

# Kamchatka - Volcanoes, Geysers, Salmon, Bears and the Inhabitants of the Peninsula. August 2- 14, 2010

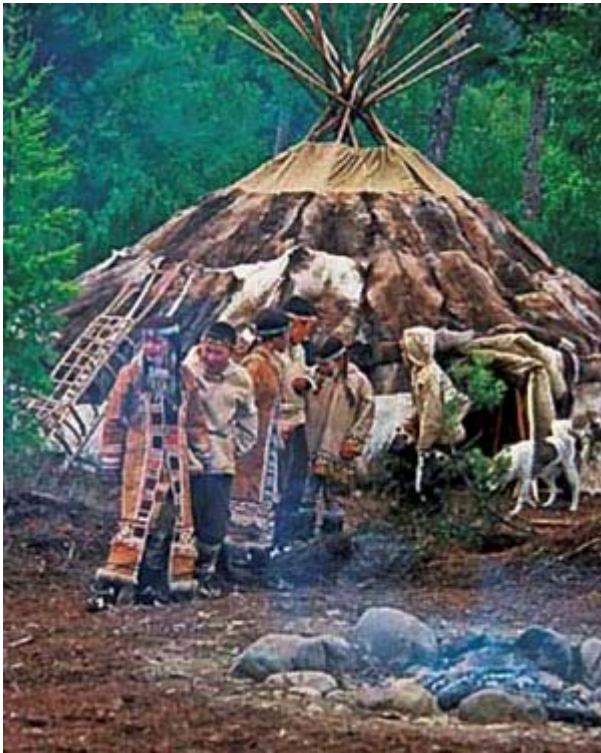
Photo expedition

**Cost per person, double occupancy:** \$7,740

**Number of participants:** 11

**Duration:** 13 days

**Overnight accommodations:** country style resort hotels and tent camps



Kamchatka is a 780-mile long peninsula located in the Russian Far East across the Pacific Ocean from Alaska. Equivalent to the size of California, Kamchatka is a hundred times less populated with less than one person per square mile. The peninsula is the most spectacular volcanic region in the world, with a high density and a variety of active volcanoes, including the [Volcanoes of Kamchatka UNESCO World Heritage Site](#). The glacier contours have a wide range of volcanic features creating inimitable landscapes of outstanding beauty. The pristine nature of the area is famous for a vast diversity of species with a high concentration of sea otters, brown bears and Stellar's sea eagles. [Kamchatka produces over a quarter of all wild Pacific salmon](#), and its river system hosts the greatest diversity of salmonid fish on Earth, including the world's largest species, Chinook (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*).

On this tour, you will view volcanoes such as Avachinsky, Gorely, Mutnovsky and the Valley of Geysers; observe mass salmon migration; and photograph giant brown bears fishing salmon at

the Lake Kurile, South Kamchatka State Nature Sanctuary. Meet with the locals and visit an authentic chum (choom), a tent-like temporary dwelling used by the nomadic reindeer herders.

You will also see firsthand the geological forces in play at the famous Valley of Geysers. Witness nature and human interactions in a unique hot spot of the world saturated with active volcanoes. Learn about the traditional and modern salmon fisheries and how our Russian partners sustain Kamchatka as a global stronghold for wild salmon. Discover the history of Kamchatka's colonization and the traditions of indigenous nomadic Koryak tribes that have survived through the centuries.

Get a live glimpse of what you can experience on this tour, [view Valley of Geysers' webcam](#) and our [photo gallery](#).





## **Transportation**

The closest airport to our destination is Petropavlovsk- Kamchatsky (PKC), in the Russian Federation. Private 6 wheel-drive vehicles will escort you during some of the tour, while some remote places are reachable only by a private, chartered helicopter.

## **Tour Leader - Dr. Ilya Raskin**

A world-renowned scientist, traveler and nature photographer, Ilya Raskin received a Ph.D. in 1984 from Michigan State University and joined

the faculty of the [Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment at Rutgers](#), The State University of New Jersey, in 1989. As Professor II of Plant Sciences, he directs scientific programs comprised of over 50 researchers from more than 15 different countries. He also is the President and Founder of the Global Institute for Bio-Exploration ([GIBEX](#)). Dr. Raskin has received a number of prestigious awards, including the Albert Shull Award for outstanding contributions to plant biology and the Thomas Alva Edison Patent Awards for revolutionary product innovation and scientific breakthrough. Dr. Raskin is an [avid nature photographer](#), whose photographs are published in numerous scientific and popular journals.

## *Day-to-day itinerary*

### ***Day 1 (Monday, August 2, 2010):***

On morning arrival to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the capital of Kamchatka Region, an IBEX representative will greet you. Transfer by bus to Paratunka, a resort village located about 15 miles from the airport, which is famous for its numerous thermal springs. The Paratunka Valley, just a 45 minutes drive from Petropavlovsk- Kamchatsky, is a splendor of geothermal activity with hot springs, mineral pools and sprouting geysers. After lunch, tour the city, with an optional visit to the Museum of Local Lore or to the visitor center of the Kronotsky Nature Reserve. In the evening, dine at a local restaurant and afterwards, relax in the thermal pool. Overnight in the luxury resort Hotel Antarius.

***Day 2 (Tuesday, August 3, 2010).*** After breakfast, you will set out on a two-day drive to Lake Kuril. A bus will drive along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk on uneven terrain. On the way, ferry across several major rivers, explore the coastal terrain and see abandoned fishing villages. Overnight in a tent camp.

### ***Day 3 (Wednesday, August 4, 2010).***

Continuing south along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk, you will arrive to Pauzhetka. We will visit the geothermal power plant operating since 1966 to learn about local green energy resources and visit fumaroles or you can stay back and relax at the camp. Overnight in a tent camp.

### ***Day 4 (Thursday, August 05, 2010).***

Start the morning with a hike to Lake Kuril, a 6.5 miles scenic path along the river that brings you to the base camp on Lake Kuril. Your luggage will be transferred to the base camp on the lake. In the afternoon, a guide will lead an ecological excursion along Lake Kuril.

Lake Kuril ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurile\\_Lake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurile_Lake)), the second largest freshwater lake in Kamchatka, located on the territory of the South Kamchatka Nature Sanctuary, is the biggest salmon spawning ground in the peninsula. Every year from August to December, about 2.5-5 millions specimens of the most valuable Ozernovsky population of red salmon come to the lake to spawn along the River Ozernaya. Since 1964, when the scientific station of the Kamchatka Institute for Fishery and Oceanography was established, censuses and population studies of salmon are taken. In August, the visitors can observe masses of red salmon in shallow water before going to the spawning grounds. This is a fantastic sight not only for ecologists and naturalists, but also for Kamchatka dwellers. The spawning grounds of red salmon are located along the lakeshore and in numerous rivers and streams flowing into the lake. They attract a great number of birds of prey and waterfowl (including the Steller's sea eagles and mergansers) and mammals (bear, otter, fox, ermine, and glutton). During this period, the animals feed almost only on salmon.



The shores of Lake Kuril and surrounding areas are known for having the highest concentration of Kamchatka brown bears. According to the results of air censuses of local bear population, there are more than 100 individuals! During the excursions on the lake, visitors will have an opportunity to observe bear behavior in their natural habitat and film unique shots of bear fishing. There is also an opportunity to observe pairs of Steller's sea eagles nesting on the lake.



During the forthcoming days, you will explore the unique ecosystem of the South of Kamchatka and various aspects of sustainable nature use. In the afternoon, arrive to the source of the Ozernaya River at Kuril Lake, where the field station of the Kamchatka Institute for Fishery and Oceanography and the rangers' lodge are located. Excursion to the scientific station, learn about the work of ichthyologists and rangers of the Nature Sanctuary engaged in protecting the salmon spawning grounds and bear population. Observe the mass salmon migration from the observation bridge with viewing grounds.

**Day 5 (Friday August, 6, 2009)**

Today a guide will take you on an excursion on Lake Kuril to the South Kamchatka Nature Sanctuary

Photograph brown bears fishing salmon.

Depending on the weather and other local factors, the excursion program may include:

- motor boat cruise along the lake shore (in small groups) and visit areas with the highest concentrated bear population to observe their activity and behavior
- observe bears from stationary "observation grounds" (it is usually possible to observe the behavior of several males and females with cubs at very close range)
- optional hiking excursions or ascend to the Ilyinsky Volcano (the ascend is moderate, although there is no distinct trail and it is sometimes necessary to cut through the thickets of cedar creeper).

Some changes in the excursion program may be made depending on weather conditions and other local factors.

During the excursions, the visitors will have an occasion to observe and photograph bears in different habitats: along the riverbanks, spawning grounds, tundra, etc. The guides will acquaint you with the major

methods of field observations of brown bears. During the daily excursions and talks, you will learn about various aspects of bear ecology and behavior in wild nature. In the evenings, there will be an opportunity to discuss the findings of your field observations.

***Day 6 (Saturday, August 7, 2010)***

In the morning, continue your guided excursion on Lake Kuril in the South Kamchatka Nature Sanctuary. After lunch, you will fly to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky by charter helicopter. Accommodations at the Antarius Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 7 (Sunday, August 8, 2010)***

Today you will take a bus trip to the Avacha volcano (Avachinsky volcano; Avachinskaya Sopka). Drive along the Sukhaya River to the Avacha Volcano plateau. The trail ascends the Avacha Volcano (8953ft) by a gradual slope to the top (estimated time needed 5-6 hours for slow ascent). Walk at your own pace climbing about 5900 ft on a well-marked single trail. You may have lunch on the edge of the crater of the volcano with a stunning panorama of the Pacific Ocean, Petropavlovsk, Koryaksky Volcano and Nalycheva Valley. Easier options with still spectacular views are available. Accommodations at the Antarius Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 8 (Monday, August 9, 2010)***

Trip to the Gorely Volcano

In the morning you will have breakfast at the hotel. Transfer by bus to the caldera between the Mutnovsky and Gorely Volcanoes (about 4 hrs). The road passes by Vilyuchinsky Volcano, a favorite place for downhill skiing for Kamchatka dwellers (quite often snow lays there even in July). Picnic lunch.

An afternoon hiking excursion will lead you to the chain of craters of the Gorely Volcano.

Gorely Volcano presents a unique collection of craters – a chain, which lies across the top. The chain begins with the West crater, no longer active and surrounded by rather low rocky walls. A glacier occupies the crater's bottom. Most of the volcano's activity is concentrated in the Central crater. On its walls and bottom, there are permanently active fumaroles; their deposits color the crater's walls. The biggest and the most beautiful crater is the Blue Lake. Its bottom is filled with tender-blue water where blocks of ice float. The last in the chain of top craters is the Cup. This crater is on the top of a rather low and perfectly regular cone. On its bottom is a shallow lake of violet water.

All the craters can be visited in a single day, when the weather is favorable. The hiking distance is 12 miles; the route is not complicated. The excursion takes about 8 hrs; however, visitors may return to the base camp earlier.

Accommodations at the Antarius Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 9 (Tuesday, August 10, 2010)***

Trip to the Valleys of Geysers

Today you will take a helicopter tour to the Valley of Geysers, including a flight over Karymsky (4875 ft) and Maly Semyachik (5118 ft) Stroll through this wonder world of nature's treasures hidden deep in the mountains of Kamchatka. A lunch-picnic is included.

The helicopter flight to the Valley of Geysers takes about 75 minutes. The cluster of geysers, fumaroles and hot springs in this valley were only discovered in 1941. They lie above the marginal fractures of the oldest Uzon Caldera. The hot water that emerges is largely recirculated rainfall, mixed with some juvenile water from magma. The magmatic heat source is probably the roots of the Uzon Volcano and/or the Kikhpinych Volcano. The Geysernaya River has cut its valley into bedded andesitic tuffs that were deposited in a lake in the first Uzon Caldera; the southeastern valley slope is the heavily eroded caldera wall, broken into older volcanic. Some dacite lavas and intrusions occur in the tuffs, and all the exposed rocks have been altered hydrothermally. Some slopes have been gullied to leave earth pillars. There are extensive deposits of opaline siliceous geyserite, some built into large banks and terraces below the main vents. The valley's

geysers include a few with large but brief periodic eruptions, and many more which produce hot water spouts frequently or almost continuously. The boardwalk snakes over the Valley. Accommodations at the Antarius Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 10 (Wednesday , August 11, 2010)***



Engage in a daylong hike (without backpacks) to the Mutnovsky active volcano and further into its crater through a crack in the volcano's edge. The view is alarming and fantastic: eastward a glacier descends the crater's wall to end in a bluff eaten by fumaroles; opposite, a sheer rock rises, here with columns of water vapor curling upward. The appearance of this crater is changeable. The crater

contains a lake of bitter highly mineralized whitish water and two groups of powerful fumaroles. One of the fumaroles throws off small drops of melted sulphur, the other – powerful jets of vapors, water and sulfurous. Nearby are vast mud pits. The excursion into the crater takes about 4 hrs.

The Mutnovsky active volcano, a nest of merged craters, is perhaps the most beautiful volcanic phenomenon of Kamchatka. The view from its top is magnificent. Steep walls surround the vast and deep crater cavity, glittering of firm and sparkling glaciers split by cracks, torches of fumaroles oscillating far below and drawing a translucent view over the northern crater. The southern craters under its armor-ice and above all this a column of vapor rising from the Active Funnel crater, surrounded by a clogged crest. The total distance of hiking during this day is about 11 miles. Lunch at the volcano site. Accommodations at the Antarius Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 11 (Thursday, August 12, 2010)***

Motorboat cruise in Avacha Bay.



The city Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky grew next to the almost ideal deep-water seaport the Avacha Bay. The bay is large and deep, with a narrow opening that keeps out foul weather and ice. The harbor is well protected from storms and dreaded tsunami waves and open to shipping year round.

Enjoy spectacular views of the Northwest part of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky along with a variety of boats that make their home in the port. Both Koryaksky and Avacha Volcanoes are clearly seen behind the city. Explore nesting places of sea birds at the Babushkin Kamen (Old Woman's Stone) Island, Tri Brata (Three Brothers) Island.



Tri Brata (Three Brothers).  
Accommodations at the Antarius Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 12 (Friday, August 13, 2010)***



Travel to Itelmens (Kamchadal) village of Pimchakh, 25 miles from the regional capital Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. The indigenous population of Kamchatka Itelmens is less than 1000 nowadays. The ethnic community of Pimchakh maintains a traditional life style, language, customs, dances and food. Visit the ethnography museum, talk to local people living there, and taste traditional cuisine and phyto-teas. See a performance of the folk ensemble.

Accommodations at the Paratunka Valley Hotel.

***Day 13 (Saturday, August 14, 2010)***

Departure

### Logging

**The Paratunka Valley** resort hotel "Antarius" is well situated 15 miles from the Yelizovo Airport and 38 miles from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, in Paratunka settlement. Swimming pool and saunas are located in a separate building close to the hotel.



Swimming pool with thermal water



Double occupancy room

**The Lake Kuril Tent Camp.** The tent camp is located on the grounds of South Kamchatka Nature Sanctuary secured with an electric fence. Comfortable tents are equipped with mattresses and sleeping bags. The camp has portable toilets and outhouses. You will be able to enjoy a daily Russian style bath. Electricity is available at the lodge.



### Food

During the field trips to Lake Kuril area, a private chef will prepare home-style breakfast, lunch and dinner. In the cities, the hotels will provide breakfast and lunch and dinner will be organized in local restaurants. To provide you with maximum flexibility we do not provide dinner when you are at the Paratunka Valley Resort Hotel "Antarius". You will be have the opportunity to explore local restaurants or dine in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.