



WildWings

KAMCHATKA

**The Ring of Fire:
Kuril Islands, Kamchatka Peninsula and the Commander Islands**

SPECIAL OFFER! 5% DISCOUNT if booked and deposited by 31/10/11!!

Client quote: ' Thank you for all that you (& Chris) did to make this a remarkable experience' J&V.S.July 2011

WildWings pioneered expedition cruises to this region in the mid-nineties, however, that ship is no longer operating, so we now offer this exciting itinerary on the expedition vessel '*Spirit of Enderby*' (48 passengers), run by our good friend Rodney Russ and his team. Being a Russian flagged ship, these expeditions visit sites previously not open to Western vessels. We have had clients on these voyages in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011 and 2012 will be the fourth time that Chris Collins will have travelled this itinerary.

This region of spectacular scenery has only been accessible since 1994 and remains rarely visited, however, the species list is truly mouth-watering and is surely headed by one of the world's ultimate raptors, Steller's Sea Eagle. Seabirds are also here in abundance, with the potential alcids including Spectacled, Brunnich's and Pigeon Guillemots, Whiskered, Rhinoceros, Crested, Parakeet and Least Auklets, Tufted and Horned Puffins, and both Ancient and Long-billed Murrelets. Black-tailed, Glaucous-winged and Slaty-backed Gulls are all present, along with the range-restricted Red-legged Kittiwake and highly distinctive Kamchatka Gull.

Whilst Laysan Albatross is the commonest albatross, there is also a good chance of both Black-footed and Short-tailed Albatrosses, with five of the latter in 2009, one in 2010 and three in 2011. Other likely tubenoses include Mottled Petrel, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Short-tailed Shearwater and the blue morph of the Northern Fulmar. Japanese, Pelagic and Red-faced Cormorants, Harlequin Duck, Black and Stejneger's Scoters can all be expected and ashore, we will search for shorebirds such as Grey-tailed Tattler, Red-necked and Long-toed Stints, Latham's Snipe and Rock Sandpiper.

Our landings add many more birds including Oriental Turtle Dove, Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Buff-bellied and Pechora Pipits, Brown-headed Thrush, Lanceolated and Middendorff's Grasshopper Warblers, Radde's, Eastern Crowned and the recently split Kamchatka Leaf Warbler, Grey-streaked, Siberian, Asian Brown, Narcissus and Red-throated Flycatchers, Rufous-tailed Robin, Red-flanked Bluetail, Siberian Rubythroat, Pine Grosbeak, Long-tailed Rosefinch and Rustic, Black-faced, Japanese Grey and Yellow-breasted Buntings.

Some of Japan's special birds also occur in the Southern Kuril Islands and we will search for Japanese Robin, Japanese Bush Warbler and Japanese Accentor whilst ashore. On Sakhalin Island itself, we have seen Sakhalin Leaf Warbler and Sakhalin Warbler on previous visits and will look for both of these if time allows.

There will also be excellent chances for some exciting mammals including Arctic (Blue) Fox, Asian Brown Bear, Larga Seal, Northern Fur Seal, Sea Otter and Steller's Sea Lions. Cetaceans could include Orca, Blue (2007 & 2009), Sperm, Northern Minke, Gray, Humpback and Fin Whales plus Baird's Beaked Whales (annually since 2009) and the seemingly 'turbo-charged' Dall's Porpoise. The opportunities for photography will be generally superb throughout.

The expedition offers an opportunity to explore one of the most geologically active and biologically rich parts of the planet and due to the large number of active volcanoes, this region has become known as the Pacific's 'Ring of Fire'. The Kamchatka Peninsula is a land of stunning bays and snow-capped volcanoes where alpine meadows and lowland forests support a great diversity of wildlife, whilst the Kuril chain comprises 32 islands that stretch between Russia and Japan.

Whilst the Southern Kuril Islands are sparsely inhabited, the Central and Northern Islands have no permanent human presence and we can expect to go for several days without seeing any other people. The voyage also takes in the remote Commander Islands which are also rich in bird and marine mammals and are the final resting place of the famed Danish explorer Vitus Bering.

Depending on your flight arrangements, you may have time to stay in Sakhalin and/or Petropavlovsk pre and/or post cruise and we can book hotels in both. The vessel will have a full expedition team onboard for this voyage including a ship's ornithologist. Subject to demand, we will operate some land-based birding excursions around Sakhalin and Petropavlovsk and to a site near Moscow Airport on the way home, with all of these offering excellent opportunities to see species you are unlikely to encounter on the voyage.

Itinerary

- Day 1: Arrive at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, overnight group hotel.
- Day 2: Transfer from hotel and board the vessel.

- Day 3: At sea heading to the Commander Islands. An opportunity to look for cetaceans (eg Blue Whale in 2007 and 2009), as well as Mottled Petrel and Red-legged Kittiwake.
- Day 4-5: Two days in the Commander Islands. Visit the community of Nikolskoye where we look for Rock Sandpiper, Pechora Pipit and Glaucous-winged Gull. Zodiac cruise Arij Karmen Island for Parakeet Auklet and Brunnich's Guillemot. Explore further east for Horned Puffin, Red-faced Cormorant, Grey-crowned Rosy Finch, Pacific Sea Otter and Baird's Beaked Whale.
- Day 6: Zhupanovo River, Kamchatka Peninsula. Zodiac cruise for nesting Steller's Sea Eagles and then ashore searching for Long-toed Stint, Lanceolated Warbler and Yellow-breasted Bunting.
- Day 7: Bukta Russkaya, Kamchatka Peninsula. Likely species include Harlequin Duck, Long-billed Murrelet and Kamchatka Leaf-warbler.
- Day 8: Onkotan and Atlasova Islands. Ashore Buff-bellied Pipit, Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler and Siberian Rubythroat can be expected and whilst cruising between the islands we should find Fork-tailed Storm-petrel, Pigeon Guillemot and Ancient Murrelet.
- Day 9: Ekarma and Toporkovy Islands. Two spectacular zodiac cruises with vast flocks of seabirds including Tufted and Horned Puffins.
- Day 10: Yankicho and Simishur Islands. Morning zodiac cruise at Yankicho for Crested and Whiskered Auklets and then to Simushir with its abandoned submarine base, where we could find Nutcracker, Brown-headed Thrush, Siberian Rubythroat and Pine Grosbeak.
- Day 11: Chiripoy and Urup Islands. Ashore we will look for Japanese Bush Warbler, Oriental Cuckoo and Japanese Grey Bunting.
- Day 12: Iturup Island. A trip into the highlands with possibilities including Japanese Robin, Japanese Accentor and Black-faced Bunting and Spectacled Guillemot offshore.
- Day 13: Kunashir Island. Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker, Crested Kingfisher and Eastern Crowned Warbler could be found.
- Day 14: Arrival at Sakhalin and disembark at Port of Korsakov. Transfer to hotels and airport.

Please note: All itineraries are subject to weather, local conditions and final approval by the relevant Russian authorities.

Voyage information

Dates:	26 th May – 8th June 2012
Leader/s:	Chris Collins and the ship's expedition team.
Cost:	
Sharing a triple basic (upper & lower berths)	£4499
Sharing a twin basic (lower berths)	£5189
Sharing a twin with facilities (upper and lower berths)	£5559

Sharing a superior twin with facs. (lower berths)	£5899
Sharing a suite with facilities from (beds)	£6189

Deposit: 25%

Prices based on £1 = US\$1.6. Payment may also be made in US\$, please ask for rates.

Price includes: Voyage with accommodation as booked, including all meals, tea/coffee, shore excursions, lectures and services of WildWings leader/s and the expedition team, day by day bird and mammal checklist. Pre-cruise hotel night with breakfast and dinner (twin share). Group transfers airport to hotel, hotel to ship, ship to airport.

Price excludes: Landing fees and port taxes (currently US\$500, payable onboard the ship), return economy class flights from £719 (London –Petropavlovsk, Sakhalinsk – London), extra pre/post cruise hotel nights if required, travel insurance, onboard gratuities (suggest US\$7 per day), Russian visa (c£90) and other drinks.

Contact us for the ship's colour brochure and our previous trip reports.