

Expedition to the Shantar Islands



Level of proficiency

good physical training and stamina

from 2 700 Euro

The nearest date: **16 - 26 June 2025**

11 days / 10 nights

Other dates:

17 - 27 August 2025

19 - 29 August 2025

1 - 11 September 2025

There is a spot in the world unique in its beauty. It is a spot where whales swim among icebergs, rapacious killer whales chase dolphins, bears roam the shores, waterfalls cascade from the mountains, marble and jasper rocks raise like bizarre castles, rivers swarm with fish and birds twitter in many voices.

This place, half real, half fantasy, lies in the western part of the Sea of Okhotsk and is called the Shantar Archipelago. The Shantar Archipelago occupies the water area of 10,000 square km and consists of 15 major and minor islands plus many rocks and stacks. People used to live in the Shantar Islands long ago, but now their only residents are the weather station workers and the old hand hunter. Shantar archipelago is one of the most beautiful and unique places around the globe!

Itinerary



Day 1

Arrival in Khabarovsk by air, an overnight transfer to the airfield in the settlement of Briakan by the large 45-seat bus. Travel time is about 12-14 hours. Full distance is 700 km, where 400 km is on the asphalt road up to Komsomolsk and 300 km is on the earth road along the Baikal-Amur Mainline.



Flight to Briakan, the Bay of Ongachan. Flight by helicopter to the Ongachan Base (1,5 hours). Accommodation in the tourist camp, in cottages (beds, bed-linen). Dinner. Getting acquainted with the camp. Special room for eating, bar and a mess room. There is a kitchen, gas stoves, freezers, a power supply unit, and a laundry. A sauna is prepared every day. In the evening, a festive supper and sauna. The Bay of Ongachan lies along the Tugur Peninsula and is very picturesque. There is a great lake there with the river flowing out of it. Salmon comes to this river for spawning. There are no midges there, but the bay is often visited by whales and killer whales. You can see bears and foxes there. The Bay of Ongachan is safe from the prevailing winds and it's usually still. The bay is beyond the National Park, and the Shantar Islands themselves are quite close. It takes just five minutes to reach the nearest isle by motor-boat.



The exploration of the Shantar Islands begins. A trip to the Nasha Bay of the Bolshoy Shantar. On the way there are stops and dinner on the Maly Shantar Island. While traveling along the island coast, you can meet bears which come to the shore to fish. From this bay the best view of the sunset can be photographed. Dinner at the Nasha Bay. Return to the base camp at the Bay of Ongachan.



Bolshoy Shantar Island. Topaznaya Bay. Today we shall visit the weather station on the Bolshoy Shantar Island. This is where the only residents of the whole Shantar Archipelago live. Its population is just four men. These four men record the weather and rainfall characteristics, transmit the data and so on. Not far from here there used to be a mini-factory for processing whale fat into oil. Nowadays the factory is ruined, and the remaining structures naturally rusted all through.



Utichiy Island. A trip to the Utichiy Island. The length of the island is about 2,5 km, the width is no larger than 500 m. Visiting the rookery of ringed seals and the bird colonies. There are the largest spectacled guillemot colonies on the archipelago. For example, in 1991-1992 17,500 bird couples nestled on the Utichiy Island. There are also seal rookeries there.



Exploring the bays of the Tugur Peninsula, the Academy Bay and the Bay of Konstantin. The Tugur Peninsula lies at the western coast of the Sea of Okhotsk (in the Shantar Sea), separating the Tugur Bay (in the west) and the Ulban and the Academy Bays (in the east). The relief of the peninsula is mostly mountainous. The Academy Bay is a bay in the Sea of Okhotsk. Its length is 110 km, width at the mouth is 61 km, and depth is up to 45 m. It is frozen in winter. The Shantar Islands are situated before the bay mouth. The Academy Bay itself is divided into the Bay of Konstantin, the Bay of

Nicholas and the Ulban Bay. The western coast is formed by the Tugur Peninsula. The bay was named after the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences by the Russian traveler and geographer A.F. Middendorf during his expedition to this part of the world in the years 1844-1845.



A trip to the Belichiy Island. The area of the isle comprises about 70 sq km, the width is between 1,5 and 7 km. It is separated from the mainland by the Strait of Lindholm, and from the nearby Maly Shantar Island by the Opasny Strait. The island is covered by larch woods. The Belichiy Island together with the neighboring isles belongs to the Federal State Natural Area "The Shantar Islands".



The Ptichiy Island. The coast is covered with drift wood, and there are picturesque rocks along the shore. But the true pearl of the bay is the snowfield! The island is small, 2,5 km long and 1,5 km wide. There are a plenty of birds, as the isle name means "the Bird Island". There are large colonies of spectacled guillemots on this isle.



The Bay of Ongachan. A day of rest, sauna, fishing, watching whales, seals, bears and foxes at the Ongachan Bay.



The Bay of Ongachan. This is also a reserve day. Steller's sea eagles, ermines and sables may be photographed.



Return from the Bay of Ongachan. Departure for Briakan by air and then a bus trip to Khabarovsk.

Documents required

International passport and visa.

Accommodation/hotels:

Accommodation is based in the Bay Ongachan. The picturesque bay is closed from the prevailing winds, it is usually still.

There is a great lake there with the river flowing out of it.

Salmon comes to this river for spawning. There are no midges there, but the bay is often visited by whales and killer whales. They might come very close to the shore.

The bay is beyond the National Park, and the Shantar Islands themselves are quite close. It takes just five minutes to reach the nearest isle by motor-boat.

There are beds and bed-linen provided in the cottages (sleeping bags are not required). Special room for eating (it's a bar messroom).

There is a kitchen, gas stoves, freezers, a power supply unit and a laundry.

A sauna is prepared every day. Luggage restrictions are 20-23 kg. Only personal things and photo cameras.

Price includes

The program cost includes all the services from Khabarovsk and back again, except for exclusive alcoholic drinks and satellite phone.

Transfer, food, accommodation at the base camp and tours.

Price does not include

Return trip to Khabarovsk and medical insurance.

Additional information

We cannot guarantee good (flight) weather conditions. A cyclone may come or the fog may thicken, so we recommend having a margin day when buying the return air tickets, or getting open-ended tickets. You'd better spend this day in Khabarovsk.

As for equipment, tourists need to take clothes, water boots or waders, a personal medical kit, photo and video equipment and fishing tackles.

In the base camp there are dishes and bed things (mattresses, blankets, sheets and pillowslips).

Food

Food in the base camp. We shall have a cook and a kitchen hand. The food is delivered beforehand, and perishable foods: fresh meat in a cooler, fruits and vegetables are brought together with the tourists (by helicopter).

The main drink (vodka) is included into the menu, while all the exclusive drinks (whiskey, brandy, wine) are bought by the tourists themselves, for which purpose the bus stops at the supermarket.

Weather

The climate of the Shantar Islands is much more severe than that in the extreme north of the Sea of Okhotsk. It is caused by the prevailing northeastern winds of the sea which drive all the ice from the Sea of Okhotsk to the straits of Shantar. The coast waters are free from ice only for two or three months. Even in July, huge icebergs float here like white swans, and the snow falls already in October, though the place lies at the same latitude as Moscow. Frequent fogs and rare but violent storms take turns on the isles. The rise of the tide here reaches 5 to 8 meters, and the flood currents are among the swiftest in the World Ocean.