



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Russia

Chukotka – Where Russia's Day Begins

10th July to 24th July 2022 (15 days)



Walrus by James Wakelin

From rambling Polar Bears to pods of feeding whales, massive walrus populations, towering bird cliffs and sweeping tundra landscapes, Chukotka's coastline and Wrangel Island are a treasure trove of biodiversity. Also rich in history and culture, Chukotka is one of 83 regions which make up the Russian Federation and covers a vast area of North East Russia the size of England and France combined, and slightly larger than the state of Texas, yet is home to less than 50,000 people, the majority of which live in the towns. The indigenous people include Chukchi, Inuit, Even, Koryak, Chuvan and Yukaghir, while its non-native inhabitants are predominately Russian.

During this voyage we plan to fuse this history and culture with unforgettable Polar Bear and marine mammal encounters as we explore the pack ice from our ship and fleet of Zodiacs. This is a rare opportunity to experience, in depth, one of the last great undiscovered wilderness areas in the world which spends up to 10 months a year protected by ice. North of Chukotka, where the Chukchi Sea meets the Arctic Ocean, is nature reserve and World Heritage site Wrangel Island, which has outstanding wildlife values. Sometimes referred to as ‘The World’s Polar Bear Maternity Ward’, because of the high density of denning Polar Bears, it is an island that never disappoints those keen on natural and Arctic history. As the ice retreats each summer (further and faster than ever before) Polar Bears come ashore and we see good numbers of these, likewise walrus find refuge here each summer normally in large numbers. Birds like Snow Geese and Snowy Owls also breed here in good numbers. And of course, Wrangel Island is central to the story of the wreck of the Karluk and other Arctic exploration stories.

The ‘mammoth steppe’ vegetation complex, a rich and diverse relic from the Pleistocene epoch nurtures over 400 plant species and never fails to astound visitors with its sublime beauty. The number and type of endemic plant species, the diversity within plant communities, the presence of relatively recent mammoth tusks and skulls, a range of terrain types and geological formations in the small geographical space are all visible evidence of Wrangel’s rich natural history and its unique evolutionary status within the Arctic. On this special Chukotka expedition, we will meet the locals, hear their stories and discover the region’s rich Arctic history. We may also have the opportunity to experience thrilling cultural exchanges at their spirited annual Beringia Regatta and Festival. We will spend our time looking for, and observing, Chukotka and Wrangel Island’s abundant wildlife – specifically Polar Bears, walrus, seals, whales and birds. On land we will explore the expansive tundra with its wild flowers and dwarf tree species and we will watch for brown bears, reindeer, Arctic Foxes, ground squirrels and, if we are lucky, we may also see a Wolverine during this authentic, high Arctic expedition adventure.

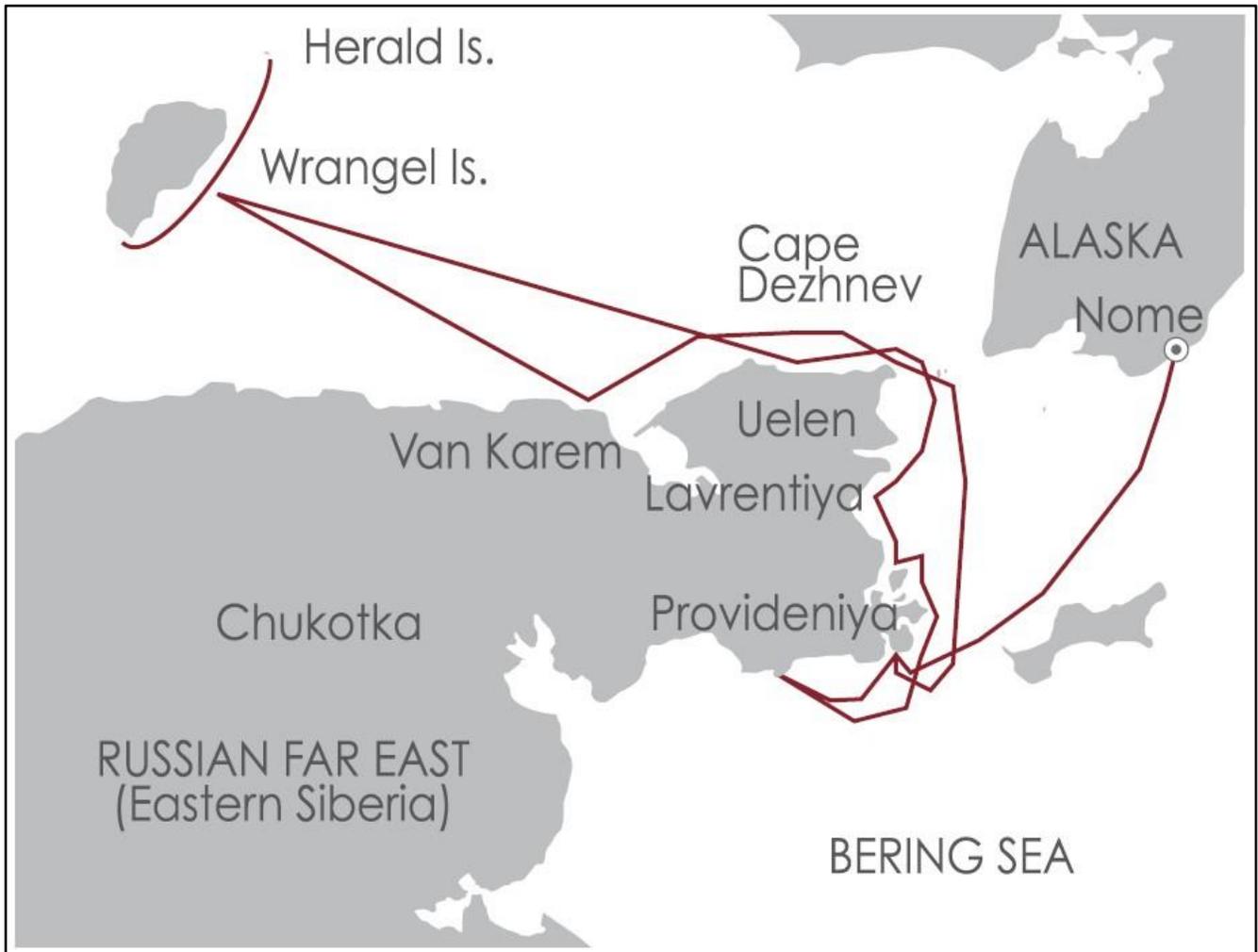
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Nome, Alaska (USA)
Day 2	Provideniya, Russia
Day 3	Presbrazhenya Bay
Day 4	Whale Bone Alley and Gil’mimyl Hot Springs
Day 5	Lavrentiya and Cape Dezhnev
Day 6	Kolyuchin Island & Kolyuchin Inlet
Day 7	At Sea
Days 8 to 10	Wrangel Island
Day 11	At Sea
Day 12	Bukhta Pultin and Unnamed Bay
Day 13	Bukhta Penkingney and Arakamchechen Island
Day 14	Provideniya
Day 15	Final departure from Nome, Alaska



TOUR ROUTE MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...



Horned Puffin by Adam Riley

Day 1: Arrival in Nome, Alaska (USA). Our expedition begins and ends in Nome, Alaska's most famous gold rush town. Make your way to the designated meeting point for your transfer to Heritage Adventurer (times and meeting point will be confirmed with your voyage documents) where the captain and expedition team will be waiting to welcome you aboard.

You will have the opportunity to settle into your accommodation and familiarise yourself on board before joining your fellow expeditioners on deck as we set sail across the Bering Strait and International Date Line for Provideniya, Russia.

Day 2: Provideniya, Russia. After clearing Russian Customs and Immigration there may be an opportunity to explore this fascinating former Soviet military port and administrative centre followed by an afternoon expedition.

Day 3: Presbrazhenya Bay. We aim to be cruising along the south coast of Chukotka today and plan to stop at Presbrazhenya Bay. This is an excellent opportunity to Zodiac cruise some spectacular bird cliffs, as long as sea conditions permit, we will get in close for some great photographic opportunities. We also plan to spend some time exploring the rich tundra landscape for wildlife and interesting flora.

Day 4: Whale Bone Alley and Gil'mimyl Hot Springs. Our first landing of the day we expect to be at one of the most significant and intriguing archaeological sites in the Arctic – Yttygran Island's Whale Bone Alley. This ancient Inuit site is decorated with Bowhead Whale skulls and bones dating back to the 14th Century, but was only discovered in 1976. Thought to be either a ceremonial site or hunting camp, a UNESCO World Heritage Site application has been submitted highlighting its cultural importance.

This afternoon we intend to make a landing at the Gil'mimyl Hot Springs. They are a short walk from the coastline, but well worth the effort. There will be a chance to explore the tundra for birds, plants and animals as we walk to and fro. After a soak in the springs, we will re-join the ship for a relaxing evening.



Tufted Puffin by Adam Riley





Ringed Seal by Forrest Rowland

monument and the remains of a Border Guard base. If the weather and sea conditions are suitable, we plan to land here and give you the opportunity to explore the area. A short distance south of the cape is the former Inuit settlement of Naukan. It is still possible to sense the melancholy in the air because the people never wanted to leave. As the relocation was fairly recent, there is a wealth of historic data and photographs that make a visit to this site even more poignant.

Day 6: Kolyuchin Island and Kolyuchin Inlet. Today is an expedition day where we plan to visit Kolyuchin Island and Inlet. Once the location of an important Russian Polar Research Station, this small island has since been abandoned following the collapse of the USSR. While the buildings are now derelict, the abundant wildlife the men studied is still there. Near the old station at the north-western end of the island are some of the most amazing bird cliffs in the Arctic, where puffins, guillemots, gulls and cormorants can be observed and photographed just metres away. A prominent Walrus haul out often congregates at the south-eastern end and, if the animals are present, you can expect some excellent photographic opportunities from the Zodiacs.

We also plan to visit Belaka Spit near the mouth of the Kolyuchin Inlet. So huge that it is visible from satellite photos, it contains vast numbers of waterfowl and migratory waders. This wild and desolate landscape is also a strangely beautiful birding hotspot. Joined by Beringia National Park rangers, we plan to search the dunes and tidal areas for Emperor Geese. If we are lucky, the Gray Whales which frequent the area will be feeding just metres offshore.

Day 7: At sea. Take the opportunity to spend time up in the bridge or out on deck looking

Day 5: Lavrentiya and Cape Dezhnev. Dropping anchor in beautiful Lavrentiya Bay, we expect to spend the morning exploring the historically and culturally rich village of Lavrentiya. A former indigenous settlement, this Soviet-planned community was established in the 1920s as an administrative centre where local Chukchi and Siberian Yupik were encouraged to move to. Visit the museum, meet local elders and enjoy an authentic taste and slice of village life in the main square.

This afternoon we will be at Cape Dezhnev, the north-eastern most point of the Eurasian continent. This cape commemorates the accomplishment of the Cossack Semyon Dezhnev who was the first European to sail through the strait in 1648 (80 years before Bering did). On the cape is a lighthouse, a



Polar Bear by Adam Riley





Humpback Whale by Adam Riley

for the first Polar Bears of our voyage with our expert expedition team as we cruise along the sea ice, or download photos as we navigate towards Wrangel Island.

Days 8 to 10: Wrangel Island. Ice and weather conditions permitting, we plan to spend this time exploring Wrangel Island. Known as the world's Polar Bear denning capital due to the large numbers of cubs born here, Polar Bears will be high on our list and, with a little patience, we should be rewarded with a number of encounters and opportunities to photograph them. The island is also the last landfall for migratory species flying north and each summer thousands of birds migrate here to breed including Snow & Emperor Geese, Steller's Eider, Snowy Owls, Pacific and Yellow-billed Loons, skuas and Arctic Terns. Other animals we will be looking for include Musk Oxen, Ringed and Bearded Seals, Arctic Fox and lemming.

Day 11: At sea. We will be steaming south from Wrangel Island and again sea and ice conditions will dictate our course and speed. We suggest participants will be richly rewarded by being on deck, because if we are in ice there could be further Polar Bears, Walrus, Ringed and Bearded Seals to be seen. As we make our way closer to the Chukotka coast keep an eye out for whales such as



King Eider by Forrest Rowland





Parakeet Auklets by Adam Riley

Humpback and Grey which are frequently seen, and increasingly, we are seeing a number of Bowhead Whales in this area. We will also use this time for lectures and recaps.

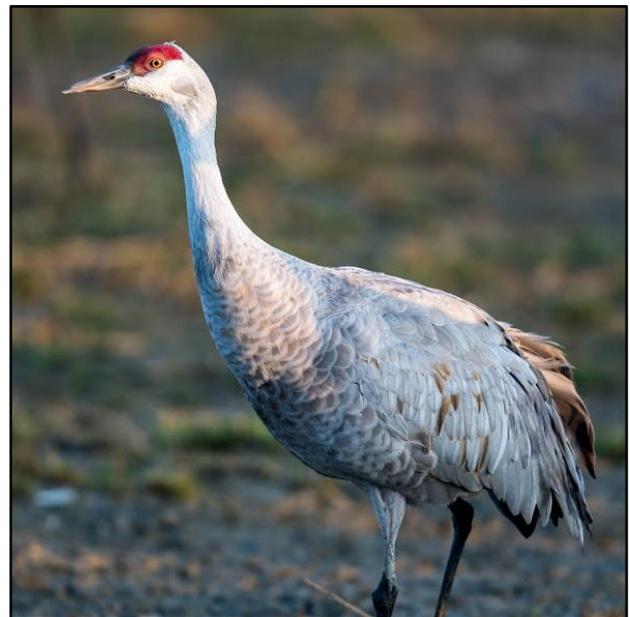
Day 12: Bukhta Pultin and Unnamed Bay. This morning we plan to enjoy a Zodiac safari of Bukhta Pultin. Beyond its narrow entrance this sheltered and rarely-visited bay opens revealing a new world. Explore the coastline, fields of wildflowers, look for wildlife or hike up the ridgeline and take in the impressive helicopter view. Nearby, picturesque Unnamed Bay is our planned destination for this afternoon where we will Zodiac

cruise to shore. Welcomed by an expansive stretch of beach, backed by a lagoon and surrounded by rugged hills, there's much to discover. Enjoy a walk along the beach and tundra looking for wildlife, or scale one of the nearby peaks and take in the stunning vistas.

Day 13: Bukhta Penkingney and Arakamchechen Island. This morning we will be launching our Zodiacs with a landing planned at Bukhta Penkingney, a long fiord cut into the coastline by glaciers and a popular spot for whale watching. Here a small braided river, its gravel bed studded with Willow bushes, winds its way down to the sea where we land. Exploring this scenic location, we will be looking for Arctic Ground Squirrels and Pikas, Willow Ptarmigan, Sandhill Cranes and Brown Bears attracted by the berries and salmon-filled river.

This afternoon we plan to cruise over to Arakamchechen Island just north of Cape Chaplino and separated from the Chukotka mainland by the 8-kilometre wide Senyavina Strait. Having watched Gray Whales feeding here previously, we recommend being out on deck as we slowly cruise through the strait. On Arakamchechen Island we will explore the lush tundra.

Day 14: Provideniya. After clearing Russian Customs and Immigration in Provideniya we will set sail for Nome across the Bering Strait. One of the world's most nutrient-rich stretches of water, each spring the Bering Strait is the scene of one of the planet's largest wildlife migrations. Beluga, Bowhead and Gray Whales, Walrus, Ringed Seals and numerous seabirds are all known to frequent the strait so there is plenty of opportunity for wildlife encounters.



Sandhill Crane by Dennis Braddy





Pigeon Guillemot by Adam Riley

Join the expedition team for a recap and disembarkation briefing before enjoying a farewell dinner to celebrate our journey as we sail back across the International Date Line.

Day 15: Final departure from Nome, Alaska. After breakfast and clearing US Immigration and Customs formalities it will be time to say our farewells. There will be a complimentary transfer to take you to the airport or a designated central location.

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.

VESSEL INFORMATION:



Heritage Adventurer is a true pioneering expedition vessel of exceptional pedigree often referred to as the ‘Grande Dame of Polar Exploration’. Purpose built for adventure in 1991 at Finland’s Rauma shipyard and specifically designed for Polar exploration, Heritage Adventurer (formerly known as MS Hanseatic) is 124-metres long, boasts the highest passenger ship ice-class rating (1A Super) and an impressive history of Polar and remote region exploration making her perfect for Heritage Expeditions signature experiential expedition travel.



Originally designed to accommodate 184 guests, we now welcome just 140 expeditioners to create a spacious, comfortable on-board experience and continuation of the exceptional, personalised expedition experience synonymous with the company. While a fleet of 14 Zodiacs ensures all guests are able to maximise their expedition experience. On board, enjoy stylish, sophisticated accommodations spanning 4 decks, visit the captain and crew in the Bridge with our Open Bridge Policy and dine on gourmet fare from leading Australasian chefs. Watch your adventure unfold from numerous spectacular indoor and outdoor viewing locations including Heritage Adventurer's famed Observation Lounge resplendent with 270-degree views and join our world-renowned team of naturalists, botanists, historians and experts as they interpret the natural and human history discovered during each voyage, as well as hosting regular lectures.

And should you require a little R&R, unwind in the library, pool, gym, hot tub, sauna and steam room, indulge in some retail therapy or find a quiet place to enjoy a coffee or cocktail from the café and bar.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, cabin prices, single supplement rates, relevant flight costs and spaces available for this cruise are displayed on our website. Please note that cabins have variable prices depending on type and size. Please see under IMPORTANT INFORMATION below.

You are welcome to contact the Rockjumper office for further information and specifics on the cabins variations and booking conditions for this tour.

Please note: The cruise costs are subject to major foreign exchange fluctuations and unforeseen increases in tour related costs (especially the price of fuel) and may have to be adjusted as a result. You will be notified by email if fuel surcharges or other price adjustments need to be implemented. Furthermore, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary due to unforeseen circumstances, but please be aware that we will attempt to stick as close to the original program as possible.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we now quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing.**
- b) Please also note that a Rockjumper leader may not accompany the expedition unless a minimum of 10 participants are signed up through Rockjumper. In the case that a Rockjumper leader is not on board, the professional expedition staff will take care of all participants signed up through Rockjumper.**
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs (especially fuel) and may have to be adjusted as a result. You will be notified by email if fuel surcharges or other price adjustments need to be implemented.**
- d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Arrival and Departure Details:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will begin in Nome, Alaska (USA) on day 1 and will conclude in Nome, Alaska (USA) on day 15 of the trip. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance or advice in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

