Remote Russia:
Yakutia & Kamchatka
2019
Remote Russia: Yakutia & Kamchatka

One Departure in 2019 – Cultural Series – 14 Days

August 6-19

Explore the remote corners of Russia, including Yakutia, a challenging northern frontier known for mammoths and diamonds, and the wild Kamchatka Peninsula, uneasily perched on the Pacific Ring of Fire. Both of these outlying regions are places of extremes, from the permafrost of Yakutia, rich with minerals, to the hot springs and fumaroles of Kamchatka, teeming with wildlife. Meet the indigenous peoples of these far-flung locales, and catch a glimpse of their way of life. Admire two natural UNESCO World Heritage Sites as you contrast the Kingdom of Permafrost in Yakutsk with the steaming Valley of the Geysers in Kamchatka.
**Daily Itinerary**

Day 1, Tuesday, August 6  
Arrive Yakutsk, Russia

Day 2, Wednesday, August 7  
Yakutsk

Day 3, Thursday, August 8  
Yakutsk

Day 4, Friday, August 9  
Yakutsk • day trip to Lena Pillars

Day 5, Saturday, August 10  
Yakutsk • day trip to Tyokhtyur village

Day 6, Sunday, August 11  
Yakutsk

Day 7, Monday, August 12  
Yakutsk • fly to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

Day 8, Tuesday, August 13  
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • helicopter day trip to the Valley of the Geysers

Day 9, Wednesday, August 14  
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • cruise on Avacha Bay

Day 10, Thursday, August 15  
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • Esso

Day 11, Friday, August 16  
Esso

Day 12, Saturday, August 17  
Esso • Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

Day 13, Sunday, August 18  
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • Avacha Volcano

Day 14, Monday, August 19  
Depart Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky
MIR Signature Experiences

- Experience Russia’s Far North Sakha Republic, a.k.a. Yakutia, known for its natural beauty, fossilized mammoths, and wealth of diamonds.
- Enter the Kingdom of Permafrost, where the King of the North presides in frosty chambers filled with fantastic ice sculptures.
- Take a day trip from Yakutsk to UNESCO-listed Lena Pillars Nature Park to admire the 650-foot stone columns towering over the river.
- Enjoy a meal with an indigenous Yakut family in their village.
- Helicopter over smoking volcanoes on your way to the Valley of the Geysers in some of the world’s wildest landscapes.
- Enjoy splendid views of Avacha and Koryak volcanoes, looming over the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.
- Boat around the mountainous coastline of Avacha Bay.

Tour Highlights

Yakutsk
- Capital of Sakha Republic, Kingdom of Permafrost, Permafrost Institute, diamond cutting factory, Mammoth Museum, Lena Pillars Nature Park (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Yakut village Tyokhtyur, fish market

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky
- Capital of Kamchatka Peninsula, home to Russian Pacific submarine fleet, Vulcanarium Museum, boat ride on Avacha Bay, Avacha Volcano, sled dog center, Museum of Local Lore

Valley of the Geysers
- Helicopter journey to the Kronotsky Reserve (UNESCO World Heritage Site), hot springs, geysers, mudpots

Esso
- Ethnographic museum

Daily Itinerary

Day One, Tuesday, August 6

Arrive Yakutsk, Russia

Upon arrival in Yakutsk, transfer to the hotel to rest and refresh. Gather for a welcome dinner this evening.

Meals: D – Hotel Tygyn Darkhan

Day Two, Wednesday, August 7

Yakutsk

Yakutsk is the capital of the Sakha Republic, also called Yakutia. This territory is the place where 99% of all Russian diamonds are mined. More than 40% of Yakutia sits above the Arctic Circle. Like the interior of Alaska, Yakutsk is warm in the summer, and the melting of the top layer of permafrost causes swampy conditions.
One of the coldest cities on earth, **Yakutsk** is the world's largest city built on permafrost. Most of its buildings are on pylons or stilts, usually made of wood, and its centralized heating pipes run above the ground. It came into being in 1632, when the Yenesei Cossacks built a stockade here on the great Lena River. The indigenous Yakut people had granted them territory for a settlement, and the Cossacks used their fort as a place to deal in furs, transporting them on the Lena. The city began to grow when gold and other minerals were discovered in the 1880s.

Begin a tour of the city this morning. Don a silver arctic poncho and enter the **Kingdom of Permafrost** through a tunnel paved with wooden planks. The way takes you deep into the mountain through chilly halls and chambers of permafrost lined with stalactites of frost and fantastic ice sculptures. The King of the North presides in one hall, and in another you can toast Winter with chilled vodka served in shot glasses made of ice.

Next explore the **Chochur Muran Ethnographic Complex**, which includes replicas of a wooden Cossack fort and a yurt-like Yakut *balagan*. Fitted with authentic furnishings, artifacts and decorations, the dwellings demonstrate what life in a harsh climate was like. Also on the grounds are Siberian Huskies, flocks of ducks and geese on the small lake, reindeer and shaggy Yakut ponies, which are available for horseback rides. The central log building holds a great restaurant serving local Siberian specialties. Take in a lunch of traditional Sakha favorites here before returning to the city center.

Back in town, visit a **diamond cutting factory**. The Sakha Republic produces 99% of Russia's diamonds, and more than a quarter of the world's raw diamonds. Visit the factory of one Yakutsk's largest producers of finished gems, the EPL Diamond Company. Here diamonds are cut, polished and made into jewelry that is sold through EPL’s chain of retail stores.
Day Three, Thursday, August 8

Yakutsk

After a hotel breakfast, explore the Treasury of Yakutia exhibition, displaying some of the mineral wealth of the region, including its famous diamonds. The collection includes both uncut and cut gems, and elegant jewelry made from diamonds and semi-precious stones.

Continue to the Permafrost Institute. As you descend into the 66-foot-deep shaft at the Institute of Permafrost, you are descending into the past. This permanently frozen zone has preserved the flora and fauna of ages past for modern humans to study. A constant 25 degrees Fahrenheit even in summer, the shaft has been a place of work and study for warmly-dressed Russian biologists and botanists for many years. A cast of “Baby Dima” is displayed here; it’s a fully preserved, 30,000-year-old frozen baby mammoth found on the Lena River.

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before taking in the Music and Folklore Museum of the Peoples of Yakutia. This unusual museum is dedicated to the traditional culture and folklore of the Yakuts, Evens, Evenks, Yukagirs, and Russian old-timers. Visitors are welcomed into the world of myths, festivals, folktales, rituals, and epics even before they hear the music that accompanies them. Films demonstrate some of the musical forms, such as the Olonkho, a Yakut spoken-and-sung epic that is registered on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Enjoy a short performance on traditional instruments here.

Dinner tonight will be at a local restaurant before overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Tygyn Darkhan or similar
Day Four, Friday, August 9
Yakutsk • day trip to Lena Pillars

Transfer to the harbor and board a boat heading for the Lena Pillars. About a half day's journey south of Yakutsk along the Lena River, the Lena Pillars Nature Park spreads over three million acres of subarctic plateau cut through by rivers, with areas of deep permafrost, tundra, taiga, dunes and rocky bird habitat. The park's most celebrated feature is the Lena Pillars, fantastic limestone columns up to 650 feet high towering over the river. Their spires and crenellated parapets were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2012. (Please note, walking to the top of the Lena Pillars (via stairs) is a challenging, steep climb.)

Drive back to Yakutsk for dinner and overnight.
Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Tygyn Darkhan or similar

Day Five, Saturday, August 10
Yakutsk • day trip to Tyokhtyur village

This morning, begin by visiting the Orto Doidu Ethnographic Park. In the Sakha language, "orto doidu" means "the middle world," where humans and animals (rather than spirits) live. Near the Örto Doidu Zoo is a modern ethnographic center with a reconstruction of a traditional Yakut summer tent, or urasa, and a restaurant serving local Yakut cuisine.
Drive north to the **village of Tyokhtyur**. This traditional Yakut village is made up of small houses, each with its own garden and outbuildings, and populated mostly by Sakha people.

Enjoy **lunch and conversation with a Yakut family**, and learn about daily life in their village. Yakut hospitality is warm and welcoming, and their cuisine is typically locally grown and foraged.

Return to Yaktusk for dinner, and overnight at the hotel.

**Meals:** B, L, D – *Hotel Tygyn Darkhan or similar*

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**Day Six, Sunday, August 11**

**Yakutsk**

Finish out the Yakutsk touring today with a visit to one of **Yakutsk's best museums**, the Yemelyan Yaroslavsky **Museum of History and Culture of the Northern People**. It was founded over a hundred years ago, and is housed in the former bishop’s residence. This museum has over 100,000 items relating to the history and culture of the indigenous peoples of Yakutia – peoples who share many traditions with Native Americans.

Continue to the Mammoth Museum. The **Museum of the Mammoth** is focused on the mammoths that roamed the area over 40,000 years ago. Exhibits include photos of the Berelekh Cemetery, where the remains of over 150 mammoths were found.

After lunch, browse the fish and produce market. In the winter, the **open-air fish market** is a sight to behold, with its bins of frozen fish standing upright on their tails ready for someone to cut into their frozen flesh for a raw treat. In summertime, the market is still amazing, due to the numbers and types of river fish that are for sale here.
Spend a free afternoon shopping for Yakutian souvenirs, resting in your rooms, or packing up for your flight to Kamchatka tomorrow.

Enjoy a Farewell to Yakutia dinner at a local restaurant.
Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Tygyn Darkhan or similar

Day Seven, Monday, August 12

Yakutsk • fly to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

Depart Yakutsk today on the noontime flight to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, arriving this evening. A beautiful sight greets arriving flights: mountainous terrain highlighted by three snow-capped volcanoes. The peninsula is home to some 150 volcanoes, 28 of which are active, including those closest to the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Avacha and Koryak.

On arrival, transfer to the hotel. Founded by Vitus Bering, the city is named after the two ships he sailed into Avacha Bay in 1740, the St. Peter and the St. Paul. Prominent explorers including Bering, La Peruse and Charles Clark all played a role in local history. A city of more than 250,000 people, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky is home to fishermen, shipbuilders and repairmen, traders, geologists and students. It serves as the capital of the Kamchatka Peninsula, a total area of 472,000 square kilometers.

The remainder of the day is free before dinner tonight at a local restaurant.
Meals: B, L (on board), D – Hotel Avacha, Hotel Petropavlovsk, or similar
Day Eight, Tuesday, August 13
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • helicopter day trip to the Valley of the Geysers

Today, embark on a helicopter excursion to the fantastic Valley of the Geysers. The helicopter flight takes approximately 90 minutes over one of the more active regions of the Pacific Ring of Fire. Admire the beauty and grandeur of active volcanoes and the mountain ranges, taiga, rivers and lakes of Kamchatka during the flight to the preserve.

The Uzon Caldera, in which Kamchatka’s Valley of the Geysers is found, was formed over 225,000 years ago, in the mid-Pleistocene, when a great shield volcano exploded. The eruption’s first phase created a huge crater, and the second blew most of the crater wall into the atmosphere, leaving a depression that today covers 150 square kilometers. The interior slopes of the caldera are steep and rocky, but the outer slopes gently merge into a wide lava plateau.

The Valley of the Geysers is located in a hidden canyon deep in the territory of the Kronotsky Nature Reserve, about 200 kilometers from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Geysers, mud pots, thermal springs and steam vents erupt from the valley floor, and boardwalks thread their way through the extraordinary landscape. Since its discovery in 1941 by scientist Tatyana Ustinova, the valley has attracted researchers and visitors from all over the world. The Valley of the Geysers is a centerpiece of the “Volcanoes of Kamchatka,” a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
Late lunch will be served picnic-style today by the heliport. (You will want to bring snacks on this day!) After the return flight from the valley, enjoy dinner at the hotel.

Please note: Helicopter flights are weather dependent. Other groups of travelers will join the flight to the Valley of the Geysers.
Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Avacha, Hotel Petropavlovsk, or similar

Day Nine, Wednesday, August 14

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • cruise on Avacha Bay

Enjoy another day in the capital of Kamchatka, beginning with a visit to the Vulcanarium Museum, where exhibits are made all the more real from witnessing the Valley of the Geysers’ geothermal activity yesterday. The museum houses a collection of minerals from the Ring of Fire, a string of volcanoes and seismic activity along the rim of the Pacific Ocean. The museum also screens video footage of some of the latest eruptions on Kamchatka.

Next, stop in at the Regional Museum of Local Lore, featuring exhibits on the history of the region’s indigenous people, its Russian settlers, flora and fauna and volcanic activity. Displays include wonderful examples of local arts and handicrafts.
After lunch this afternoon, and weather permitting, set out on a boat ride exploring **Avacha Bay**, considered one of the largest bays in the world. Admire the boats and ships that arrive and depart year round. Farther from town, colonies of sea birds nest on the cliffs and rocks, the cone of **Avacha Volcano** steams above the green hills and the sheer sea stacks called the “Three Brothers” stand guard against tsunamis. Also cruise around Starichkov Island, where you may perhaps spot some of the bay’s sea otters, seals and other sea mammals.

**Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Avacha, Hotel Petropavlovsk, or similar**

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### Day Ten, Thursday, August 15

**Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • Esso**

This morning, depart by overland vehicle for **Esso**. The day will be quite long, but the route offers fantastic scenery. This is a route few travelers have taken, as Kamchatka remained off-limits to Soviet citizens and foreigners alike until 1991. During that time, it was one of the most secret and restricted parts of the Soviet Union due to its military installations. (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky harbors the Russian Pacific submarine fleet and a major naval base.)

The lunch stop will be at **Milkovo**, an old Cossack village situated on the banks of the Kamchatka River, the largest river on the peninsula. Notice how the climate differs markedly from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky; in the summer, Milkovo is the warmest place on the peninsula. Time permitting, visit a **replica of an old Cossack fort** before continuing to Esso.

**Esso** is a town of approximately 2,300 people, two thirds of whom are Russian and one third of whom are indigenous peoples. Spend some time visiting and learning about the two major indigenous peoples of Kamchatka, the Koryak and the Even.

By current estimates, there are approximately 7,200 Koryaks in Kamchatka, most living in the Koryaksky Autonomous Okrug. The name Koryak originated in the 18th century as a general term used to describe the scattered ethnic groups that inhabited northern and northeastern Siberia. The Cossacks, who came to Kamchatka in the 17th century, frequently heard the local people use the word **khora**, which means reindeer. They took this word to refer to the people in general, thereby calling them “the people of the reindeer.”

**Koryak** people are divided into subgroups: **nymylany** (settled) and **chavchuveny** (nomadic). The **nymylany** Koryaks were originally hunters and fishermen. Today, most of them live a modern lifestyle in wooden...
homes with electricity. The chavchuveny Koryaks engage primarily in reindeer-breeding. They rely on the reindeer for their food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Originally, they lived in yaranga, round dwellings covered in reindeer hides. Towards the end of the 19th century, however, they began to use tents made from a dense type of fabric instead. The chavchuveny Koryak have retained much of the original nomadic culture of the Koryak people, primarily because they continue to spend the better part of the year traveling with their herds. Since they return to their settlements only periodically, there is much less opportunity for foreign cultural elements to have an impact on their way of life.

The Evens came to the Kamchatka peninsula relatively late from the Okhotsk region. Originally they engaged in fishing and hunting, but toward the end of the 19th century their major occupation became reindeer-breeding. The first Even arrived in Kamchatka with a small number of reindeer, but upon arrival in Kamchatka, under the influence of the Koryak, they began to breed reindeer for fur and meat. For shelter, they constructed conical tents called chums (similar to the Koryak yaranga and to the Native American teepee). They used reindeer for transportation and made clothes from the hides. Today, almost half of the approximately 1,500 Even in Kamchatka live in the Bystrinsky area, to which Esso and the nearby Anavgay Settlement belong.

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Picket, to which stars and constellations, like reindeer, are tethered. They believe that stars and constellations are like people. The dwellings of indigenous people represent the mythological model of the world, particularly the pole-ladder, which stands in the middle of the dwelling and symbolizes the connection between the lower and upper worlds. When someone dies, they believe the person ascends to the upper world and, simultaneously, someone descends to the lower world in their place.

Dinner is at the guesthouse.
Meals: B, L, D – Three Bears Guesthouse or similar

Day Eleven, Friday, August 16

Esso

Esso has a vibrant indigenous culture which inhabitants have fought to preserve. Visit the local ethnographic museum, considered one of the best of its kind in Russia, offering visitors a glimpse of their way of life.
Bystrinsky Nature Park runs from Kamchatka’s backbone of volcanic peaks down the western slope halfway to the Sea of Okhotsk, which separates the peninsula from mainland Russia. The park encompasses 120 volcanoes in its 5,000 square miles of wilderness. Bystrinsky was formed to protect the unique flora and fauna of the area, but it has become a refuge for several groups of Russia’s indigenous people as well.

Many Even, Koryak, and Itelmen people were moved out of their ancestral lands here and collectivized by the Soviets during the 1930s and 40s. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these groups have been encouraged to return to their subsistence lifestyles in what has become a protected area. Hunting, fishing, gathering berries and mushrooms and tending gardens of potatoes, cabbage, and beets, the Even reindeer herders have developed a way of life that is sustainable and agreeable to them. Other families live in scattered cabins along the rivers of the park, and have agreed to help protect it from development and exploitation.

At the park entrance, there is a visitors’ center where you can watch a documentary from the 1920s, shot by Swede Sten Bergman during an early expedition to Kamchatka.

Browse a small art gallery to get a sense of the creativity of the local people, and to see some of their best work.

Enjoy lunch in Esso before you drop in on local woodcarvers for a master class in making traditional Yakut amulets – small figures and pendants that have been produced since early times here to bring good luck and good hunting.

This evening, attend a folk performance along with dinner at the local native center in Esso or Anavgay village. Return to Esso for overnight. Meals: B, L, D – Three Bears Guesthouse or similar
Day Twelve, Saturday, August 17
Esso • Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

Today, transfer overland back to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. The evening is yours to explore the city.
Dinner is at the hotel or a local restaurant.
Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Avacha, Hotel Petropavlovsk, or similar

Day Thirteen, Sunday, August 18
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky • Avacha Volcano

The final day in this rugged country includes a trip to Avacha Volcano. Hop aboard a six-wheel truck for the drive to the foot of Avacha. The first 18 km is on the main road, but the next 25 km is on a rugged track that climbs upward to the base camp, where climbers begin ascending the volcano. After a picnic lunch at the volcano’s foot, set off for a walk to the top of Camel Mountain (1,150 meters). All types of indigenous plants and flowers grow here along the 20-30 degree angled slope. Spectacular views of Zhupanovsky, Vilyuchinsky and Koryaksky volcanoes are the reward for reaching the apex of Camel Mountain.

Return to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky to bid farewell to the Kamchatka Peninsula with a festive dinner.
Meals: B, L, D – Hotel Avacha, Hotel Petropavlovsk, or similar

Day Fourteen, Monday, August 19
Depart Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

Following breakfast, the tour concludes with a transfer to the airport.
Meals: B
Dates for 2019 – One Departure – Cultural Series

The land itinerary will be operated on the following dates. Please note that you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to the tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

August 6-19, 2019

Please Note: This program makes use of domestic flights in Russia which are highly subject to change. Domestic flight schedule changes in Russia could impact the internal structure of this program – MIR will keep you posted of any changes to the program when they’re known. We also make use of a helicopter for the day trip to/from the Valley of the Geysers, which is highly weather dependent and will be done only if conditions permit.

Package Prices – 2019

6-16 travelers, $7,695 per person, double occupancy
Plus internal air $1400, economy class, subject to change; includes helicopter day trip to/from Valley of the Geysers
Single supplement $875

Tour Price Includes

• Accommodations as noted in itinerary, ranging from best available in Yakutsk, and moderate three star hotel in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, to a small private hotel with shared facilities in Esso.
• Meals per the itinerary: 13 breakfasts, 12 lunches (including one lunch aboard airplane) and 13 dinners.
• Restaurant tips for included meals.
• Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers and other staff, including a MIR Tour Manager
• Arrival/departure airport transfers. MIR will arrange for all travelers to be met on arrival and seen off on departure whether we make your airfare arrangements or not, provided you arrive and depart on the tour start/end dates in the tour start/end cities.
• Ground transportation throughout the itinerary by van or minibus, and truck (type of vehicle depends on group size and terrain).
• Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
• Special events, excursions and cultural performances per the itinerary.
• Ecological permit to visit the Valley of the Geysers.
• Baggage handling where available.
• Gratuities to local guides, drivers, porters and other service personnel.
• Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, Touring with MIR handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
• Customized visa application and instruction kit (please note, visa fees are not included in the tour price).
• Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
• Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates and more.

Not Included in Tour Price

• Internal airfare (internal airfare is quoted separately and is subject to change by airlines/helicopter line).
• International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
• Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
• Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
• Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
• Gratuities to Tour Manager.
• Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
• Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR’s control.
• Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?
To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

Cultural Series
MIR’s Cultural Series programs feature some of our most distinctive tour concepts and include uncommon and educational experiences, including visits to small towns and villages outside the major urban areas and capital cities. All trips feature comfortable, well-located hotels.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You
While the accommodations are as comfortable as possible, they will vary from best available in Yakutsk, to a moderate, three star hotel in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky to a much a simpler, small, private guesthouse in Esso, with shared toilet and shower facilities.

It is important to keep in mind that Yakutia and Kamchatka are, in general, not up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; nevertheless, you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps, and availability and quality of public restrooms. You are traveling in some areas which, relatively speaking, have seen few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed.

While this program is designed to be the most comfortable possible for travel in this region, it is rated as rigorous touring due to the extensive walking involved, the length of some transport segments and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot, and many streets in Yakutian villages and in Esso are of packed dirt (can be muddy if wet) only. Transportation is sometimes by four-wheel-drive vehicles over rough and unpaved roads. Touring on one day includes the use of a Russian military helicopter converted for civilian use. Travelers other than MIR group members will likely be present on the helicopter segment. On Day 4 walking to the top of the Lena Pillars (via stairs) is a steep and challenging climb with difficult footwork and limited handrails. On Day 13, the walk up Camel Mountain is mostly on a 20-degree grade, with 50 meters at 30 degrees. The terrain is volcanic slag, and snow or ice can be present.

To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least 2-3 miles a day (including some hills, stairs and trails), keeping up with fellow travelers. Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential components to the enjoyment of this trip.

Additional en route nights may be required (at additional traveler expense) depending on your final air routing. These could be needed in one or more of the following cities: Anchorage, Seoul, Vladivostok, Moscow or Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. See International Airfare section below for more information.
Every effort has been made to make the information in this schedule accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. Please note also that in Kamchatka, all helicopter flights and the boat cruise are weather dependent, since helicopters are only able to fly and boats to set out when weather conditions permit. Unfavorable weather conditions may result in delays and modifications to the planned program. We will do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in the Russian Far East, this may not always be possible. This tour maintains a focus on cultural interaction, and we will be visiting a private home and sharing meals with local residents. It is therefore important that tour members have a desire to involve themselves in the local culture in order to enjoy this trip.

**Are You Prepared?**

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit [www.travelguard.com/mircorp](http://www.travelguard.com/mircorp)

Please read the U.S. State Department’s Travel Advisory regarding travel to Russia here: [https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/russia-travel-advisory.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/russia-travel-advisory.html)

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: [https://step.state.gov/step/](https://step.state.gov/step/)

**Weather**

The climate of much of the Russian Far North is classified as “Subarctic” or “Very-cold Subarctic,” with extremely severe winters. The “Pole of Cold” in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) has registered a record-breaking low temperature of -92.2 degrees Fahrenheit. Yakutia’s average annual temperature is about 14 degrees Fahrenheit, but in summer it can reach 70 degrees and above. Most precipitation falls in July.

The Russian Far East is moderated by its maritime climate. This leads to warmer temperatures in the winter and cooler temperatures in the summer, with this maritime effect most prevalent near the coast. Inland, the climate becomes more typically continental. Late summer is the most enjoyable time of year to visit the Russian Far East and Kamchatka. Expect warm, sunny days most of the time, but rain is definitely possible. The average daytime temperature range is 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit, but keep in mind that temperatures can also cool down at night, especially if there is rain.

In the summer, expect a wide variety of weather conditions, and be prepared for the heat or cold, rainy days, perhaps even snow in the north. It is not unusual to have snow showers in the mountains of Kamchatka even in July. Rain is always possible and tends to fall in quick, powerful storms rather than extended light rain. The best advice for dressing in summer is to use layers in order to accommodate the wide variety of weather conditions. In winter, even along the coast, dress for extreme cold. (Mosquito repellent is also a summertime necessity!)

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com) closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.
Additional considerations for footwear and pants in the region

- Past travelers have experienced colder and wetter conditions than expected, especially in Kamchatka.
- We recommend you consider for your comfort low hiking boots that are waterproof or water resistant, as normal shoes can be tricky when surfaces are wet, and can take days to dry out.
- Likewise, we recommend that you consider waterproof or water-repellent clothing or over-clothing, including pants to keep your legs dry if walking through tall wet brush.
- Thermal layers and warm clothing may be needed in case of colder-than-expected temperatures and time spent at higher elevations.
- Temperatures much warmer than expected are also possible on this trip, particularly in the highly continental climate of Yakutia.

International Airfare

MIR’s in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only – U.S. departure will have to be at least one day prior, and in many cases two or more days prior to the scheduled tour start date.

This program visits some of the most remote regions of Russia’s hinterlands. Air routings into Yakutsk are challenging due to the general remoteness of the area, and size limitations on planes that can land and take off from there. Routes homeward from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky are more robust but still limited. Schedules and airline routings may require traveling through Moscow, and/or other Russian cities, such as Vladivostok, Irkutsk, or Novosibirsk. While a flight from Anchorage to the Russian Far East has existed in the past, it is not expected to operate in 2019.

Most air routings will require one or more en-route overnights (at additional expense) in one or more cities. Routing through Moscow from the west coast of the U.S. will generally require an overnight in Moscow on the return end of the trip. For the same reason routing through Vladivostok works best for travelers who want to spend some time visiting this Russian Far eastern sea port. Traveling between such remote destinations, once inaccessible except by arduous overland journey, can still be difficult and requires flexibility in your travel planning.

MIR is happy to make custom land arrangements for you around the air itinerary of your choice, including booking additional accommodations, guided touring and excursions, which will be booked at additional expense.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

At the time of writing, U.S. passport holders require one visa for this tour: Russian. You may also need a visa for any additional country you fly via to join the tour.
An estimate of current visa costs for U.S. passport holders, based on standard processing time, is $237. Your exact visa fees may differ as visa costs can depend on a number of factors, such as state of residence, processing time, and return shipping. Visa fees are always subject to change.

Standard visa processing in the Russian visa section is ten to fifteen days for this tour. Travelers should prepare to be without their passports for that amount of time. If you plan to travel extensively in the time leading up to your MIR tour, you may need to obtain a second valid passport or use expedited processing, depending on your plans. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding the timeline for visa processing.

Extensive pre-tour paperwork is necessary to apply for this visa, which requires an overseas approval authorization to be issued prior to submission of your application materials to the Embassies/Consulates. A valid passport with six months validity from the end of the tour is also required.

In the past some travelers have made their own visa arrangements instead of using MIR’s preferred provider for their visa processing; either using their own visas service or attempting to process directly with the embassies/consulates. We strongly recommend you discuss it with us before choosing an alternate visa processing method, to help avoid difficulties and visa problems. In the event that you plan to process visas without going through MIR’s preferred provider, please contact us first so we can pass you detailed instructions with critical trip-specific information.

Pre- and Post-Tour Extensions
In addition to hotel arrangements needed en route due to air schedules, MIR can assist with guided touring, excursions and more as you make your way to Yakutsk and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. We suggest you spend an extra day or two in Vladivostok and visit the Amur Tiger Rehabilitation Center. Add touring in Western Russia, visiting Moscow and St. Petersburg on your way to the Russian Far East, or let MIR set up an extension for you in Seoul, South Korea. Please contact us for more information on adding Western Russia, Siberia, Mongolia and more.

Also Nearby...
For more tours in the Russian Far East and Mongolia, you may want to check out the following:

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

**Essential Siberia**, 7 days. Explore Siberia’s UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal, surveying the nomadic heritage, Buddhist monasteries and overwhelming natural beauty of this amazing land. Explore Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryatia, lakeside Listvyanka Village and cultured Irkutsk, influenced by transplanted Czarist and Bolshevik exiles.

**Essential Tibet**, 8 days. Fly to the holy city of Lhasa high on the Tibetan Plateau. Admire the treasures of Tibetan culture on the “Roof of the World,” and respond to the atmosphere of centuries of Buddhist practices.

**Essential St. Petersburg**, 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the “White Nights” of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

**Essential Russia**, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia’s political capital, Moscow,
and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

**Small Group Tours**

**Siberian Winter Escapade**, 8 days. When you think of Siberia, you may think of punishment and exile, of barren tundra and vast expanses of nothingness — of a place of no return. The closely-guarded truth is that Siberia is a wild and wooded place of unimaginable beauty, especially in winter. UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal freezes so hard that you can walk on water; race teams of sled dogs, and fish through the ice. Experience the rare opportunity to sweep across the frozen lake by hovercraft to sacred Olkhon Island.

**Siberian Odyssey: Legends of Lake Baikal & Tuva**, 13 days. Explore South Siberia, a remote and atmospheric land where mounted Scythians thundered across the steppe long ago. Meet the Buryats of UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal and the Tuvan and Khakass people, whose Mongolian neighbors imbued them with Buddhism, shamanism and *khoomei*, or throat-singing.

**Mongolia to Moscow: A Trans-Siberian Railway Adventure**, 16 days. Travel on regularly scheduled Trans-Siberian trains over a dramatic and variegated route that offers limitless opportunities to meet the diverse local people — Mongol, Buryat and Russian. Experience the rolling green hills and nomadic traditions of Mongolia, Siberia’s UNESCO-listed Lake Baikal and endless taiga forest on your way to the booming capital, Moscow. The July departure of this program features the Naadam Festival in UlaanBaatar.

**Siberia & Mongolia: Spirits and Nomads**, 16 days. Beautiful and exotic, Siberia and Mongolia are worlds away from the traditional beaten path. Explore the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, then fly to the red sands of the Gobi Desert. Celebrate a local Naadam Festival, far from the glitz and ruckus of the capital. In Siberia, take to the waters of great Lake Baikal, the oldest and deepest lake on earth, and ride a section of the fabled Trans-Siberian Railway.

**Conditions of Participation**

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2019 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

**Cancellation and Refund Policy**

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR’s receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

*MIR Small Group Tours*

Cost of cancellation, if received:
61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of $750;
31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;
30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.
References
We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?
Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators…

Destination Specialization
MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don’t do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Turkmennistan, Uzbekistan), Iran, the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

30 Years of Experience
A travel company doesn’t last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

Recommended & Respected
MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by National Geographic Adventure. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as Outside magazine and National Geographic Traveler. Our trips have been featured in books such as Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean and 1,000 Places to See Before You Die.
More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.
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