

## 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. Wrangel Island is one of the least visited wilderness areas on the planet. **However we stress that this is an expedition style cruise. Our adventures and daily program may be influenced by the pack ice, changeable weather and sea conditions of the region.** 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 Bering Strait, the Arakamchechen archipelago, Chukotka coast and Wrangel Island. 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 these areas and even more restrictions on the narrow body of water between Russia and Alaska. This coastline is a spectacular world of large river systems, towering mountains, snow, tundra, wild animals and friendly people. Summer's warmth fosters the growth of a profusion of wildflowers creating lush alpine valleys. These areas are home to some of the world's largest seabird colonies, with large concentrations of polar bears, walrus and grey whales. We would also hope to see reindeer, musk ox and arctic fox.

### 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.**

## BERING STRAIT & WRANGEL ISLAND 13 Day Expedition: 6 – 18 August 2009

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### ITINERARY –BERING STRAIT & WRANGEL ISLAND (NOME TO NOME)

The thick pack ice of the Arctic Ocean is a likely obstacle for our passage to Wrangel Island – one of the least visited wilderness areas on the planet.

#### Day 1 – Nome, Alaska

Welcomed by our Russian officers and crew, we board Marina Svetaeva in the afternoon and set sail from Nome for our journey along the coast of Chukotka.

#### Day 2 – Itygran Island

Using kayaks and zodiacs we explore the Arakamchechen Archipelago today in search of some unique cultural and wildlife experiences. We may visit the Chuckchi settlement of Yanrakinnot, a small village whose inhabitants still practice a traditional way of life reindeer herding, fishing and hunting. 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 Chuckchi hunters. We seek out walrus and gray whales around the Arakamchechen archipelago, which is also an excellent habitat for bird species such as parakeet auklet, horned puffin and pomarine jaeger. Our lecture series begins with entertaining and informative presentations on the unique wildlife, geology and indigenous history of the remote Russian Far East.

#### Day 3 – Uelen & Cape Dezhnev

Today we sail through Bering Strait, the famous waterway spanning less than 100km that separates Russia from the USA. We plan to make a landing at Cape Dezhnev, the easternmost point of the Eurasian continent where we explore the remains of an abandoned polar research station and native settlement atop the windswept limestone cliffs. This afternoon we hope to visit Uelen village, where we'll visit some local craft centres and the museum, home to a fascinating display of Chuckchi and Inuit traditional clothing, artwork and ivory carvings. We may even see a traditional Chuckchi skin kayak which is being reintroduced. Here you may say a traditional Crossing the Arctic Circle in the late afternoon on the International dateline, we have the unique experience of straddling two continents, two time zones and two oceans. This evening we enter into the one of the world's least explored regions, the Arctic Ocean.

#### Days 4 – Kolyuchinskaya Estuary

Today we are aiming to explore the Kolyuchinskaya Estuary and the areas between the Amguena and Vankarem Rivers, an almost untouched ancient tundra ecosystem. This is a fantastic place for kayaking and hiking amongst the tundra flowers whilst watching for bird species such as yellow-billed loon, tufted puffins and the endemic emperor geese. We keep an eye out for ringed seals and whales as we head west to our next destination - Wrangel Island. The coming days are very much at the mercy of the weather gods. The state of the pack ice, which we expect to appear on our approach, will determine if we are able to meet our goal of visiting Wrangel.

#### Days 5 - 7 – Wrangel Island

If ice conditions allow, we plan to spend three days exploring the exceptionally rich natural history of Wrangel Island Nature Reserve, which covers some 750,000 hectares. Wrangel has undergone a unique evolutionary process that was uninterrupted by the glaciation that swept much of the Arctic during the last ice age. This has resulted in this seldom-visited island having the highest level of biodiversity in the entire High Arctic. Wrangel supports and protects huge seabird colonies and rarer bird species such as snowy owl and Russia's only remaining snow geese. The Reserve is home to the world's largest concentration of breeding polar bears - we hope to encounter these magnificent animals during our explorations, as well as other Wrangel inhabitants such as reindeer, musk ox, Arctic fox, walrus and gray whales. Wrangel boasts more plant species than any other Arctic island and during summer the tundra bursts into life. We hope to explore the coast, hike among lush alpine valleys, visit the Russian scientific station and an Inuit fishing settlement.

#### Days 8-11 – Chukotka Coast

During our return voyage along the remote and rugged Chukotka coast we experience expedition cruising at its best as we seek out places of interest along this extraordinary coastline. With our expert team of expedition leaders and lecturers guiding us, we will make various stops for paddles and visits to small Yupik and Inuit villages. We first head west of Wrangel Island and explore the Siberian Coast toward Pevek, covering part of the celebrated North West passage. We return east into the Chuckchi Sea where we hope to visit Cape

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Vankarem, a narrow tongue of land backed by a large lagoon. The beaches of this area are home to one of the largest walrus haul out sites in northeastern Russia.

**Day 12 – Arakamchechen Archipelago**

Crossing through the Bering Strait once again, we pass by the Diomedede Islands. These two specs of land span the international border and were a hotspot during the cold war, with American and Soviet military eyeing each other across the 4km gap between the islands. We are on the lookout for orca and beluga whales as we head south and aim to make a landing on Arakamchechen Island, home to a myriad of nesting seabirds including guillemots, tufted puffins and crested auklets.

**Day 13 – Nome, Alaska**

We bid farewell to our travelling companions as we dock early at the port town of Nome.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### HIGHLIGHTS OF 'BERING STRAIT & WRANGEL ISLAND'

- An in-depth exploration of the spectacular Bering Strait and Wrangel Island Nature Reserve, one of the most remote and unexplored regions in the world.
- Seeing the unique geology of this area and ancient tundra.
- Wildlife opportunities – prolific birdlife (puffins, auklets, kittiwakes, snowy owl, snow geese), dolphins, whales, seals, walrus, reindeer and the chance to see Wrangel Island polar bears.
- 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 Zodaics 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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