

The Russian Far East - Cruise the Ring of Fire  
From Petropavlovsk Kamchatskiy to Petropavlovsk Kamchatskiy  
10 to 21 July '09



Heritage Expeditions

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**Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy – at sea en route to Onkotan Islands**

Finally the day of departure, dawning overcast but warm and calm. We had all stayed on board last night with the last group arriving from the airport shortly after 8pm. The day started with a wake up call by Robyn announcing breakfast. The crew was making final preparations, last stores loaded and documentation completed, Julia from Travel Pacific came on board with last minute instructions and Victor Nikulin from the Kamchatka fisheries department joined us as an observer (a requirement of our permits). We were also joined by Nikolay the Director of the Commander Islands Nature Reserve who was hitching a lift to the Islands.

The Pilot came on board and lines were let go at 0930 and we sailed out into Avacha Bay – claimed by some Mariners as the greatest natural harbour in the world. There are no roads in and out of Petropavlovsk Kamchatskiy so all supplies must come in either by sea or air. In the port there were a number of ships at anchor with others underway, and we followed an empty tanker out of the Bay. Once clear of the entrance we turned south – our destination the Kuril Islands. Cloud obscured the mountains of the Kamchatka Peninsula but sea conditions were ideal – a small swell from the SE.

The remainder of the day was scheduled to be at sea with a series of briefings – in preparation for the expedition, these briefings were included:

- a) Introduction to staff and Expedition.
- b) Compulsory Life Boat Drill (theoretical and practical)
- c) Zodiac Briefing – in preparation for a landing immediately after breakfast tomorrow.
- d) A landing briefing for Onkotan Island tomorrow morning.

Between these briefings we were free to do what we wanted so many of us enjoyed the opportunity to be on deck with binoculars and cameras – not only were there good views of the mountains and coastline when the cloud lifted but there were northern fulmars, tufted and horned puffins, Brunnichs, Common and Pigeon Guillemot and crested Auklets.

**Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Onkotan Island**

#### **Ekarma Island**

The ship continued through the night towards Onkotan Island. It wasn't uncomfortable at all, although the captain reported strong winds about 0500 – they obviously didn't translate into rough seas.

Robyn came onto the PA at 7.10 am with a wake up call and announced breakfast for 7.30am. The Spirit of Enderby was due off the NE tip of Onkotan Island at 0900 Breakfast was followed by a briefing in the lecture room. Rodney briefed us on our proposed landing at Nemo Bay, describing the landing and activities in some detail. Three zodiacs were launched, driven by Nathan, Aleks & Kosta. Rodney formed the welcoming party on the beach. Nemo Bay is an indent in an otherwise rocky coastline – there was a black sand beach, which immediately gave away its origins as volcanic. When everybody was ashore Rodney led the way across a creek and up the benched track to the plateau. There were other obvious signs of human occupation. Rodney had explained that there were several periods of human occupation – including the Anu people, fur trappers, Japanese and Russian. We found obvious signs of the Japanese occupation which ended in 1945 when they were defeated by the Russians.

The wild flowers were SPECTACULAR – there is no other way to describe them. They were there in many varieties and in abundance, continuing across the plateau. A large percentage of the group headed off into the fog with a GPS in search of Black Lake and a group remained near the rim of the valley and spent their time "birding" and botanizing". Unfortunately the group heading for Black lake ran out of time and had to turn back before reaching the lake.

Last boat off the beach was at 1200 hours and many were reluctant to leave because of the wildflowers, but with promises of more special landings they came off. Captain got the ship away immediately and headed to Ekarma Island while we all had lunch and a chance to catch a few minutes sleep/rest. At 3 pm Ian (Geologist) gave a lecture entitled Volcanology 101 – in which he introduced the principals of plate tectonics with special reference to the Kuril Islands, which laid the foundations for further discussion. The ship was quiet for the remainder of the afternoon, a few people on the bridge and a few in the library – the rest must have been sleeping. There was not a lot to be seen as the fog was rather persistent.

We changed the program around putting dinner first, followed by zodiac cruising to take account of the small delay in our arrival. The fog lifted briefly just as we arrived at Ekarma Island, then closed in again and we circled the island going west about while we had dinner. Immediately after dinner Rodney gave us the briefest of briefings as the zodiacs were launched. Everybody who wanted to go was ready by 8pm and then, as if it had been ordered, the fog lifted and evening lighting combined with the cloud and the birds created a scene which will live in our memories for a long time.



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The five boats motored to the cliffs and then cruised along – there were literally thousands of fulmars, tufted and horned puffins and a few flocks of auklets. The fulmars were whirling and soaring over the cliffs (breeding grounds). We cruised around the headland and into the bay for great views of the coastline and volcano which dominates the Island.

Everybody was back on board by 10pm, with many retiring to the bar to celebrate the day and Kens birthday as the ship sailed south into the night and the fog.

## **Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Ushishir Islands - Yankicha Island**

#### **Simushir Island**

A comfortable night as we steamed towards Yankicha Island in the Ushishur Islands (the group is made up of two Islands Yankicha and Ryponkicha. Robyn made a wake up call at 0645, first sitting of breakfast was at 0700 – followed by a second seating. While we were breakfasting the captain brought the ship to Anchor and Nathan and Aleks prepared the Zodiacs for launching. Rodney briefed us on our activities at 0800 and disembarkation began at 0830.

With everybody in the Zodiacs we headed towards our landing on Yankicha Island. Rodney had warned us that the entrance to the caldera was subject to tide and swell but it appeared that the tide had just turned so there was sufficient water for the zodiacs to navigate the entrance – there was a swell running, but was barely breaking. Once inside the Caldera it was calm and sheltered and another unforgettable experience began. Words are inadequate describe it – those who experienced it will be able to relive it through the 100's of photos that were taken. There were rafts consisting of thousands of auklets. They would often take to the wing, circling and whirling overhead before landing again. There were also thousands of birds in the sky at once – at times the sky was black with birds. There are two species of auklets nesting here; the crested and whiskered. Arctic Foxes were liberated many years ago and we encountered several family groupings – they were very curious and would approach the zodiacs which were sitting in the shallow water. There were 2 females and one group of at least 4 well grown cubs. After spending time with auklets and foxes we motored over to the geothermal area where there was a strong sulphur smell coming from hot springs. It was a chance to stretch legs and for some to continue to botanize. As we were due back at the ship at 11a.m. it was everybody back in the zodiacs at 10.30 a.m. to retrace our steps back over the bar. The tide had dropped a little, but the bar was still navigable - the only distraction was a group of harlequin ducks sitting on a rock.. We paused briefly to look at a volcanic plug with Kittiwakes, Guillemots (two species) and cormorants nesting on it. We encountered a few fur seals in the water. Nathan had to navigate by GPS back to the ship as the fog had thickened again then with everybody and the zodiacs back on board we sailed to Simushir Island.

The fog lifted as we approached the Island. While Rodney gave us a briefing, Nathan put 5 boats in the water ready to take everybody onshore. Robyn stayed on board to do office work, so Dennis drove the 5<sup>th</sup> Zodiac. The entrance into the caldera was quite dramatic. On the northern side of the entrance there was the rusting remains of a ship that had obviously not made it – maybe the tide or rough seas had caught it. Once inside the caldera the microclimate which Rodney had mentioned was obvious – warm and still. We pulled the boats up on the beach to the south of the rusting remains of the submarine pens, below what was probably the administrative centre. Everybody was free to wander, and people did exactly that; exploring the old township and trying to work out the function of the various buildings including the medical centre, the school, workshops and generator sheds, the latter being quite obvious but unfortunately it had been damaged by fire.

We all met up on the beach again at the appointed hour and headed back to the ship which was drifting off the entrance to the caldera.

## **Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Matua Island – Sarycheva Volcano, Shaishkotan Island -Zakatnaya Bay**

Everybody was keen to see if there was any activity from Sarycheva Volcano on Matua Island - a previous Heritage Expeditions voyage had been there when it had erupted and the ship had been covered in ash. We arrived in the early hours of the morning and sat off until first light when the captain moved in closer, unfortunately heavy fog obscured the volcano. We waited for about an hour but the fog didn't want to move so we turned north towards Zakatnaya Bay on Shiashkotan Island.

The landing was preceded by a briefing. Three zodiacs ferried everybody ashore to a relatively easy landing where Rodney was on the shore to meet us. Rodney had described the site and our options to us at the briefing – basically we were free to wander at leisure. A track led to a plateau above the beach and right at the bottom of the track near a waterfall Dennis found a stone wall which almost certainly dated to the Anu people. The word Kotan is an Anua word which means Village – so we can surmise that the Anu people where on Shiashkotan Island.



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The majority of people scrambled up the track to the remains of what was almost certainly a former Russian Border Guard base. Very little remained – it is hard to estimate when it might have been abandoned – it appears that the rate of decay here is quite fast because the timber is a softwood and not treated in any way. The generator engine was of a fairly old vintage.

There was another track climbing to the same plateau from the southern end of the beach. Several people walked (and beach combed) their way to this end. Rodney noted a large flat rock engraved in Japanese writing half way down the beach. The track was quite steep but as it neared the plateau it passed under a rock escarpment and dug into that rock escarpment was a “pill box” or gun emplacement. It really was a work of art – no doubt cut out by hand from solid rock. The entrance was by way of a tunnel dug down from the top – but it had collapsed. Some of us were able to gain access to it by climbing through the slot, finding the ground inside littered with empty cartridges. There was another gun emplacement not far from this one, but constructed of timber, which had collapsed. Above these pill boxes there were extensive earthworks which no doubt included accommodation and living quarters. Further away there was circular earth works which we had come to associate with gun emplacements.

When the last boat was back to the ship the Captain raised the anchor and we sailed north to Paramushir Island – the day wasn't over yet and we had a great encounter with some killer whales.

### **Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

#### **Paramushir Island - Bukhta Krasheninnikova;**

#### **Altasova Island**

Wake up call at 6.15 this morning announcing breakfast at 6.45am.. The ship had steamed overnight to Bukhta Krasheninnikova on the South Western tip of Paramushir Island. Sea conditions were calm with slight swell.

Immediately following breakfast – there was the briefing in the Lecture room. Rodney described a landing site but this had to be changed once operations began because the swell on the rocks would have made landing very difficult, so instead of landing in the south end of the bay we landed at the north end.

In the briefing Rodney had warned us that bears were present on the Island so staff were a little bit more controlling. It was an easy landing onto a gravel beach where the group split roughly in two. One group went with Dennis and Aleks to check out a volcanic Plug that they had seen from the zodiacs and the other group went with Rodney to the north. There was considerable amount of human evidence – stone walls showing where buildings had once stood. The north bound group saw the remains of a winch (steam driven) obviously used for hauling something ashore.

Although there was plenty of bear sign (droppings and grubbing) no bears were seen. Everybody enjoyed themselves and the last boat left at 10.30 a.m. for the ship.

When everybody was back on board Captain lifted the anchor and we set a course for Alaidskaya Bay on Altasova Island. There was time for a cup of tea/coffee before Aleks talk on the Birds of The Russian Far East. In this talk he focused on the birds of the marine environment – it was an informative talk that helped many with the identification of the birds we have been seeing. There was a break before lunch which was served at 1.30pm. Rodney announced a briefing at 2.30pm immediately prior to our landing. Killer whales were sighted from the bridge and people got good views of them – sea conditions were ideal.

In the briefing Rodney gave us some background on Altasova Island – the first of the Kuril Chain to be sighted by Europeans. Vladimir Altasova , a Cossack who traveled down the Kamchatka Peninsula in 1697, was the first to record it. It is the highest volcano in the Kuril chain at 2339 metres. There is a textbook parasitic cone (Vladimira Peninsula) which lies just off the beach in the bay we landed – it was formed in 1971. There is a lot of evidence of human occupation – a Gulag was established on the Island in 1955 and it operated a herring processing plant until it closed in 1970.

It was an easy landing onto a black sand beach, and everybody was free to roam. Most people went and had a look at the parasitic cone – Tony (and a few others) actually climbed it; others went to check out the two “lakes” for waterfowl or other species that might be hiding there, and the rest went to the Gulag. There was very little remaining – the watch tower was still there but the ladders had rusted away, the main building had collapsed and there was virtually no sign of anything else.

Some otters were spotted in kelp beyond the Peninsula and could be seen from on top of a nearby knob. The first boat headed back at 5pm and the last boat was at 6pm. unfortunately the fog/cloud never lifted off Alaid volcano so we never got to see it – but we did have good views of it the first night we sailed down the coast.



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With everybody back on board the vessel steamed towards the Kamchatka Peninsula and an early landing tomorrow morning.

## **Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Russkaya Bay, Cape Kekurnyy**

We steamed through the night. Making good time, we passed through Vestnik Bay at about 4am and kept north to make the most of the day, arriving off Russkaya Bay (or Fiord) at 10 am. There was heavy fog – the fog had been coming and going most of morning – but we had had some great views of the south Kamchatka coastline. Captain made contact with the Border Guards stationed in the Bay and clearance was given for us to enter. As we came into the anchorage they called up again and asked to see everybody's (including crew) passport – so Nathan and Viktor took them in while Capt anchored the vessel and we launched the rest of the zodiacs. We landed at the head of the Fiord on a sandy beach and split into two groups. Rodney, Aleks and Leo took a group up the river while Nathan and Dennis took a group along the beach to the River mouth.

The group going up the river encountered a deep stream which they had to cross. Some waded in unconcerned about wet feet, others took the time to remove their footwear and wade across. There were lots of obvious bear tracks and tracking around - they could have easily been hiding in the tall grass only meters from us and we would never have known. This group split in two when we came to another stream even deeper than the first. Rodney and a few hardy souls continued until the vegetation beside the river became almost impassable. Aleks took the other group back down to the River mouth where they met up with Nathan's Group. Everybody eventually came back to the landing site and was ferried out to the ship – by this time the fog was starting to lift and we had great views of the fiord.

Lunch was served while we steamed out of the bay. At the entrance we launched the Zodiacs again and everybody joined us for a cruise to Cape Kekurnyy to see if there were any Steller's sea lions there. Right on the Cape there was a Stella's Sea Eagle and we all got good views of it – some folk got some great photos. Eventually it flew off and our attention shifted to sea lions (Steller's Sea lions). There was one big male by himself on a rock just inside the Cape and then there was a group of sub adult males on a rock closer to the shore. The large male sat up and seemed generally unconcerned about us, whereas the group of sub adult males were very agitated – fighting and pushing amongst themselves until most of them eventually jumped (fell or where pushed) into the sea. We called it "time up" at this point and headed back to the ship – as the last zodiac was being raised a large group of Killer Whales was sighted swimming around the Cape – possibly hunting sea lions.

We enjoyed pleasant sailing conditions as we headed north to the Kronotsky Nature Reserve.

## **Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Olga Bay – Kronotsky Preserve**

When we woke this morning the seas were calm – a change from the swell that had been building from the NE last night when we went to bed. Rodney had become concerned that Kamenistaya Bay would be too exposed to the NE, making a landing difficult, so had altered course to Olga Bay, a deep bay protected from the NE - it was still part of Kronotsky Reserve and one of three sites included on our permit.

The Bay was very shallow and we anchored in 10 metres of water – about 1.5 n miles off shore. There was a briefing before breakfast and then after breakfast we were invited to pick up a cut lunch which Sean and Nicki had prepared. Nathan and Victor found a very sheltered landing place on their scouting trip so 4 boats ferried everyone ashore and we were met on shore by a Ranger from the base which we could see from the anchorage. The sandy beach we landed on stretched in both directions as far as the eye could see and there were a number of volcanoes visible to the south. We had the option of walking to the south or to the north so the group split roughly in two with Dennis and Aleks going south and Rodney and Nathan heading north.

The northbound party wandered along the beach – there were bear tracks, wolf tracks and then some reindeer tracks. It was easy going, the tide was going out and there was plenty of sand with only one small stream to cross. There was lots to see; both Ian and Jane joined the northbound group and spent a lot of time looking at the Pillow lavas and the structure of the volcanic rock. There was a steep escarpment immediately behind the beach, which was almost certainly an old raised beach, and looking to the south we could see what was possibly another raised beach above this one. The birding was good – a small group of Harlequin ducks, Longtailed Duck, Far Eastern Curlew, several species of Gulls, Kittiwakes, Wagtail, Rubythroat and Arctic Warblers; and two Steller's sea eagles were sighted near Cape Olga. We stopped to inspect a hulk of a rusting ship well above the high tide mark (the second one we had seen on this coast) - there was some speculation that these might have been thrown up during a tsunami. At lunch time a small group climbed a rocky headland and had lunch sitting on top of this – it afforded good views over the landscape. One reindeer was spooked from tall grass behind the beach and it took off down the beach, much to the surprise of some of the



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group. At approximately the same time some of the group saw a brown bear climbing through vegetation near the top of the escarpment. The group spread out after lunch with the front of the group going a little further to another prominent headland which was just short of Cape Olga.

Dennis headed south with one half of the group, down along the beach and, after helping to secure the zodiacs, Aleks joined them. After a leisurely walk along a beautiful beach, with the imposing site of the Zhupanovskaya Volcano as a backdrop, the group arrived at the small ranger/research station at the mouth of the river. Most people went up for a look at the weather station and enjoyed the fine hospitality of the researchers there with chai being provided for everybody. Aleks and a few others stayed at the river mouth and relaxed in the late morning. Not long after the morning took an exciting turn when a large male bear was spotted not more than 50m away emerging from the undergrowth. It crossed the river and headed back upstream, disappearing into the thick undergrowth along the riverbank. Aleks crossed the river to keep watch and after about 40 minutes the bear emerged again. The rest of the group came down soon after and all were treated to fantastic views of an adult male Kamchatka brown bear feeding in the river and moving backwards and forwards through the area. Dennis kept a close eye on its behaviour and although it appeared to have a fairly mellow demeanour everybody was very aware of its relatively close proximity. Eventually it started to approach a little close for comfort and the group started to move off. It kept coming and Dennis spoke loudly to it in Eskimo, following which it stood up briefly to its full height before turning around and heading off. It was a truly memorable wildlife experience for all involved.

The two groups met up back at the Zodiacs and were ferried back out to the ship. When everybody was back on board and the zodiacs secured we set a course to the Commander Islands.

## **Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Commander Islands**

We had a good overnight run from Olga Bay and were on time for our 10.30am landing. The fog had come down and we couldn't see a lot as we approached Nikol'Skoye although we did catch a glimpse of Toporkova Island on the Port side as we came to anchor. Nathan took zodiac ashore to clear our landing with the Border Guards – no drama there so we were free to land. Rodney had briefed us on what was available here; for the birders it was the Rock Sandpiper and when the first boat load landed it was right on the beach. Most people wandered into the village, some taking the coast road and the others going over the top via the lookouts. The last zodiac brought Nick (Commander Islands) and his gear ashore – he was coming out to work for a month. His staff was on the beach to meet him.

Valentine had opened the museum up for people to go and have a look. It is an excellent museum with some great displays – the diorama depicting Bering's camp complete with artifacts from the site was very good. The other diorama contained the skeleton of Steller's sea cow - an incredibly interesting evolutionary story of how this animal evolved and was confined to this group of Islands. The photographs and other displays portraying life on the Islands all added to our appreciation. Dennis met up with a couple of the local people – 2 elderly ladies – one was 80 the other was in her early 70's both had been born on Medney Island but had been moved to Nikol'Skoye about 30 years ago when the Medney settlement had been closed down. He interviewed them for a language study that he has been conducting over many years. Some of us also met a young German woman who was studying ethno-botany. She had flown to the Commander Islands a few days ago – but was waiting on a flight back to Kamchatka – these flights are notorious for being cancelled and delayed.

People also found Sergey Pasenyuk in his Gallery. He is a colourful character, a great artist and also adventurer – many people brought his book on the Commander Islands. It is well illustrated and the text is both in Russian and English. Most people found their way around the village which currently has about 480 people living there, about 100 are school age children and the government recently completed a new school for them.

Last boat off was at 1pm - as soon as everybody was on board the anchor was lifted and we sailed down the coast. The course is known as a great whale sighting location due to the closeness of trench; we were in fact sailing over the top of it but unfortunately, due to the fog, very little was seen. At 1800 hours we stopped the vessel and all zodiacs were launched (including the damaged one which the team had spent considerable time yesterday repairing). We headed off with GPS to locate the coast, finding a rocky headland with Red legged kittiwakes, guillemots and some cormorants. We spent time there amongst the kelp getting photos and then, as had happened many times before, the fog lifted revealing a dramatic coastline. Just before we left, Kosta's boat took a large wave over top of it – wetting several people and drowning some cameras.

We followed the kelp edge down and started seeing Otters – they were rather shy but if we were patient and waited they invariably poked their head back up again and we were able to get some good observations and photos. We called into a small bay that was kelp free and spotted a couple of foxes on the beach – we didn't land but on a terrace behind the beach there was a small hut – not in such good condition – presumably belonging to the Reserve.



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South of this bay there was a rocky headland with a small island just off shore. Again there were good numbers of Kittiwakes (both red and black legged), there were also good numbers of guillemots, but perhaps the highlight was a group of tufted puffins sitting on top of the rock.

The last leg of the journey took us to the southern most Cape on Bering Island. The wind increased and temperature dropped a few degrees as we waited for the Captain to rendezvous with us. Everybody was back on board shortly after 9pm to a welcome meal from Sean and Nicki – including lamb shanks!!!!. The Captain headed around the Cape to Commander Bay where we hope to make a landing in the morning. Everybody else headed to bed apart from a few who went to bed via the Sauna.

## **Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Commander Islands**

It was a comfortable night drifting off the Northeastern coast of Bering Island. The wind increased but when we woke at 0600 the coast was clear both to the North and South – a rare sight – as it is mostly covered in fog and cloud. The Captain brought the ship up directly abeam of Commander Bay and dropped anchor. The wind was gusting up to 30 knots and this made anchoring a little more difficult given that it was a rocky bottom - the anchor dragged but then caught. Breakfast was at 6.30am with a briefing scheduled for 7.30am but this was changed to a PA briefing and disembarkation at 7.30am. Rodney described the conditions and many people chose not to go. Three zodiacs were launched and Rodney and Dennis prepared to go onto the beach. The wind was offshore so made for a bouncy (and wet trip) into shore but it was low tide and once everybody was ashore we were free to explore the area – the boats were anchored in the shallow water. The site was excavated recently by archeologists and bodies of the sailors that had died, including Bering, were exhumed and taken back to the mainland for identification, then brought back and given an elaborate burial service. We walked through what would have been the original camp site. There is a small memorial there – but the main memorial is 100 meters inland on a small hillside. Bering is buried separately from the other men and has his own memorial cross.

The sky was clear and we could gain an appreciation of the landscape. For those of us who had read the book it added flesh to the words and for those who hadn't I am sure they will read it after their visit.

Everybody was back on board by 9.30am, we lifted the anchor and headed south around the cape and towards Zhupanova River. The wind dropped out as we rounded the Cape – so obviously a very localized wind (almost Katabatic!!!!). The sea conditions were near perfect and, just as Nathan announced that we were in ideal territory for whales, a group of Humpback whales were spotted. Rodney asked the Captain to turn the ship back and we spent about 30 minutes slowly doing a big loop with Humpback whales sounding and blowing on both sides of the ship. It was hard to estimate the total number of whales seen but it was probably in the vicinity of about 10 -12. The whale sighting came right at lunch time so the chefs had to contend with people coming and going.

The afternoon was relaxed; we scheduled another of Dennis's infamous lectures for 3.30pm – this time there was even less space on the white board than on the previous occasion. He talked about climate change in relation to the Bering Sea, but the majority of the lecture was devoted to Eskimo language.

Sea conditions continued to be kind and we made good comfortable speed towards the Kamchatka Coast.

## **Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

### **Kamchatka Peninsula – Zhupanova River**

It was a very pleasant nights sailing. Breakfast was served at 8.30am and the remainder of the morning was taken up with settling accounts – Robyn had processed and delivered these to the rooms immediately after breakfast. We also had an expedition recap – Rodney got off his sick bed for this. He had picked up a terrible bout of the flu and didn't look good (or sound that good). He recapped the expedition, just taking us through each day – we have covered so much ground and seen so much it was good to be reminded. His recap was followed by a power point presentation by Aleks, Robyn and Nathan, combined with their photos of this trip – this was presented with a background of music and it brought the memories flooding back. Aleks explained that copies of the Power Point were available for purchase – some of the proceeds were going to a Conservation cause in New Zealand.

Rodney finished this part of the recap by acknowledging the staff that had helped make the trip such a success. Rodney went back to bed and Nathan took over with a disembarkation briefing in which he outlined the program for tomorrow.

We came to anchor in near perfect conditions off the Zhupanova River just on lunch time. After lunch Nathan called us to the lecture room for a briefing on the plans for the afternoon in the Zhupanova River and soon after we boarded the



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boats for what would be our last zodiac cruise for the expedition. The fog was slowly lifting as we made our way to the small fishing village where we met our guide. He headed off in his small dinghy and we followed as he led us through the treacherous sandbars in the entrance to the river. The fog continued to lift and the sun eventually came out, making for a beautiful afternoon. The scenery was idyllic, and the Kamchatka volcanoes made a beautiful backdrop. We saw salmon jumping and Steller's Sea Eagles, as well as a myriad of small waders and other land birds. Gulls and terns were also plentiful and the birdwatchers amongst us were kept extremely busy.

We eventually reached an area that was too shallow to continue and slowly made our way back to the fishing village. There we were treated to some fantastic Russian hospitality, with fresh cod, salmon and hot drinks. It was a great way to finish a beautiful afternoon and most of us will remember the taste of the Kamchatka Sock-eye Salmon, fresh from the Zhupanova River, for many years to come. Eventually we reluctantly left the village and returned to the ship, only to be treated to yet another delicious dinner from our chefs Nicki and Sean. After dinner most people made their way out onto the decks to enjoy the crystal clear blue Arctic sky. A beautiful end to a beautiful day.

**Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009**

### **Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy**

In the early hours of the morning the Captain entered Avacha Bay and we came alongside the wharf in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, disembarking at around 9.15 a.m.

The crew of the Spirit of Enderby and the staff of Heritage Expeditions thank you for travelling with us, wish you a good journey home (and that you and your luggage were reunited) and hope that we may meet again one day.



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