



There on the edge of last untouched frontiers some 300 km away from the mouth of the great Amur river in the southwestern part of the Sea of Okhotsk lies the Shantar Archipelago consisting of over 15 islands. Located close to the shores of the Siberian mainland, the Shantar Islands have no permanent population except for the meteorological station staff on the Big Shantar Island.

The little-known Shantar Archipelago is a secluded natural sanctuary inhabited by songbirds, birds of prey, whales and orcas, sea otters and lions, seals, brown bears who live there without being interfered with. Even the shape of the smaller islands resembles images of sleeping hairy sea animals.

The Shantar Archipelago circumnavigation tour operated by "Absolute Siberia" Events & Expeditions Bureau offers many opportunities to see and observe:

- such birds as dapper, boldly pied thick-billed murrelets, puffins, fulmars, kittiwakes etc. in large flocks setting off for feeding grounds, diving to catch fish, then returning to their nesting burrows. Probably the main bird watching highlight will be to see in its realm the great eagle of the north - Steller's Sea eagle, the heaviest eagle in the world averaging about 7 to 9 kg, unique among all sea eagles in having a yellow bill and possessing 14 (not 12) rectrices,

- Steller's bull sea lions battling ferociously for females while the latter's harems nurse their black-furred pups, seals which bobbing heads are often sighted in the sea while full size animals are easily seen on the island shores, orcas and blowing whales, incl. white ones and, if we are lucky enough - rare black bowhead whales that has no dorsal fins,

- the largest specimens of Kamchatka brown bear (beringianus race) that in big numbers concentrate along the shoreline of the Shantar Islands foraging among seaweed,

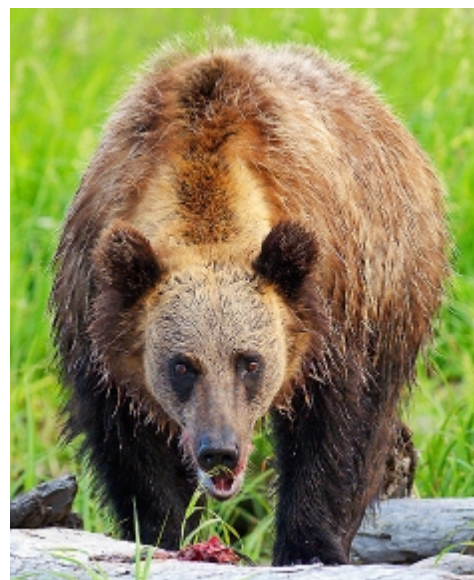
- unique geology of the Shantar Archipelago featuring huge jasper and white marble crags, great Prokofiev's waterfalls, The Diomid Rocks ("Dragon's Teeth"), the Seneca Hole Rock...

From our anchorages we will zoom shoreward in rubber Badger boats with outboard engines, and even when the sea is a bit rough the massively rolling waves will not stop us surfing ashore in these maneuverable boats to take photos of various mammals of the Shantar islands.



And, certainly, the expedition route will offer excellent opportunities for good fishing in the Shantar bays, the Deer and Big Anaur Rivers (silver loach, trout, hunchback salmon, red-finned fish, local kundzha and mikizha fish). The whole expeditionary adventure to the one-of-a-kind Shantar Archipelago will be a great a taster of the unknown Sea of Okhotsk, a well memorable lifetime journey.

This 14-days tour starts and ends up in Khabarovsk. The 10-days circumnavigation part begins in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur on board of the “Miracle” all-weather ocean type boat (Soviet made and renovated). On the 3rd day and after leaving the mouth of the Amur we set out to the Shantar Islands of the Okhotsk Sea passing by and visiting Lake Mukhtelya, Wrangler Cape, Squirrel’s Island, Smaller Shantar, Gulf of Yakshin, Birds and Bear Islands, then Sea Gulls & Ducks Islands, Big Shantar Island & Island of Kuskov, finally returning to the docks in Nikolaevsk on Day 12 and returning by air to Khabarovsk where the trip terminates on Day 14.



The trips are led by Alexei Shevelev (geologist by university education, professional photographer, licensed guide, editor & publisher; before his present positions worked as a professional diver on the staff of Lake Baikal rescue service taking care of active adventure lovers, boatmen or anyone in need, having rescued or saved some of their lives, and those of the wildlife species, sometimes. Visit his interesting web-site on minerals and geology at the address: www.petrographica.ru

“In my view, the Shantar is not just a geologically fantastic Archipelago with tremendous marine and shoreline wildlife. I’d rather call it “The Shantaristics” – the Continent of Dream...”

And it’s most likely to be true. Japanese photographer Yashiaki Nagasima after visiting the Shantar Islands said: “I can’t even express in word my sensations and feelings! I’ve been to over a hundred countries but never had I seen such nature before...”

Only 2 departures in August, 2012. Maximum group size: 8 persons, including T/C. Price per person: from USD 5850 p/p (on full board basis with 3 meals daily, twin room sharing at hotels and 4-birth cabins on board of the expedition boat, all kind of transportation en route, roundtrip domestic airfare – Khabarovsk – Nikolaevsk - Khabarovsk, services of local English-speaking guide.

“The Shantar Archipelago” Expeditionary Journey Logistics Summary (full tour itinerary & descriptions to be provided after pre-booking)

Days 1-2 – Meet tour leader in Khabarovsk. Sightseeing tour incl. Fish Museum & Aquarium. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 3 – Fly to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur to board the ocean-type “Miracle” boat and set out from the docks heading for Chkalov/Baidukov Islands with overnight at the Happiness Gulf.

Day 4 – Circumnavigate to Reinike Island, fishing and overnight in picturesque bay.

Day 5 – Proceed to the Wrangler Cape (first whales/orcas to be spotted). Reach the first islands relating to the Shantar Archipelago. Overnight near the aquatic mammals’ nursery.

Days 6 –7 – Proceed further via Belichyi and Malyi Shantar Islands, through the Gulf of Lindgolm taking shots of whales, sea lions, otters and beringianus brown bears . Approach the Big Shantar Island, explore the bays of the Big Shantar Island, and meet the only people of the Archipelago.

Days 8 – 9 – Set out westwards, full day boat trips to watch wildlife.

Day 10 –11 – Heading for the Wrangler Cape en route enjoying the sights of waterfalls, wildlife, then proceed further to the starting point of the journey – Nikolaevsk.

Day 12 –13 – Arrive in Nikolaevsk to take return flight to Khabarovsk and after the Farewell Party and special certificates award ceremony fly back home on Day 14.

