wildflowers and spreads dappled light through magnificent birch, larch, fir and poplar forests. In summer spawning salmon run upstream, much to the delight of the world's largest brown bears, ravenous from months of winter hibernation.

Known only to a privileged few, the alluring Commander Islands promise to be one of the highlights of this voyage. Named in honour of the great Danish explorer Vitus Bering, the islands and the surrounding 50km marine zone are a globally significant conservation area, protected and recognised by UNESCO in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

To ensure you have safe, enjoyable paddles you should be of an intermediate standard and have an adventurous attitude. This should not be your first sea kayaking experience. You do not need to be an expert or know how to roll. However, you should have practiced a wet exit and assisted re-entry before the trip, and recognize that the weather will influence greatly what we can and can't do. You need to be comfortable putting spray skirts on, ferry gliding and have practiced support strokes. We have very little opportunity for instruction before we commence paddling, so we highly recommend that you have done some kayaking recently and in a variety of conditions.

Try to rent a kayak locally before leaving home if you would like some additional experience, or seek out a local operator for some paddling tuition. We often begin our first paddling session from the shore and after that will be launching directly from the ship so you should be comfortable paddling on seas that could have up to a 1 metre swell and some current. The water surface will vary from calm to wind chop. Your guide will assess your ability on the initial paddle and, if you have insufficient experience, he or she may not allow you to participate in rougher conditions. Our paddling excursions will not involve camping out.

We'd be happy to talk to you about your ability, and may be able to advise you how to obtain the necessary experience before your trip. Paddling numbers are limited and berths fill fast so it is essential you book early.

Please Note: Along with your voyage booking form we require all participants to complete our "Sea Kayak Booking and Experience Form" and return it to us immediately to secure your spot in the sea kayaking group.

ITINERARY –KAMCHATKA & CHUKOTKA (Petrapavlosk to Nome)

Day 1 – Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka

We start our adventure in the city of Petropavlovsk. Founded by Vitus Bering in 1740 and named in honour of his two vessels the St Peter and St Paul, this isolated city is the economic and cultural centre of Kamchatka. This afternoon, our Russian officers and crew welcome us onboard our expedition vessel *Marina Svetaeva* as we set sail through one of the finest natural harbours in the world, Avacha Bay.

Day 2 – Kronotsky Nature Reserve

Covering over 1 million square hectares, the Kronotsky National Biosphere Reserve is home to a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna. This afternoon, we hope to kayak and explore the area around Kamenistaya Bay, one of the best places in Kamchatka to see brown bears. The coastal lowlands of this large bay are covered in cottongrass, aspens and birch while large volcanic mountain ranges form a perfect backdrop for our explorations. Kamchatka is home to one of the largest wild salmon populations in the world and we may be able to witness the start of the annual salmon run, where millions of fish return to spawn in the coastal rivers. As we head to the Commander Islands this evening, entertaining and informative talks from our expert expedition team enhance our understanding of the wildlife, geology and history of the Russian Far East.

Days 3-6 – Commander Islands

Lying 175km off the Kamchatka coast, harsh and unstable climatic conditions have shaped the Commander Islands into a breathtaking maze of arches, sea stacks and cliffs. Dominated by impressive mountains that rise straight out of the sea, we intend to cruise Medny Island's remote bays and take nature walks on land. We hope to observe Arctic fox, sea otter, harbour seal, whales and seabirds such as red-legged kittiwake, red-faced cormorant, laysan albatross and parakeet auklet.

We also aim to explore the rocky coastline of magnificent Bering Island. We hope to paddle ashore at Commander Bay, home to the shipwrecked survivors of Vitus Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition of 1741. We pay respect to this great explorer at his gravesite and memorial. We may visit Severo Zapadny, a massive rookery situated below verdant green eelgrass meadows where northern fur seal, spotted seal and the rare Steller's Sea Lion breed side-by-side. Our visit to the Aleut fishing village of Nikolskoye includes a cultural performance and a trip to the small museum, home to a fascinating collection of Bering memorabilia and natural history displays.

Day 7 – Karaginskiy Island

We explore the northern part of Karaginskiy Island where we visit a native fishing camp of the Koryak people. Numerous habitats exist on this delightful island, including the taiga forests of mountain ash, pine and alder and a variety of lakes and wetland areas which make for great paddling. We may begin to see some of the Eurasian bird specialties that frequent these more northern latitudes such as willow ptarmigan, oriental cuckoo and Arctic warbler. Weather permitting, we hope to visit Verkhoturova Island, whose black-sand beaches are sometimes used as haul-outs by walrus.

Day 8 – Govena Peninsula

We spend today in and around the picturesque fjords of Yuzhnaya Glybokaya and Lavrova Bay. Jagged peaks form a dramatic backdrop to these peaceful bays, remarkably similar to Norwegian fjords. We hope to have the chance to stretch our legs among the tundra, keeping an eye out for brown bears, Arctic hare and mountain sheep. natural history displays, including one of the only complete skeletons in the world of the now extinct Steller's Sea Cow. Both fjords have remains of fish processing villages that were abandoned in the 1960's. These eerie ghost towns once supported up to 5,000 seasonal workers who came to Kamchatka each summer to coincide with the salmon spawning season.

Days 9 & 10 – Koryakskiy Coast

We spend two days exploring the spectacular inlets and bays around this remote coastline. Nomadic Koryak reindeer herders bring their herds to the coast this time of year and we may have a chance to witness this fascinating remnant of indigenous culture. We hope to land at St Peter Bay, named for one of Vitus Bering's ships, and walk among its grand valleys, carved out by ancient glaciers and covered in tundra, birch and alder trees. Stunning scenery awaits at Natalia Bay and we hope to visit Bogslava Island, home to tens of thousands of nesting puffins, guillemots and pelagic cormorants ...a stunning spectacle in our kayaks.

KAMCHATKA & CHUKOTKA
14 Day Expedition: 24 July – 6 August 2009

Day 11 – Chukotka Coast

Chukotka is Russia's easternmost region and home to the indigenous Chukchi people, believed by anthropologists to be the first to have crossed the Bering Sea to settle in the United States. We spend two days cruising along the scenic mountainous coastline of this area, hoping to encounter some of the locals, who live a traditional lifestyle of subsistence reindeer herding, fishing and hunting. We aim to stop in at Gabriel Bay to witness the salmon run and paddle and hike among the wetlands that dot the coastline.

Day 12 – At Sea

We are at sea today as we head east across Anadyr Bay, a vast body of water that stretches 400km at its entrance and choked with ice for up to 10 months a year.

Day 13 – Arakamchechen Archipelago

This morning we hope to visit Itygran Island, home to the World Heritage site of Whalebone Alley. Discovered by Russian anthropologists in 1976, this sacred site consists of an avenue of raised bowhead and gray whale ribs and jawbones once used for religious ceremonies by ancient Chukchi hunters. We aim to make a landing on Arakamchechen Island, home to a myriad of seabirds including guillemots, tufted puffins and crested auklets. Beaches on this island are often used as a walrus haul-out and we will be on the lookout for gray whales that frequent the archipelago's rich feeding grounds.

Day 14 – Nome, Alaska

Our adventure ends today as we dock early at the port town of Nome. Airport transfers connect with your onward flights.

Please see our Kamchatka Options leaflet if you'd like to spend time exploring the wonders of the Russian Far East before starting the voyage.

GENERAL INFORMATION

HIGHLIGHTS OF 'KAMCHATKA & CHUKOTKA

- An in-depth exploration of the spectacular Kamchatka Peninsula, one of the most remote and unexplored regions in the world.
- Learning about volcanoes and geothermal activity.
- Wildlife opportunities – prolific birdlife (puffins, auklets, kittiwakes, Steller's sea eagles, rubythroats), dolphins, whales, seals, sea lions, sea otters and the chance to see Kamchatka brown bears.
- Exploring the Commander Islands, a rarely visited group of islands rich in wildlife and blessed with dramatic mountain scenery.
- Visits to traditional villages where welcoming locals offer a glimpse of their traditional lifestyle.

This Tour Includes

- Ship's accommodation. All public areas are open to all passengers.
- All meals on board ship.
- All shore excursions from the ship including Zodiacs excursions.
- Lectures, videos, slide and film shows and guide services.
- Medical services. There is a resident medical officer and well equipped clinic on board.
- Port taxes, port charges and landing fees imposed by government authorities.
- Kayak guide, kayaks, paddling and rescue equipment.

This Tour Does Not Include

- Air transport and airport transfers before and after the cruise
- Excess baggage on any air flights.
- Visa, passport and vaccination charges and airport departure taxes.
- Hotels and meals not included in ship cruise itinerary.
- Tips on board for crew and service personnel.
- Laundry, postage, personal clothing, medical expenses, personal travel insurance and items of a personal nature such as bar charges, wine and phone calls.
- Emergency evacuation charges.

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