



PEREGRINE
TRAVEL CENTRE WA

ACROSS THE TOP OF THE WORLD

TO WRANGEL AND
HERALD ISLANDS

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
2 - 16 August 2021



Heritage Expeditions

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





Wrangel Island Reserve © I Menyshina



Wrangel Island Reserve © G Riehle



Wrangel Island Reserve © M Kelly



This unique expedition crosses the Arctic Circle and includes the isolated and pristine Wrangel and Herald Islands and a significant section of the wild North Eastern Siberian coastline. It is a journey only made possible in recent years by the thawing in the politics of the region and the retreat of summer pack ice in the Chukchi Sea. The very small distance between Russia and the USA along this border area was known as the Ice Curtain, behind which, then and now, lies one of the last great undiscovered wilderness areas in the world.

The voyage journeys through the narrow Bering Strait, which separates Russia from the United States of America, and then travels west along the Chukotka coastline before crossing the De Long Strait to Wrangel Island. There we will spend four to five days under the guidance of local rangers on the nature reserve. Untouched by glaciers during the last ice age, this island is a treasure trove of Arctic biodiversity and is perhaps best known for the multitude of Polar Bears that breed here. We

hope to catch many glimpses of this beautiful animal. The island also boasts the world's largest population of Pacific Walrus and lies near major feeding grounds for the Gray Whales that migrate thousands of kilometres north from their breeding grounds in Baja, Mexico. Reindeer, Musk Oxen and Snow Geese can normally be seen further inland. A visit to massive bird cliffs on nearby Herald Island is also planned. 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.

The human history of Wrangel Island is fascinating on its own. Highlights include a 3,400 year old Paleo Eskimo camp in Krassin Bay, controversy over discovery and ownership of the island, the amazing story of the survivors of the *Karluk*, Ada Blackjack the heroine of the island, the Soviet occupation and militarisation and, more recently, the establishment of this world class nature reserve. A host of similarly enthralling stories hail from several optional landings along the northern coasts of Chukotka. Our expert expedition team will take you on guided walks, Zodiac cruises and provide lectures to help you better understand and appreciate this unique High Arctic landscape.

Join Peregrine WA's very own ANNA BULLEID on this unique once in a lifetime Small Ship Expedition Cruise
Call 08 9321 1259 or email sales@peregrinewa.com.au to book your places.

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NOTE: You can join this expedition either in Anadyr or in Nome, Alaska. Those starting in Nome will fly by a Heritage Expeditions' charter flight to Anadyr and will join the ship and expedition members who have travelled direct to Anadyr.

Day 0: Nome

Those departing from Nome, Alaska, should arrive in Nome before midday and preferably the previous night.

On arrival, you should check in with Bering Air at the Nome Airport who will have details of our charter flight. During this flight you will cross the International Date Line, arriving into Anadyr on Day 1 of the expedition. You will clear Russian Customs and Immigration.

Day 1: Anadyr

All expedition members will arrive in Anadyr; depending on your time of arrival you may have the opportunity to explore Anadyr, the administrative centre of the Chukotka region, before getting to know your fellow voyagers and crew on board the ship. If flights have been on time we plan to depart Anadyr this evening. As we depart you are invited to join the captain,



© A Terauds



Beringia National Park © E Bell

officers and the expedition team on the bridge. The Anadyr estuary is renowned for its Beluga Whales.

Day 2: Anadyrskiy Bay

As we sail across Anadyrskiy Bay towards the Bering Strait there will be introductory lectures, an introduction to the staff and ship and a series of compulsory briefings and drills. There will also be a chance to relax or enjoy some 'birding' with our naturalists and/or settle into ship life and, for many of you, adjust to the time changes. Late this afternoon we will be in the vicinity of Preobrazheniya Bay where there are some outstanding 'Bird Cliffs' which we will Zodiac cruise before dinner.

Day 3: Yttygran, Nuneangan and Arakamchechen Islands

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 Whales are frequently seen around the island. After landing at Whale Bone Alley we will take the Zodiacs on a whale-watching excursion. We will also cruise close inshore of neighbouring Nuneangan Island (Bird Island) where a large number of seabirds nest.

On nearby Arakamchechen Island there is a prominent walrus haul out; if the animals are present we will land and walk across the tundra to view them from the cliffs.

Day 4: Cape Dezhnev and Uelen Village

Sea conditions permitting, we will land at Cape Dezhnev early this morning. The north-eastern most point of the Eurasian continent, it is sometimes possible to see the coast of America from this remote and lonely outpost. It is also an historic landmark named after the Siberian Cossack, Semyon Dezhnev, who in 1648 became the first European to sail from the Arctic to the Pacific.

A steep scramble from the beach brings you to an abandoned Border Guard base, a monument to Dezhnev, and another to all the sailors who have sailed these seas.



Beringia National Park © L Whitehouse



Wrangel Island Reserve © F Bell

Cape Prince of Wales in Alaska lies 89 kilometres across Bering Strait. A few nautical miles to the west of Cape Dezhnev we visit Uelen Village; the most north-eastern village in Russia. Archaeological work has revealed that walrus, seal and whale hunters have lived here for over 2,000 years. Today the population is predominantly Chukchi, with some Russians and Inuit. Hunting is still very important but the village is also one of the largest centres for traditional Chukchi and Inuit art in the world.

We will be entertained by villagers and visit the bone-carving workshop. Sculptures from the bone-carving workshop in Uelen can be found in most of the major museums in Russia.

Day 5: Kolyuchin Island

This small island was once an important Russian Polar Research Station and one of a number dotted across the Arctic. Sadly with the collapse of the USSR there was no money to maintain them and they were abandoned; the buildings are derelict but the wildlife the men studied are still there. Near the abandoned 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 from just metres away.

At the south-eastern end of the island there is a prominent walrus haul out, if the animals are present it is one of the easiest places to observe them and get some good photographs.

Days 6 to 10: Wrangel and Herald Islands

Ice and weather conditions permitting, we will spend the next few days on Wrangel Island and, if possible, we will also include a visit to nearby Herald Island.

Wrangel Island is one of those islands that you have to visit to appreciate. The earliest human occupation is dated 3200 years BC, and it has been established that they were seasonal hunters from Siberia. The island's presence was speculated about and marked on maps by early Russian explorers, but it wasn't until 1849 that it was 'rediscovered' by the British. A Canadian expedition attempted to establish a permanent settlement and claim the island for Canada; they were evicted by the Russians who took ownership of the island.

Today it is a Russian Federal Nature Reserve of international importance. A lot of its significance lies in the fact that it is a major Polar Bear denning area. In fact it is sometimes referred to as the world's Polar Bear maternity ward on account of the large numbers of cubs born there. It is also the last landfall for migratory species flying north. Each summer thousands of birds migrate here to breed, including Snow Geese, Snowy Owls, skuas, Arctic Terns, Ross's, Sabine and Ivory Gulls.



Wrangel Island Reserve © D Brown



Wrangel Island Reserve © G Riehle



Wrangel Island Reserve © E Bell

There are many landings that we can make to search out wildlife, wild flowers and Arctic landscapes. Polar Bears will be high on our list of animals to see and with a little patience we should be rewarded with a number of encounters. Musk Oxen and reindeer were introduced to the island in 1975 and 1948 respectively, though reindeer numbers are low. We also have a chance to visit Dragi Harbour where the survivors of the *Karluk*, which was crushed by ice in 1914, scrambled ashore and lived until they were rescued. If ice conditions permit, we will explore Herald Island to the east of Wrangel Island.

Day 11: North Siberian Coast

Although well mapped and charted there have been very few Expedition Cruises and, consequently, there is a lot of scope for expedition landings. Depending on weather and sea conditions we will attempt an expedition landing today. There are several choices, at Cape Vankarem there is a seasonal large walrus haul out, the animals may or may not be present. The area around the Cape is bounded by narrow sand ridges with numerous coastal lagoons and inlets; nearby there is a small Chukchi

village whose residents still make their living hunting walrus, seals and whales. There is another smaller Chukchi village called Nutepelmen which is situated on a spit at the entrance to Pyngopikhin Lagoon, further west of Cape Vankarem.

Day 12: Kolyuchin Inlet

So huge that it is visible from satellite photos, this inlet contains vast numbers of waterfowl and migratory waders. We concentrate our visit on Belaka Spit near the mouth of the inlet.

It is a wild, desolate landscape that is strangely beautiful. We search the dunes and tidal areas for birdlife including Emperor Geese and Spoon-billed Sandpipers. Gray Whales frequent the area and are sometimes spotted feeding only metres offshore.



Beringia National Park © A Terauds

Day 13: Bering Strait and Chukotka Coast

Early morning we will pass the Diomed Islands, sometimes called Tomorrow Island and Yesterday Isle because they straddle the International Date Line. Here Russia and America are separated by only 2.3 nautical miles of ocean. We will remain in Russian territory as we cruise south past the islands.

In 1867 when the USA purchased Alaska from Russia the new boundary was drawn between Big (Russian) and Little (USA) Diomed Islands. This makes Big Diomed Island Russia's eastern-most possession. The island was originally inhabited by Yupik Eskimos but after World War II the native population were relocated to the mainland. Today there are no permanent residents but Russia maintains a Border Guard station here. It is an important island for birdlife with good numbers of Black-legged Kittiwakes, Common and Brunnich's Guillemot and Horned and Tufted Puffin. If the Border Guards grant permission (we have applied for it), we will Zodiac cruise the coast near the station, the bird numbers in this region are spectacular, especially puffins.



© A Fergus

Later this afternoon we make an expedition landing on the Chukotka coast, our last chance to enjoy the wildlife and tundra landscape.

Day 14: At Sea

Join the staff for an expedition recap and a disembarkation briefing, and then simply relax as we sail across Anadyrskiy Bay towards Anadyr. Tonight we will enjoy a farewell dinner to celebrate our journey.

Day 15: Anadyr

After breakfast it will be time to say our farewells. There will be a complimentary transfer to the airport or to a hotel of your choice.

Those returning to Nome will join a charter flight that will depart

Anadyr around midday and, because of the International Date Line, will arrive back in Nome on the evening of the previous day. However, we strongly advise that you do not book any onward travel from Nome until the following day to allow for possible delays in the charter flight. Those returning to Moscow can either be transferred to the airport or hotel in Anadyr, depending on their flight times.

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.



Beringia National Park © J. Mishina

DATES

Anadyr to Anadyr

2 - 16 August 2021

PRICES

Heritage Suite \$14,300 pp*

Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed and a single bed in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.

Mini Suite \$13,500 pp*

Separate bedroom with a double bed and a single bed or sofa in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.

Superior Plus \$13,100 pp*

Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Superior \$12,000 pp*

One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Main Deck \$ 10,900 pp*

Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

Main Deck Triple \$ 9,850 pp*

One bunk (one upper and one lower berth) and one additional lower berth, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

* The price listed includes the additional local payment of \$500 which is payable in US\$ cash onboard the ship. (All prices are per person in US\$)

ADDITIONAL OPTION

Private charter flight Nome to Anadyr to Nome \$2,000 pp

PRICE INCLUDES

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

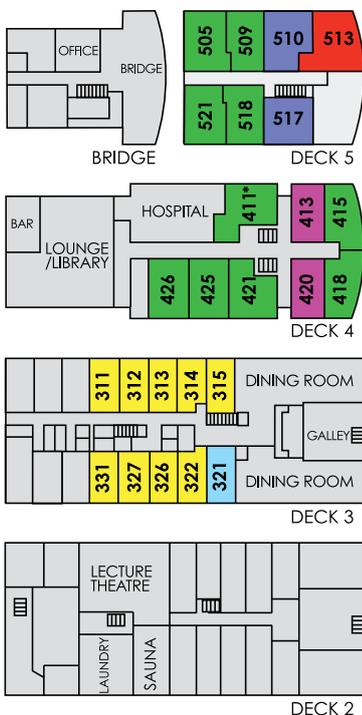
PRICE EXCLUDES

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

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■ **Heritage Suites:** Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed and a single bed in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.

■ **Mini Suites:** Separate bedroom with a double bed and a single bed or sofa in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.

■ **Superior Plus Cabins:** Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows. *Cabin 411 has a double bed with upper bunk.

■ **Superior Cabins:** One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

■ **Main Deck Cabins:** Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

■ **Main Deck Triple:** One bunk (one upper and one lower berth) and one additional lower berth, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.



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