

## Wrangel Island in the Russian High Arctic with Mark Carwardine and landscape photographer Joe Cornish

*A very special expedition, with outstanding photographic opportunities, to one of the least explored wildernesses on Earth.*

*Photos from our 2017 and 2018 expeditions show just how very special – click [here](#) to see*

22 July – 8 August 2019



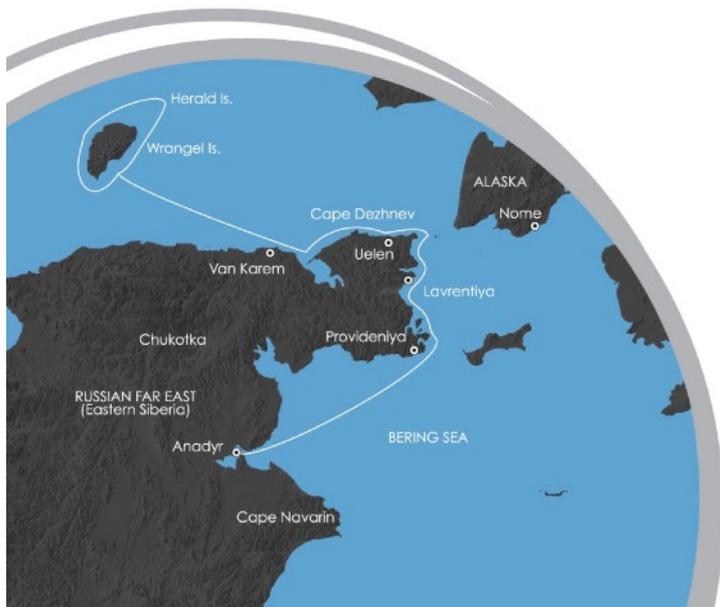
### About our trip

This 14-night expedition cruise, on the Spirit of Enderby (see the picture opposite), travels along the Chukotka Peninsula, sails through the Bering Strait (which separates Russia from the United States), crosses the Arctic Circle, continues west along the wild coastline of northeastern Siberia, and then pushes 140km further north to one of the most remote wildlife hotspots in the world: Wrangel Island. This once-in-a-lifetime journey is made possible

only by the thawing in international politics in recent years, and the retreat of the pack ice in summer.

Wrangel boasts an astonishing abundance of wildlife. The island hosts the largest polar bear denning ground in the world and is home to Pacific walrus, wolverines, muskoxen, reindeer, snowy owls, snow geese, king eiders, ivory, Ross's and Sabine's gulls, vast seabird colonies, and much, much more. We will enjoy lots of Zodiac cruises, and plenty of landings, and will be watching for all sorts of wildlife from the ship. The surrounding seas are great for whale watching: humpback, fin and bowhead whales, orcas and belugas all occur here, as well as grey whales, which migrate all the way from their winter breeding lagoons along the coast of Baja California, Mexico, to feed.

Add mammoth tusks (Wrangel is believed to be the last place on Earth where woolly mammoths lived and their curved tusks are literally everywhere), hundreds of plant species, phenomenal geological formations, and you can begin to understand why this High Arctic island is so special.



## Planned itinerary

### Day 1: Fly to Moscow

On arrival in Moscow we transfer to a hotel in the city.

### Day 2: Overnight flight to Anadyr

#### Day 3: Embark cruise in Anadyr

Our voyage begins in Anadyr, the easternmost town in Russia with a population of about 14,000 people. Here we board the Spirit of Enderby and sail out into the estuary, which is renowned for beluga whales.

#### Day 4: Anadyrskiy Bay

While crossing Anadyrskiy Bay we meet the team (Mark and Joe, historian Katie Murray, and others) and settle into shipboard life, with lectures, briefings and drills. There will also be time to enjoy birding and watching for cetaceans. In the afternoon we launch the Zodiacs to explore Preobrazheniya Bay's spectacular bird cliffs.

#### Day 5: Yttygran, Nuneangan and Arakamchechen Islands

We explore the ancient aboriginal settlement at Yttygran, to see the remains of a busy whaling camp and a 1/2-km-long beach known as Whalebone Alley, which is littered with whale bones. We then go whale-watching by Zodiac – grey whales are frequently seen around the island – and cruise past neighbouring Nuneangan Bird Island, where large number of seabirds nest. Nearby Arakamchechen has a prominent walrus haul-out, and we can land and walk across the tundra to see them.

#### Day 6: Cape Dezhnev and Uelen Village

If conditions allow, we land at Cape Dezhnev, the north-easternmost point of Eurasia (named after Cossack Semyon Dezhnev, the first European to sail from the Arctic into the Pacific in 1648). A steep scramble leads to an abandoned border post, with monuments to Dezhnev and others who sailed these seas. In good visibility it is possible to see Cape Prince of Wales in Alaska, just 89km away across the Bering Strait.

Further west, we visit Uelen, Russia's most north-easterly village. Archaeologists have found evidence that walrus, seal and whale hunters have lived here for more than 2,000 years, and today the population is predominantly Chukchi, with some Russians and Inuits. Hunting is still important, but Uelen is now a major centre for traditional Chukchi and Inuit art, and sculptures from its workshop are found in many of Russia's major museums. The villagers entertain us and we visit the artists' workshop.

### Day 7: Kolyuchin Island

This small island was once an important centre for research into polar bears (one of a number dotted across the Arctic) but it was abandoned with the collapse of the USSR. It has some of the Arctic's most spectacular bird cliffs, with tufted and horned puffins, guillemots and gulls, and a photogenic walrus haul-out.

#### Days 8-12: Wrangel and Herald Islands

Ice and weather conditions permitting, we spend no less than five days exploring Wrangel Island and nearby Herald Island, enjoying Zodiac cruises and making landings to see as much of the unique and abundant wildlife and Arctic landscapes as possible. Seasonal hunters first visited these islands in 3,200 BC, but they weren't 'officially' discovered until 1849.

Throughout the 1800s and early 1900s almost every exploring expedition that blundered anywhere near Wrangel ended up with the adjective 'doomed' in front of it. Then a Canadian expedition attempted to establish a settlement – to claim the island for Canada – but they were evicted by the Russians, who also laid claim. Now it is classified as a 'Zapovednik' (a 'strict nature reserve') and practically all human activity other than for scientific purposes is banned. We are very lucky indeed to be visiting.

#### Day 13: North Siberian Coast

Few expedition cruises venture to northern Siberia but, depending on conditions, we will attempt a landing. The area around Cape Vankarem consists of narrow ridges of sand with numerous coastal lagoons and inlets, and a large seasonal walrus haul-out. The Chukchi inhabitants still live from hunting walrus, seals and whales, much like their ancestors.

#### Day 14: Kolyuchin Inlet

This vast inlet contains large numbers of waterbirds and migratory waders. Belaka Spit, near the mouth, is a wild and desolate but strangely beautiful landscape where we search the dunes and tidal areas for emperor geese and spoon-billed sandpipers. Grey whales frequent the area and are sometimes spotted offshore.

#### Day 15: Bering Strait and Chukotka Coast

On our way south, we pass the Diomed Islands – dubbed Tomorrow Island and Yesterday Isle, because they straddle the International Date Line. In 1867, when the USA purchased Alaska from Russia, the new international boundary was drawn between Big Diomed (Russia) and Little Diomed (USA) – meaning that, effectively, the two countries are separated by only 4.25km of sea.





If granted permission (there is a small Russian border post here), we will cruise the coastline by Zodiac to see spectacular numbers of birds (including horned and tufted puffins). We also land on the Chukotka mainland to enjoy its wildlife and tundra landscape.

**Day 16: At sea**

We cross Anadyrskiy Bay with a final chance to look for belugas. There's time to relax and reflect on the voyage, before a recap and disembarkation briefing with expedition staff, followed by a farewell dinner. .

**Day 17: Disembark at Anadyr and fly to Moscow**

Disembark in Anadyr and transfer to the airport for a scheduled flight to Moscow. On arrival in Moscow, transfer to a hotel for the night.

**Day 18: Transfer to Moscow Airport for flight home**

**About the Spirit of Enderby**

Originally built in 1984, specifically for polar and oceanographic research, the ice-strengthened Spirit of Enderby has been refitted to accommodate a maximum of 50 passengers on expedition cruises (our charter will be taking just 45). The vessel has a combination of twin and triple cabins with shared or private bathrooms, as well as three spacious suites. All cabins have an outside view (with either a window or porthole), a hand basin, and ample storage space. The

facilities on board include a bar/library and lounge area, plus a dining room and lecture room.

**Prices**

From £13,395 per person (Main Deck twin-Share Cabin price). Please check with Wildlife Worldwide direct (see below for contact information).

**Price includes:** Estimated flights, transfers, 2 nights' accommodation in Moscow (on a bed and breakfast basis), 14 nights on board the Spirit of Enderby, with all meals, guided wildlife and photography activities and the services of Mark Carwardine, Joe Cornish, historian Katie Murray, and others.

**Payment schedule**

- £2,000 (non-refundable) per person as deposit
- £2,500 per person 30 Nov 2018
- Final instalment 29 Mar 2019

**To book (and for more information)**

Please contact Wildlife Worldwide  
 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com  
 tel: 01962 302 055

**Please note...**

This holiday is being operated by Wildlife Worldwide, with Mark and Joe as co-leaders and photography guides.

