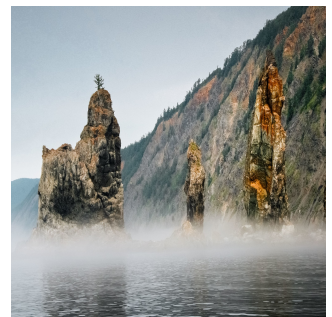
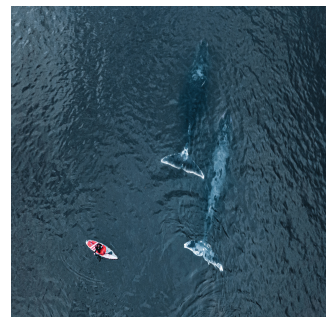
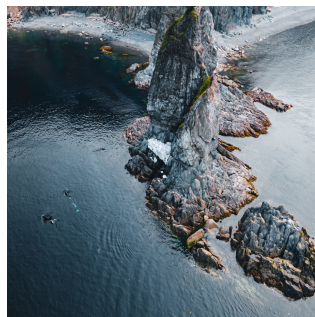


# Archipelago of Discoveries

Expedition to the Shantar Islands



If you have always wanted to see whales, the Shantar Islands are one of the best places in Russia where you can do it. It is home to the largest part of the bowhead whale population of the Sea of Okhotsk. Due to difficult access to the archipelago, you will find true solitude and union with nature here, without numerous groups of tourists.

# Experiences you'll have

## Whale watching on the Shantar Islands

To **see whales** on Shantars, you have a long way to go. The inaccessibility and harsh climate of the islands seem to keep people away on purpose. This is one of the reasons why the **pristine nature** has been preserved here.

For 8 months, islands are covered with ice, and in the short summer, nature tries to make up for lost time. Emerald northern taiga, mountain tundra. Fields of irises and lilies in July, cloudberries and blueberries in late August. And no civilization for hundreds of kilometers around. Dawns, sunsets, and **special Shantar fogs** - thick, flowing, or spiraling.

Despite living on the wild shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, **comfortable conditions** await you on this journey: high double tents and warm rooms in wooden houses. Cabins with board games and wildlife movies. Daily bathhouse, drying rooms for clothes and shoes, and places to charge devices.

The main citizens of this region are bowhead and killer whales, seals, bears, Steller's sea eagles, and tufted puffins. On the journey, you will see them in their natural habitat.

Please remember, that this is a wildlife trip, not an aquarium or zoo. We cannot 100% guarantee the probability of encounters with animals and feel it is fair to focus your attention on it.

5 reasons to go on a journey to the Shantar Islands:

- to observe whales, brown bears, seals, and bird colonies from up close and safe distance
- to meet marine biologists and contribute to the Sea of Okhotsk whale population research
- to explore islands by boat: find semi-precious stones and see rocks of bizarre shapes
- to catch the sea or river fish on your own, to learn how to cook fish dumplings or caviar in 5 min recipe
- to forget about civilization for a week and enjoy a real digital detox amid unspoiled nature

**We accept bookings for groups of 6 or more**

The base rate is in RUB. The price in dollars (3,184 USD) depends on the exchange rate of the [Central Bank of Russia](#) minus 2% and is valid as of March 4, 2024.

## Itinerary

The journey begins in Khabarovsk, where you should get to on your own. **You should be in town the day before the program starts and plan to fly back the day after the program ends.** This way you can prepare for the long journey at the beginning and rest after the program.

We can help with ticket purchasing and choosing a hotel in Khabarovsk. If necessary, leave a comment in the application.

**Note:** this expedition is held in remote and hard-to-reach places with complete autonomy. The itinerary may change depending on the weather and the concentration of whales. Long delays on the route, cancelation of some excursions in bad weather, or earlier departure from the route are possible.



New

Shantar Islands

### Archipelago of Discoveries

Difficulty	
Age	from 7 y.o.
Group size	to 12
Duration	10 days

Accommodation at the trip



6 nights 2 nights 1 nights

Языки



guide

from 285 000 EUR



## Day 1

### In the morning you will go to Khabarovsk airport to meet

the group (all participants are traveling from different hotels, so the transfer to the airport is paid extra).

### After meeting the group you will depart from Khabarovsk

to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur by plane (flight time is 1,5 hours).

### At the airport of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, you will be met by

our guide, and by minibusses travel to Perovsky Cape, located on the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk (travel time is 2,5-4 hours along a forest gravel road).

### From Perovsky Cape, you will cross the sea to Wrangel Bay

by a high-speed covered boat (travel time is from 4 to 6 hours, depending on weather conditions. There will be hot tea and lunch boxes for you on board).

### Reaching Wrangel Bay, you will be accommodated in a

comfortable campsite on the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk. The RussiaDiscovery team calls this place the *Whale Bay*, because of the highest probability of seeing bowhead whales here. In the evening, you will enjoy a festive dinner and a sauna.

### **Note: in case of stormy weather or flight delay from**

*Khabarovsk on this day, it is possible to overnight at a campsite on Perovsky Cape or in a hotel in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur. The delay in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur can last up to several days. In this case, we will pay for the hotel stay and partially reimburse the cost of meals. Possible activities here: visiting a museum, city tour, trekking outside the city, visiting a sauna, lectures about traveling.*

## Day 2

### You will spend these days in Wrangel Bay. Here there is a

chance to see bowhead whales. Their weight reaches 150 tons and their length is 22 meters. This cetacean species lives only in the cold waters of the Northern Hemisphere.

### The southernmost group of this cetacean species is found

in the Sea of Okhotsk. In the shallow waters of Wrangel Bay, they

come for socialization and to hide from carnivorous orcas.

**If the weather is favorable, you can go out to sea on a**

paddleboard and, if you are lucky, observe whales at close range (the usage of this watercraft is completely safe for both whales and humans).

**In Wrangel Bay, other wild animals can be seen: orcas and**

seals, foxes, and chipmunks.

**Marine biologists with years of experience studying**

cetaceans and other scientists will live with you. In evening lectures, they will tell you about the whale's life and behavior, and introduce you to the biology, ornithology, and geology of the region.

**If you wish, you can participate in whale counting and**

biological materials collection. This data will help scientists to study the bowhead whale population in the Sea of Okhotsk. Also, you can install and check photo traps, which helps monitor wildlife. For example, in 2021, a camera trap in Wrangel Bay recorded an Amur tiger at the northernmost point in the region where this rare predator has been seen.

**Trekking awaits you in Wrangel Bay. You will walk along**

the coast, taiga, climb the rocks nearby, and admire the northern landscapes.

You can also go sea fishing, pick mussels, and join culinary master classes.

**Just in case, we want to remind you that we cannot**

**guarantee the 100% presence of whales and other animals in Wrangel Bay.** Please keep this in mind when planning your trip.

**Day 3**

**Early this morning you will go to Ongachan Bay by a speed**

boat (journey time is 2-2,5 hours). The route will pass through the Academy Bay and the open sea. On the way you will explore Belichiy Island and, if the weather is good, make a landing. There is a chance to meet bowhead whales and orcas, and flocks of seabirds – tufted puffins, ducks, gulls.

**Arriving at the bay, you will stay at the base, have lunch**

and relax. This place will be the starting point for your travels in the following days.

**Day 4**

**On this day, if the weather is favorable, you will have a**

boat trip to the island of Bolshoy Shantar (Rus. fo Big Shantar).

**The Shantar Islands are 15 wild uninhabited islands in the**

Sea of Okhotsk. Some of them reach a length of tens of kilometers, while others are quite tiny. The flora and fauna of the archipelago constitute a unique natural complex, which is why a

national park was established on this territory in 2013.

### **Bolshoy Shantar is the largest island in the archipelago,**

with 65 km length from north to south and 47 km from west to east. It is famous for several interesting places:

a marine weather station where only 4 people live and work all year round  
an abandoned whale factory where sawmills, meat grinders, and fat burners are still preserved  
Cape Raduzhniy (Rus. for Rainbow), where there are huge rocks of jasper in different colors, from bright red to green. Walking in this part of the coast, you can find semi-precious jasper shales, white quartz, and marble veins.

### **Sea birds can be seen on Ptichy (Rus. for Bird) and Utichy**

(Rus. for Duck) islands. There are spectacled *guillemots*, *thick-billed murre*s, *tufted puffins*, *ducks*, *gulls*, and *Steller's sea eagles*.

### **By evening you will return to the base at Ongachan Bay.**

### **Boat trips and exploration of the Shantar archipelago are**

**possible only in favorable weather.** In case of a storm, you will stay at the base and explore the surroundings: climb up to the viewpoint above the camp, where you can enjoy the panorama of the bay and Ongachan Lake. Walk along the atmospheric coastline, littered with logs taken out by the sea. You can also go fishing and pick berries (closer to September there are a lot of cloudberries in these places). In Ongachan Bay you will have a contemplative rather than active time spending.

#### **Day 5**

### **On this day, you will have a sea crossing to Nikolaya Bay**

along the southern coast of the Sea of Okhotsk. The itinerary includes places with the highest probability of encountering whales and killer whales.

You will pass through Academy Bay and Ulba Bay and see the unique Ukurunru Cape. Directly at the cape, there is a picturesque stack 15 m high, and the sea's depth at the cape's base reaches 20 m.

In the evening, you will camp in a tent camping site on the bank of the Gorbusha River, have dinner, and rest.

#### **Day 6**

### **Today you will have a free day at the base. You can spin**

fishing, learn how to cut fish and cook red caviar. You will watch salmon spawning and see brown bears fishing if you are lucky.

You can also walk along the riverbed and, weather permitting, go out to sea again.

#### **Day 7**

### **After breakfast and packing a sea crossing to**

Perovsky Cape awaits (travel time is 5-7 hours). There will be hot tea and a snack on the route.

From Perovsky Cape you will go by minibuses to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur (travel time is 2,5-4 hours on a forest gravel road).

Arriving in the city, you will be accommodated in a hotel, have a rest and dinner (paid extra).

#### **Day 8**

### **Today you will return from Nikolaevsk-on-Amur to**

Khabarovsk by local airline plane (the flight time is 1,5 hours).

### **Arriving in Khabarovsk, you will say goodbye to the group**

and go to the hotel on your own to relax after a long and eventful expedition.

### **Due to the possibility of delay of regional flights, we**

#### **strongly recommend you buy back tickets the next day.**

This way you will reduce the risks of delays, can walk around Khabarovsk, and rest before a long flight home.

## **Accommodation at the trip**

The expedition takes place far from civilization. The accommodation will be quite simple, but comfortable.

### **The campsite in Wrangel Bay (4 nights )**

On the territory: canteen, large tourist tents for lectures and recreation, 2 Russian saunas (heated daily), a drying hut, 4 toilets, a washing area, electricity from generators.

Accommodation: high camping tents for 2 people. In each tent: 2 sleeping compartments with a folding bed, a common space with a small table, chairs, and a clothes rack. For couples, we can offer regular camping tents, without compartmentalization.

### **The base in Ongachan Bay (2 nights)**

On the territory: warm cabins, a lounge house with a film collection, a gazebo, a hot shower, a sauna (heated daily), a drying hut, toilets, a washbasin area, and electricity from generators.

Accommodation: wooden cabins for 4-6 people. Each cabin has wide plank beds with mattresses, pillows and blankets, hangers, and a small table.

### **Gorbusha tent camping in Nikolaya Bay (2 nights)**

The camp has a large dining tent, a sauna, toilets, a gazebo, a campfire area, a drying hut, and electricity from generators. You will be accommodated in double tents.

### **The Sever Hotel in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur (1 night)**

It is the only hotel in the town with a satisfactory, but not very high level of comfort. You will be accommodated in rooms for 2-4 people with a private bathroom.

**Note:** you should book your accommodation in Khabarovsk before the start and after the end of the expedition. We recommend hotels [Sopka](#) and [Parus](#) (high level of service), [Verba](#), [Khabarovsk City Boutique Hotel](#), [Sapporo](#), [Lazurit](#) (standard accommodation), and [Chaika](#) (budget accommodation).

## **FAQ**

## What the weather will be like

Summer air temperature: from +30°C during the day to +5°C at night. Strong winds, rain, and fog are possible. In September, the average temperature ranges from +20°C during the day to 0°C at night.

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## What to bring with me

The weather in the Shantar Islands can be extremely unstable: strong winds, fog, and rain are possible. Therefore, we ask you to pay attention to the equipment list below.

For sea trips:

- stormsuit (overalls or jacket and trousers)
- high rubber boots (needed for embarkation and disembarkation from a boat)
- shoes with warm insoles
- wind-resistant hat
- thermal socks
- waterproof gloves
- balaclava helmet

For trekking and time in the camp:

- light jacket (GORE-TEX with a hood in case of rainy weather)
- light shoes (e.g. sports shoes)
- trekking trousers
- cap or light hat
- light gloves
- thermal underwear (2 types with different levels of warmth)
- liner in a sleeping bag
- fleece jacket
- underwear, T-shirts, socks
- towel
- swimming costume (in case you have a wish to get into water)
- sleeping bag (+5°C comfort)
- dry bag
- head torch with extra batteries
- light backpack for trekkings
- snorkeling vest (for SUP surfing, optionally)

For photography equipment:

- camera, GoPro camera, drone (optional). No special permit is required to shoot from a copter in the Shantar Islands
- waterproof backpack and a dry bag

Other:

- personal medicines, toothbrush, wet towel wipes, etc.
- knife or multitool
- binoculars (optional)
- wetsuit for SUP surfing (optional, you can rent it for free on-site)

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## Meals

The tour price includes 3 meals a day during the active part of the program (breakfast and dinner, as well as lunch or afternoon snacks on the routes).

The menu will include both simple dishes (porridge, sandwiches, soups,

salads, second course, herbal and berry teas) and seafood (flounder, salmon, red caviar, crabs, depending on the catch). In Wrangel Bay, a chef bakes fresh bread. It is possible to participate in a cooking master class.

During the long sea crossing from Perovsky Cape to Wrangel Bay and back, lunch boxes and hot tea will be provided on board.

Additionally, you need to pay extra for meals in Khabarovsk before and after the expedition, and for meals in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur (dinner on day 10 and breakfast on day 11).

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## Who will be my guide

- a RussiaDiscovery guide will be with your group during the journey. He will coordinate all processes and will answer any questions you may have
- marine biologists will stay with you at a campsite in Wrangel Bay. They have been studying whales for many years and will tell you about the peculiarities of their life and behavior during evening lectures
- professional drivers and captains will drive minibuses on forest roads and boats on the open sea
- experienced gamekeepers will protect you from possible encounters with wild animals while walking along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk
- cooks in Wrangel, Ongachan, and Nikolay Bays will cook for you three times a day

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## What transport is used on the route

From Khabarovsk to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur and back you will **fly by Aurora or Khabarovsk Airlines**. Tickets with luggage up to 23 kg and hand luggage up to 5 kg are included in the tour price (extra charge for 1 piece of luggage is 3500 RUB). The flight time is 1,5 hours.

From Nikolaevsk-on-Amur to Perovsky Cape and back you will be transferred by **buses or minibuses Toyota Hiace**. This forest gravel road takes from 2,5 to 4 hours. The bus capacity is 24 people and the minibus is 12 people. We seat 7-8 people per car for your convenience. Luggage is placed on top and inside the car.

The sea crossing from Perovsky Cape to Wrangel Bay and back will be on a **closed-type high-speed catamaran boat** (travel time is 4-6 hours). The boat's capacity is 15 people. There are comfortable chairs and a toilet on board. This boat was designed specifically for the harsh conditions of the region. The catamaran is high-speed, so the passengers do not get seasick.

Boat trips around the Shantar archipelago will take place on **open-type catamaran boats**. In this case, you should be prepared for strong wind, but such boats offer a 360-degree view for whale watching.

**Note:** we have been organizing trips to the Shantar Islands for more than 5 years and all this time trying to improve the route and logistics. Previously, on the road from Khabarovsk to Wrangel Bay, we used a car transfer, which took about a day and was very tiring for tourists. Now we replaced this part of the route with a flight to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur. In addition, a covered boat will now be used for long crossings, rather than an open-type boat. Thanks to these improvements, the expedition will become more comfortable.

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## Insurance

Insurance is not included in the tour price, so you should arrange it yourself (we recommend a helicopter evacuation option). Please note that insurance is mandatory for tourists over 65 years of age.

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## Mobile communication and Wi-Fi



Stable mobile communication will only be available in Khabarovsk and Nikolaevsk-on-Amur. There will be no phone connection or Wi-Fi in Wrangel Bay and Ongachan Bay. Please, let your family and friends know in advance so they do not worry.

For emergency communication, the guides will be provided with a satellite phone.

## Alternative travel options

In this program, the arrival dates are given for combined groups, but we can also conduct this expedition in an individual or corporate format. The cost for a ready group is 3,450,000 RUB.

We can also organize this trip with helicopter pickup. Please contact us and we will give you the details.

## To learn more about the Shantar Islands

Journeys with RussiaDiscovery are not just active holidays. It is important for us that you not only enjoy the beautiful views but also get to know the features of a particular territory as deeply as possible.

We recommend you look through before traveling to the Shantar Islands:

- [expedition # MamontCup2017](#): our project together with the Fisherbird Creative Agency, which started our work on organizing trips to the Shantar Islands
- [report from our travel expert Kseniya Rubtsova](#), where she shares her emotions concerning swimming just 10 meters away from a whale

# Booking

Shantar Islands

## Archipelago of Discoveries

**New**

Difficulty



Age

from 7 y.o.

Group size

to 12

Duration

10 days

Accommodation at the trip



6 nights



2 nights



1 nights

from 285 000 EUR

### What's included in the price:

- airfare from Khabarovsk to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur and back (23 kg baggage, 5 kg hand luggage limit)
- minibus transfer from Nikolaevsk-on-Amur to Perovsky Cape and back
- rent of a high-speed covered boat for long sea transfers and uncovered boats for short sea trips
- accommodation in Wrangel Bay (4 nights), Ongachan Bay (2 nights), Nikolaya Bay (2 nights), Nikolaevsk-on-Amur (1 night)
- three meals a day (delicious and healthy food, fresh seafood)
- daily walking and sea excursions, whale watching, birds watching, etc
- lectures of marine biologists, services of captains, drivers, gamekeepers, cooks, and

### Extra charge:

- [airfare to Khabarovsk](#) and back
- 2 nights accommodation in Khabarovsk before and after the trip
- airport transfers and meals in Khabarovsk
- meals in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur (dinner on Day 9, breakfast on Day 10), including in case of delays
- English interpreting services (+15,000 RUB per day)
- accident insurance (including helicopter evacuation)
- extra luggage
- insulated sleeping bag rental (+40 RUB/pp, if necessary)

## RussiaDiscovery guide

- rent of group equipment, fishing gear, boats, SUP boards and wetsuits
- permission to visit the Shantar Islands National Park
- Russian sauna visiting



Best price  
guarantee



Personal  
tours



Discounts for  
regular clients



Gift  
cards