

JEWEL OF THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

THE CHUKOTKA, KAMCHATKA
COASTLINE AND KURIL ISLANDS

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
5 – 26 SEPTEMBER 2022



Heritage Expeditions

Antarctica • Western and South Pacific
Subantarctic Islands • Russian Far East





Koryakskiy Nature Reserve © A.Fergus



© D. Brown



Beringia National Park © S Blanc



The eastern seaboard of Russia dominates the North Pacific and yet very few people know anything about it, let alone have experienced it. This isolation has protected its most valuable assets – its wilderness and wildlife.

The area was considered an important 'frontier zone' during the Cold War, so it was off-limits to foreigners. Even Russians had to get special permission to travel here. These limitations were changed in 1991/92 with Perestroika but that didn't make it more accessible. If anything it is probably less accessible now than it was, as there are fewer people living in the region. This makes it the perfect destination for Expedition Cruising.

In the winter much of the shoreline is choked by ice, however during spring and summer the region is a hive of activity.

In September the thousands of birds that migrated here to take advantage of the phenomenal abundance of food will be preparing to leave. The reindeer and mountain sheep will be feeding in preparation for the harsh winter, while fat Kamchatka Brown Bears, which have fed extensively on berries in the early summer, then feasted on salmon in the rivers and creeks, will be enjoying the late summer sunshine.

Late summer and early autumn is a beautiful time to discover this wilderness. The onset of autumn paints vibrant colours on the tundra-cloaked hillsides creating the perfect postcard landscape.

On this journey from Nome, United States to Otaru, Japan we will make numerous landings along these remote coastlines. We will select sites that few people visit such as river mouths, fiords, bays and islands that, in our experience, offer natural history enthusiasts, photographers, historians and travellers the most unique of opportunities.

Voyage with us and discover the unrestrained beauty and jewel that is the Russian Far East, with the option to join an exclusive tour of the world's second largest geyser field – Valley of Geysers – via helicopter.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Nome, Alaska, USA

Our expedition begins 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 Sea and International Date Line for Provideniya, Russia.

Day 2: Provideniya, Russia

After clearing Russian Customs and Immigration there will be an opportunity to explore this fascinating former Soviet military port and administrative centre followed by an expedition afternoon

Day 3: Cape Dezhnev and Lavrentiya

This morning we plan to 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 this strait in 1648 (80 years before Bering did). On the cape is a lighthouse, a 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 few nautical miles south of Cape Dezhnev we visit Lavrentiya village, home to Chukchi, Yupik and Russians. While Russian development here began in the late 1920s, Lavrentiya had been an indigenous settlement long before. Explore the town square, sample local delicacies and experience traditional cultural performances with the friendly locals.

Day 4: Yttygran Island & Bukhta Penkingney

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 Penkingney. 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 5: At Sea

As we sail across Anadyr Bay there will be lectures, opportunities to look for whales and walrus from the deck, relaxing in the ship's bar and catching up with reading or downloading and editing photos.

Day 6: Bukhta Gavrila and Pika River

This coastline is rich in marine mammals and one creature we will be looking for, in particular, is the walrus. As the animals regularly move between locations, finding them can be a matter of luck, although we have had success here in the past. We plan to explore Bukhta Gavrila. The bukhta (or bay) was named after Commander Vitus Bering's ship, the *St Gabriel*, from the First Kamchatka Expedition. Behind the expansive beach there is a lagoon and we may also visit Chukotka's oldest, and the Arctic's southernmost, weather station which now sits abandoned. Due to strong tides around Cape Navarin there is an abundance of food here and it is not uncommon to see large numbers of seabirds and Gray Whales congregating in the area. This afternoon we plan to visit the



Koryakskiy Nature Reserve © J. Mishina

delta of Pika River – a well-known walrus haul out and one of the few places in the southern part of their range that sees thousands of animals coming to rest on the beach.

Day 7: Bukhta Natalii

Along the Koryak Coast there are many beautiful fiords (bukhtas or bays) and none are more beautiful than Bukhta Natalii. This fiord has two smaller fiords that drain into it from the south – Bukhta Pavla and Bukhta Petra (named after St Peter and St Paul by Commander Vitus Bering). We plan to cruise to Bukhta Pavla and make a landing. The magnificent mountain landscapes and tundra vegetation will surround us, along with the possibility of sighting Snow Sheep, as they are often seen in the area. There is a historic walrus haul out on Bogoslova Island which guards the entrance to these fiords.

Day 8: Tintikun Lagoon

Much of the southern Govena Peninsula was declared a state reserve. This wildlife-rich and rarely visited location is surrounded by jagged peaks and cliffs where waterfalls tumble down valleys,

and is home to Kamchatka Brown Bears, Steller's Sea Eagles and Largha Seals. During our Zodiac cruise we expect to enjoy numerous wildlife encounters and explore one of the region's most spectacular fiords Tintikun Lagoon. This fiord was blocked by a large terminal moraine during the last period of glaciation. A shallow river surrounded by jagged mountains, glaciers and forested slopes has breached the moraine, allowing access to one of the most picturesque locations found anywhere in the world. We take a closer look on a Zodiac safari. There is also a large population of brown bears and these should be feeding in, and around, the river mouth that drain into the head of the lagoon.



© B Van Doren



Day 9: Verkhutova Island

Verkhuturova Island has some huge seabird colonies which we plan to get close to by following a short, but steep trail to the clifftop. We should be able to enjoy some fantastic views of Tufted Puffins, Brunnich's Guillemots, Pelagic Cormorants and Black-legged Kittiwakes. We may also see some Steller Sea Lions, as they are often hauled out on offshore rocks nearby.

Days 10 to 11: Commander Islands

The Commander Islands consist of two large islands (Bering and Medny) with two smaller islands Ariy Karmen and Toporkov. These islands are located at the western extremity of the Aleutian chain. We intend to explore the

islands through a combination of landings and Zodiac cruises. Anchoring off Bering Island, named after Commander Bering who had the misfortune of discovering this land when his ship was wrecked here in 1741, we plan to explore Commander Bay. Walk to the graves of Bering and some of his crew who lost their lives during the long cold winter on this remote land and visit the site where they sought shelter. The reports from those that survived led to a 'fur rush' and the settlement of the islands.

Our first stop will be the village of Nikolskoye, where we will visit one of the only museums in the world to display a skeleton of the famed (but now extinct) Steller's Sea Cow. After the village we plan to visit the fur seal rookery at North-West Cape and Zodiac cruise the bird colony at Ariy Kamen. At nearby historic and atmospheric Medney Island we explore this fascinating landscape and wildlife including Pacific Sea Otters back from the brink of extinction after being hunted relentlessly in the 1800's.

Day 12: Olga Bay and Zhupanova River

Olga Bay is a part of the very large Kronotskiy Reserve, which also includes the world-famous

Valley of the Geysers. The habitat is quite different to what we will have been experiencing before with lush Kamchatka forests coming right down to the beach line. There is a possibility we will see brown bears and other forest fauna, as well as multiple bird species that live in this habitat. The seas around Olga Bay are frequented by large numbers of Gray Whales that are usually quite friendly to the visiting boats, if the conditions are right we will take a Zodiac whale-watching cruise. The rising volcanoes in the background here provide a beautiful setting to explore real Kamchatka wilderness.

This afternoon we make our way along the Zhupanova River by Zodiac. This journey allows us to explore a river habitat which is common in Kamchatka. The Kamchatka rivers (of which there are over 1,800) are important ecosystems that support a wide variety of wildlife. They are especially important for salmon spawning – one of Kamchatka's valuable natural resources. Steller's Sea Eagles are known to nest in the lower reaches of the river and we are likely to see many young birds as well as a few adults still hanging around their nesting sites.



Commander Island Reserve © M. Kelly



Day 13: Bukhta Russkaya, Kamchatka

If the weather is fine, fantastic views of the many snow-covered volcanoes that dominate the southern part of the peninsula will greet us as we sail up Bukhta Russkaya. Near the entrance of this isolated fiord, roughly 150 miles north of the southern tip of Kamchatka, there have been sightings of both the Long-billed Murrelet and the endangered Kittlitz's Murrelet. There is also an excellent chance of seeing Sea Otters, Larcha Seals, Steller Sea Lions and Orcas. We plan to make a landing at the head of the fiord where brown bears are not uncommon. During the night our vessel will enter Avacha Bay, one of the greatest natural harbours in the world.

Day 14: Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy

Today we plan to spend the day exploring Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, the capital and administrative centre of the Kamchatka Region. The town was founded in the 1700s by Commander Vitus Bering during the Second Kamchatka Expedition. All through the Cold War it was home to a significant

part of Russia's Pacific Fleet which included a large submarine base. The city and region was 'closed' to all foreign visitors until 1992. There is the option to join our inclusive tour, or upgrade to join a tour to the Valley of Geysers – the second largest geyser field in the world – via helicopter.

Day 15: Ptich'i Rocks and Atlasova Island

Early this morning we will arrive at the wildlife rich Ptich'i or Bird Rocks. The plan is to Zodiac cruise these fascinating formations where an abundance of birds, seals and Sea Otters reside. Sea Otters were hunted to almost extinction in Russia, but now number back to almost two-thirds of their historical range. Harbour and Larcha Seals are often seen here as well as a healthy population of Tufted Puffins. We then plan to sail through the Second Kuril Strait between Shumshu and Paramushir Islands on route to Atlasova Island where Alaid, the tallest volcano in the archipelago with an elevation of 2,340 metres, can be found.

Day 16: Onekotan Island

Today we plan to make a landing at Onekotan Island, an uninhabited island comprising two stratovolcanos connected by a flat stretch of land and part of

the Kuril Islands chain. Exploring the island you will find extensive evidence of fortifications built by the Japanese during World War II.

Day 17: Simushir and Yankicha Islands

After an early breakfast we plan to board the Zodiacs and cruise into a vast flooded caldera at the northern end of Simushir Island. Only a quarter of a century ago this was the location of a top secret Soviet submarine station where hundreds of mariners were based. This haunting reminder of the Cold War has now been completely abandoned and we can wander around what remains of the base, which is steadily being reclaimed by nature. Within the stunning setting of this huge caldera, we can expect to find a good range of species with one of the most common birds likely to be the spectacular Siberian Rubythroat which can often be seen singing from the tops of scrubby bushes. Over lunch we plan to cruise to Yankicha Island, the summit of a submerged volcano. Invariably this is one of the highpoints of the entire voyage as the number of alcids breeding here is truly incredible. Subject to weather and sea conditions, we will use the Zodiacs to circumnavigate part of the coastline and then





enter the flooded caldera. The concentrations of Crested and Whiskered Auklets here are simply spectacular and we can also expect to get great views of Brunnich's and Common Guillemots and both Tufted and Horned Puffins. We also stand an excellent chance of seeing Arctic Foxes that can be pretty inquisitive as they patrol the auk colonies looking for their next meal. As we return to the ship in the late evening many of the alcids will be returning to their colonies. Being surrounded by clouds of birds darkening the sky is an experience you will never forget.

Day 18: Chirpoy and Urup Islands

This morning we plan to anchor off Chirpoy Island where there are some dramatic headlands covered in breeding seabirds. Black-legged Kittiwakes and Brunnich's Guillemots are among the more numerous species that we are likely to find here. As we continue south towards Urup there is an excellent chance of observing Sperm Whale and Orca from the ship. Laysan Albatross, Ancient and Long-billed Murrelets, Brunnich's Guillemot, Crested and Rhinoceros Auklets and Tufted Puffins are often seen in good numbers on this crossing.

On an extended walk on Urup Island we will explore the scrubby woodland. Beachcombing and walking can be very rewarding here as there is the possibility of seeing both Larcha and Harbour Seals, as well as Pacific Sea Otters.

Day 19: Iturup Island

This morning we make our way to the community of Kurilsk, where local buses will take us into the volcanic highlands of Iturup. Passing through some spectacular scenery as we steadily climb up towards the Baranskiy volcano, there may be an opportunity to soak in the thermal pools. The higher altitude and different vegetation provides a great contrast to recent days. On our return to Kurilsk there should be an opportunity to explore the



village on a nature walk with our expedition guides or do some further birding.

Day 20: Sakhalin Island

We arrive at the Port of Korsakov on Sakhalin Island where we will clear Russian Customs and Immigration before setting sail for Otaru, Japan. This evening enjoy a farewell dinner and recap of our adventure.

Day 21: Otaru, Japan

This morning we arrive in Otaru, a port city in Hokkaido known for glassworks, music boxes, sake distilleries and picturesque Otaru Canal flanked with shops and cafes built within repurposed 1920s warehouses. After breakfast and clearing Japan Customs and Immigration, there will be a complimentary coach to a central hotel or to the airport. To allow time for disembarkation procedures and travel from Otaru, we do not recommend booking flights departing before 13:00hrs.

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.

JEWEL OF THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

THE CHUKOTKA, KORYAK AND
KAMCHATKA COASTLINE



HERITAGE ADVENTURER

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.

DATES

Voyage #HA220905
5 – 26 September 2022

PRICES

Heritage Suite **\$32,950 pp***

Located on Deck 6, Heritage Suites are an expansive 44m² and feature large double panoramic windows, king bed, large living area with a sofa, coffee table and chairs and grand marble bathroom with a double basin, bathtub and shower, large writing desk, floor to ceiling cabinetry for storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Worsley Suite **\$23,975 pp***

Located on Deck 6, Worsley Suites are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable chaise-style lounge suite, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Single **\$22,775 pp***

Superior Single Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Triple **\$14,985 pp***

Superior Triple Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 5 **\$19,475 pp***

Superior Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 4 **\$18,975 pp***

Superior Cabins on Deck 4 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Single **\$21,475 pp***

Main Deck Single Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Triple **\$14,450 pp***

Main Deck Triple Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

* The price listed includes the local landing fees of \$500 (All prices are per person in US\$).

PRICE INCLUDES

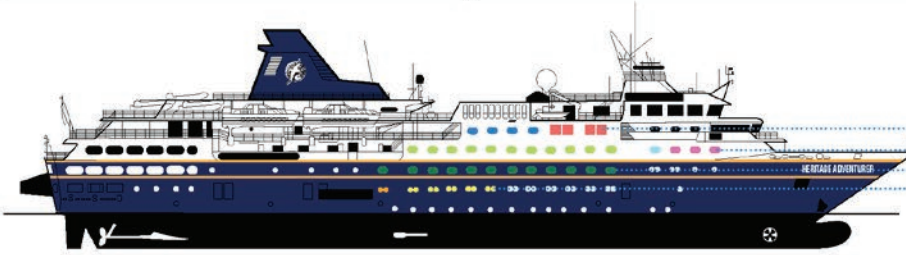
Pre/post cruise transfers, all on board ship accommodation with meals and all expedition shore excursions.

PRICE EXCLUDES

All items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/domestic flights, visas, travel insurance and Valley of Geysers tour.

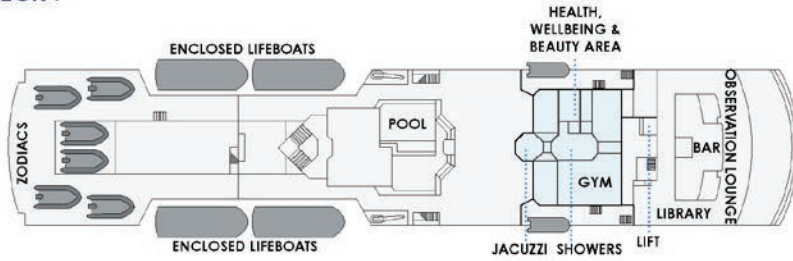
16/07/2021

Heritage Adventurer Deck Plan

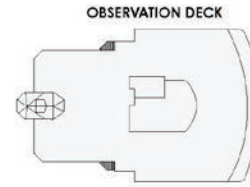


DECK 6: SUITES ● WORSLEY ● HERITAGE
 DECK 5: ● SUPERIOR ● SUPERIOR TRIPLE ● SUPERIOR SINGLE
 DECK 4: ● SUPERIOR
 DECK 3: ● MAIN DECK TRIPLE ● MAIN DECK SINGLE

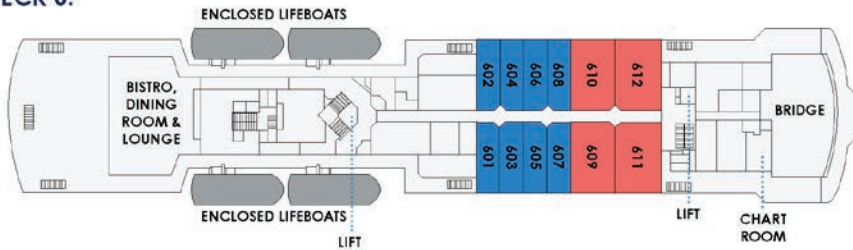
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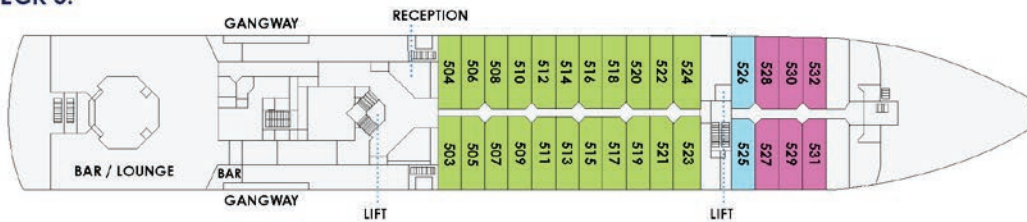
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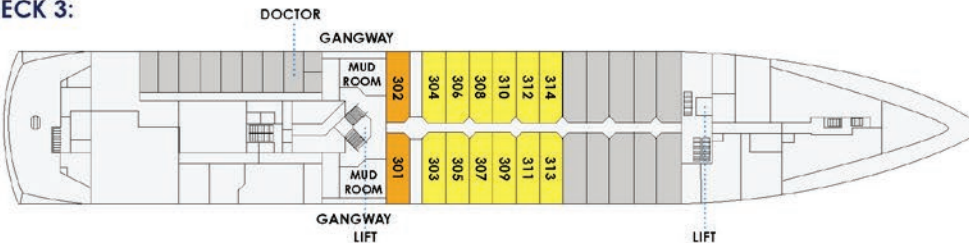
DECK 5:



DECK 4:



DECK 3:



DECK 2



SUITE CATEGORIES

- HERITAGE SUITE
- WORSLEY SUITE
- SUPERIOR SINGLE
- DECK 4 SUPERIOR
- DECK 5 SUPERIOR
- MAIN DECK SINGLE
- SUPERIOR TRIPLE
- MAIN DECK TRIPLE



Heritage Expeditions

Antarctica • Western and South Pacific
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