



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Russian Far East Siberia's Forgotten Coast *28th June to 10th July 2022 (14 days)*



Spoon-billed Sandpiper by David Erterius

Siberia's eastern coastline is undoubtedly one of the most remote and least visited regions of the globe. It is home to several groups of indigenous people, including the Itelmen, Koryak, Even and Chukchi. Fur trappers and sealers plundered the region's natural resources in the name of the Tsar in the early 17th Century. Stalin and subsequent leaders encouraged economic development in this part of the Soviet Union. As the iron curtain was drawn and the Cold War escalated, this region became forbidden territory. Travel to and within the area was strictly controlled, the number of military installations increased, early radar warning stations proliferated and Russia's Pacific fleet patrolled the coastline. This all changed in the early 1990s with Perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Military installations were abandoned, there were mass migrations of workers back west and towns and industries

were simply abandoned. As the heavily subsidized economy collapsed, the indigenous people were forced back to traditional ways of life.

Even now, travel through this region is still heavily regulated and virtually impossible for the independent traveller. There is little or no infrastructure, only a few kilometres of road, and no hotels apart from in the main towns of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy and Anadyr. These towns have scheduled air services, but access to the rest of the region either by air or sea, even for locals, is at best 'unpredictable'.

Throughout its chequered human history its rich natural history has largely gone unnoticed and unknown to the rest of the world. It is an amazing coastline dominated by the volcanoes of Kamchatka in the south, the fiords of what was formally the Koryak region, and the rich estuarine areas and tundra of Chukotka.

This coastline has one of the most diverse assemblages of wildlife and habitats of anywhere of a similar latitude on the globe, and virtually no people or visitors to disturb them. One of the most iconic species is the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper that is endemic to the region.

Since 2011 we have supported BirdLife International and Birds Russia research teams working on this species. This support now includes other seabirds and waders as researchers monitor potential changes in their populations and distribution due to a variety of reasons.

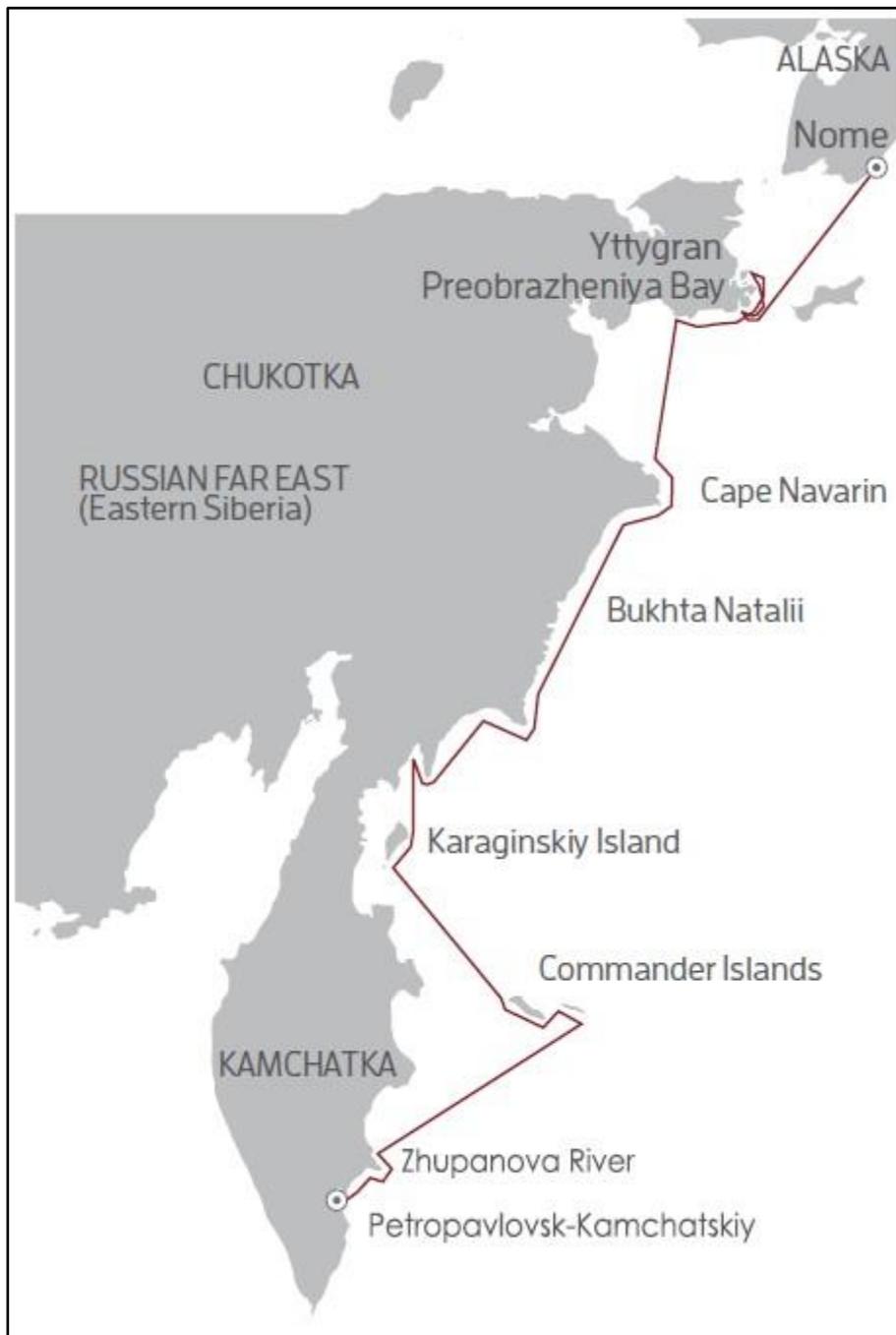
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy
Day 2	Zhupanova River
Days 3 & 4	Commander Islands
Day 5	Karaginskiy Island
Day 6	Verkhoturova Island and Govena Peninsula
Days 7 to 9	Koryak and Chukotka Coast
Day 10	Meinypil'gyno
Day 11	Preobrazheniya Bay
Day 12	Yttygran Island & Bukhta Peningney
Day 13	Provideniya
Day 14	Nome, Alaska, USA



TOUR ROUTE MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...



Steller's Sea Eagle by Adam Riley

Day 1: Arrival in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy. Arrive into Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, the capital and administrative centre of the Kamchatka Region and transfer to the port to board your ship. We suggest you arrive at least a couple days earlier and spend some time exploring the area. We can help you with accommodation and tour options including the world famous Valley of the Geysers. It is an historic town and there are a number of museums and monuments worth visiting.

Day 2: Zhupanova River. We plan to spend the morning Zodiac cruising on the Zhupanova River. Our main target here is the magnificent Steller's Sea Eagle and there are usually some occupied nests close to the river. Other possible species include Long-toed Stint, Aleutian Tern, Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler and Yellow-breasted Bunting. Good numbers of Larcha Seals are also often hauled out on sandbars in the river. The river is an important salmon fishery and we hope to have the opportunity to visit a nearby fishing camp.

After returning to the ship, we will then set sail again and by late afternoon, we should be over deep water heading for the Commander Islands. New species we will be looking for include Laysan Albatross, Mottled Petrel and Fork-tailed Storm Petrel. The Kamchatka Trench can also be excellent for cetaceans and we have previously seen Blue Whales on this crossing.

Days 3 & 4: Commander Islands. The wildlife-rich Commander Islands were first discovered by the Commander Vitus Bering when his ship was wrecked here in 1741. We intend to explore the islands through a combination of landings and Zodiac cruises, with our first stop being the village of Nikolskoye where there is an interesting museum displaying the skeleton of the famed (but now extinct) Steller's Sea Cow.

Birding around the village is also excellent and we should find Rock Sandpiper, Mongolian Plover, Glaucous-winged Gull and Pechora Pipit, with possibilities on



Crested Auklets by Adam Riley





Steller's Sea Lion by Adam Riley

subsequent landings including Rock Ptarmigan, Buff-bellied Pipit and Grey-crowned Rosy Finch. Zodiac cruising is often spectacular and we hope to encounter Red-faced Cormorant, Red-legged Kittiwake, Pigeon Guillemot, Horned Puffin, and Parakeet, Crested and Whiskered Auklets.

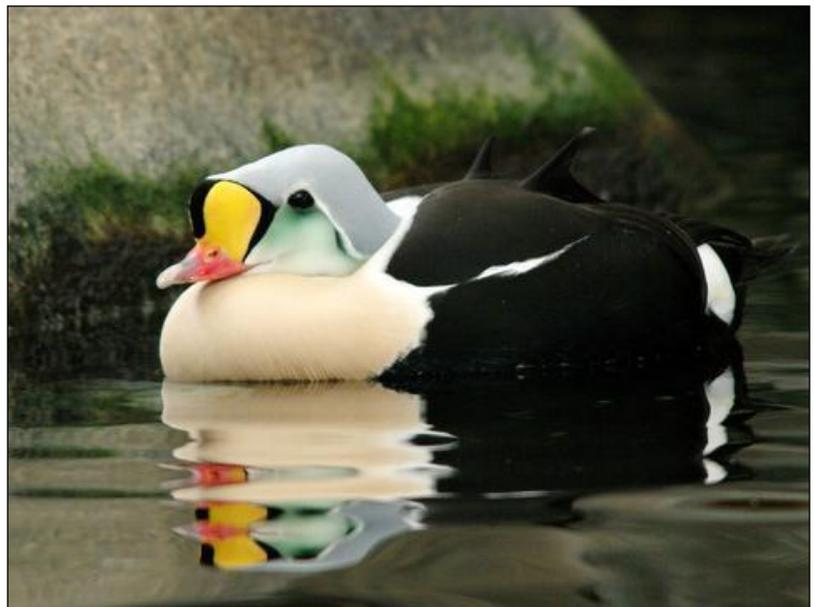
Our plans also include a ship cruise along the southern coast of Bering Island, as this area is excellent for cetaceans. Regularly encountered species include Humpback, Sperm, Northern Minke and Baird's Beaked Whales.

Day 5: Karaginskiy Island. Our proposed landing site is a patchwork of boggy tundra, ponds and shingle spits, and an interesting range of waders can be found here, including Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint and Red-necked Phalarope. The ponds also support a range of waterfowl and previously we have encountered Red-throated Diver, Bean Goose, Greater Scaup and Long-tailed Duck. Potential passerines include Kamchatka Leaf Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Bluethroat, Red-throated Pipit and Eastern Yellow Wagtail.

Day 6: Verkhoturova Island and Govenia Peninsula. Verkhoturova Island has some huge seabird colonies and by following a short trail to the cliff top, we should be able to enjoy some fantastic views of Tufted Puffin, Thick-billed Murre (Brunnich's Guillemot), Pelagic Cormorant and Black-legged Kittiwake.

Both Steller's Eider and Harlequin Duck occur too and we may also see Steller's Sea Lions, as they are often hauled out on some offshore rocks.

Later in the day, there will be either a Zodiac cruise or a landing on the Govenia Peninsula. Good numbers of Brown Bears can often be found here, as well as King and Common Eiders and Black and Stejneger's Scoters.



Male King Eider by Alasdair Hunter





Walrus bull by Adam Riley

Days 7 to 9: Koryak and Chukotka Coast.

We spend the next 3 days slowly cruising north along the spectacular Chukotka Coastline, stopping each day to explore secluded bays, walk onshore and enjoy the wealth of wildlife that abounds in this remote and little-visited region. We will keep the itinerary flexible to take account of the weather conditions, the advice of our Expedition Leader and the sightings we have already enjoyed over the past few days.

There are many equally wonderful areas to explore, including Pavla Bay, around which Brown Bears patrol and Steller's Sea Eagle soar, and the dramatic Bogoslova Island. Onshore we will explore a mix of tundra,

coastal marshes, birch and pine forest and freshwater lagoons, home to a wide variety of birdlife, including many of the species already outlined above, plus White-billed Diver, Taiga and Tundra Bean Goose, Emperor Goose, King Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Sandhill Crane, Rough-legged Buzzard, Gyr Falcon, Temminck's Stint, Red-necked Phalarope, Arctic Warbler, Red-flanked Bluetail, Little Bunting and Common Rosefinch. Flowers such as Kamchatka Rhododendron and Alpine Bearberry carpet the landscape, whilst land mammals to look out for, in addition to Brown Bears, include Red Fox, Arctic Ground Squirrel, Mountain Hare and even the rare Snow Sheep, which was recorded on one lucky occasion. Larger land mammals – although present – are elusive and rarely seen.

As we track north, we will also keep our eyes peeled for more seabirds, which may include the diminutive Kittlitz's Murrelet and tiny Least Auklet, as well as the more common Horned and Tufted Puffins, Crested Auklet, Short-tailed Shearwater and various skuas.

In our previous expeditions we have explored much of this coastline, documenting the distribution and abundance of many species. In 2011 we recorded a previously unknown breeding population of Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Researchers from BirdLife International and Birds Russia will be travelling with us to monitor changes and search for new breeding colonies. Their programme will provide unique opportunities for photography, hiking and 'birding' in a country with a rich diversity of species, and where literally only a few 'westerners' have ever been before.



Whiskered Auklet by Adam Riley





Tufted Puffin by Adam Riley

Day 10: Meinypil'gyno. We hope that today will be the ornithological highlight of our cruise, the opportunity to view one of the world's rarest and most beautiful waders on its remote nesting grounds! The enigmatic Spoon-billed Sandpiper is critically endangered. Over the past few decades, their population has nose-dived from an estimated 2,000 – 2,800 pairs in the 1970s to less than 100 pairs in 2011. They only breed on the remote tundra of Kamchatka and Chukotka and then migrate over 8,000 kilometres to their wintering grounds in South-East Asia. The threats to this attractive little wader are many and varied so we

will learn more of their plight during the cruise as well as raise money for their continued protection.

Over the years, Heritage Expeditions have built up a close relationship with the staff at the 'Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Taskforce' which monitors about 15 breeding pairs in the area. We will be guests of the Task Force and if it is possible, we will be guided to one of their monitored nests.

The Spoon-billed Sandpiper's territory is also home to a wide variety of other birds, including Emperor Goose, Sandhill Crane, Pacific Diver and Black Scoter, whilst offshore we will keep our eyes open for ghostly white pods of Beluga Whales, the sheer numbers of which can be breathtaking at times and are certainly comparable with some of the best-known whale-watching sites in the world.

Day 11: Preobrazheniya Bay. At Preobrazheniya Bay we look to Zodiac cruise its spectacular towering granite cliffs home to thousands of nesting birds including Black-legged Kittiwakes, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Common, Thick-billed and Pigeon Guillemonts,



Brown Bear by Meghan Kelly





Killer Whales by Meghan Kelly

Glaucous and Vega Gulls, Parakeet and Crested Auklets, Northern Fulmars, White Wagtails, Short-tailed Shearwaters and Red-throated Pipit. We will also be looking for Resident Killer Whales (Orca), known to frequent the coastline.

Day 12: Yttygran Island & Bukhta Peningney. Yttygran Island is home to the monumental ancient aboriginal site known as Whale Bone Alley, where whale bones stretch along the beach for nearly half a kilometre. There are many meat pits used for storage and other remains of a busy whaling camp that united several aboriginal villages at a time. In one location, immense Bowhead Whale jawbones and ribs are placed together in a stunning arch formation. Gray and Humpback Whales are frequently seen around the island. This afternoon we plan to visit Bukhta Peningney. This long fiord, cut into the coastline by glaciers, is a popular spot for whale watching. Exploring this scenic location, we will be looking for wildlife including Brown Bear.

Day 13: Provideniya. Today there will be an opportunity to explore this fascinating former Soviet military port and administrative centre. 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. 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 14: Nome, Alaska, USA. 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 Petropavlovsk-Kamchatksiy on day 1 and will conclude in Nome, Alaska (USA) on day 14 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.

