

Ancient Cultures and Traditions of Yakutia
An authentic winter experience
February/March 2009 & 2010
Minimum 6- Maximum 10
Economy-Luxury Version



Highlights: Yakutia is one region where getting in touch with local indigenous cultures does not require helicopter transportation, or driving on nearly impassable roads. Yet, the immersion is an authentic occurrence of getting in touch with the day-to-day living and traditions of the local people. Of course, this means that you, as the guest, need to be open to taking part in those traditions and also their way of communal living. This is an extra-ordinary adventure in one of the remotest regions of Siberia.

The activities are strenuous but fun and there will be lots of laughter and a real sense of the spiritual realm under which the reindeer herders perform their tasks.

Yakutia is like no other region in Siberia in that its infrastructure includes modern hotels and modern shopping centers, as well as going back to the way Russians lived during Soviet times. Most likely this is one of those authentic experiences which will be the highlight of your life.

Logistics: The cost of the trip does not include getting to Yakutia. There are several ways to do that either from Vladivostok or Khabarovsk or through Moscow. This also means that you have to have at least two to three travel days prior to partaking in this itinerary.

While in Yakutsk, there are luxury accommodations available, as well as down to earth accommodations and we can offer both. While in the small indigenous village we will be housed with the families which living conditions are very basic. We will partake of their daily food which is mostly based on reindeer meat, but by request we may provide you with a different option. Most definitely one has to leave one's 24-7 lifestyle behind and learn to relax in a much more spiritual environment.

Itinerary

Day 1

This day you will arrive in Yakutsk and you are transferred from the airport to the hotel where upon check-in you will have a typical Russian breakfast.

Later on that day you will have a chance to become acquainted with Yakutsk by visiting the old stockade, the old town in which it is located and the Institute of Permafrost and Mammoth and other interesting places.

The Permafrost Institute

The Permafrost Institute is part of the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Science and was founded in 1961 It is a unique scientific institution which researches how permafrost exerts its influence over nature and life processes. During the excursion in the Institute's underground laboratory you will be an eye-witness of that natural phenomenon. Your guide will be a candidate of geographic sciences Mark Shatz.

The Mammoth Museum.

The museum was founded in 1991 as a scientific and cultural center. It is designed to study the mammoth and its habitat of the Ice Age. It is the only specialized museum of unique paleontological exhibits in the world. Fossils of mammoth and mammoth fauna are valuable prehistoric relicts and considered a national treasure.

The Yaroslavy United Yakutsk State Museum of History and Culture of People of the North

This is one of the oldest and richest museums of Siberia and the Far East. It was founded in 1891 by an initiative of political exiles. There are about 140 thousand exhibits in the museum.

After returning to the hotel, you will have time to check your clothing and equipment for the upcoming trip or buy some clothing if needed. You will overnight in Yakutsk. L, D

Day 2

After an early morning breakfast transfer by a Russian 4wd car to the village of Magarassy, which is located about 100 km from Yakutsk). While on the road, visit a Yakut horse farm, where they breed the famous Yakut horses. Yakut horses are unique in that remain outside through the whole winter. The Yakut horse is the descendant of the Lensky horse, which is the original horse of the north. They lived thousands of years ago along with the mammoths and woolly rhinoceros, but unlike them survived and developed up till the present. You will be acquainted with the life and traditions of horsebreeders, and there may also be a possibility to go horseback riding.

You will arrive at the village, and visit with the Yakut families. Magarassy is a small village, very famous for it's 3 Olympic Games Champions, the Kontoev's brothers. Your meals will be taken with the families and there will be a possibility to get acquainted with their way of life. You will walk around the village, and learn about the traditional way of their housekeeping and farming. Later in the evening they will present you with a folklore performance. You will overnight in the village. B, L, D

Day 3

After breakfast transfer by car (15 km) to the meeting point at the reindeer trek location, Sailyk. You'll meet with the reindeer herders, and receive safety instructions and to prepare for the trip. You'll Transfer on reindeer sledges accompanied by a snowmobile to the main camp site. Along the way stop for the ritual ceremony of purification and blessing of the local spirits at the fire site and for lunch which will be prepared in advance. Then you will continue to the main site, where you will be accommodated in

a guest house or tents, all equipped with a stove, and you'll enjoy a traditional dinner and a Russian banya. You will overnight in cabins or tents. B, L, D



Day 4

After breakfast, you'll visit the site of the herd. This can be done by riding reindeer sledges or by snowmobile. There is the possibility for taking pictures or making a video. You will also be able to participate in how to catch a reindeer with a "Maut" (a lasso), and taking part in the everyday work of a reindeer herders. After lunch later in the afternoon, you'll head back towards Yakutsk by car, where you arrive in the evening for an overnight. You will overnight in Yakutsk B, L, D

Day 5

This morning after breakfast, you will have a free day in Yakutsk.

Later in the evening you will go to the historical complex "Chochur Muran", just outside Yakutsk. There you will get acquainted with the life of Russian Cossacks, their traditions, excursion and go dog sledding –with the assistance of the "Yakut huskies". You'll visit the "Realm of Permafrost", a long hall inside the mountains where it is possible to see beautiful ice sculptures and meet the Lord of Cold – Chyskhaan (the symbol of Cold). That evening there will be a farewell dinner. You will overnight in Yakutsk. B, L, D

Day 6

Transfer to the airport, departure from Yakutsk.

Pricing

Economy version/Basic Hotel accommodations In Yakutsk
From \$2,200 based on double occupancy/single occupancy \$2,300

Luxury version/Luxury Hotel accommodation/The Polar Star
From \$2,550 based on double occupancy/single occupancy \$2,750

Included:

- All transportation, including transportation by ground and on the water, transfers, etc.
- All excursions as noted in the itinerary
- English speaking knowledgeable Tour Manager
- All meals as noted in the itinerary
- All accommodations as noted: note we offer budget as well as luxury accommodations in Yakutsk
- All other entrance fees to preserves and reserves

Excluded:

- International airfare and domestic airfare to Yakutsk
- Communication costs and other personal items
- All alcohol if not provided by the local Tour Manager

Payment Policy

Deposit requirement \$300 per person upon booking
Full Payment 45 days prior to departure
We need to secure air tickets at least 45 days out.

Refund Policy

Initial deposit is refundable less \$100 processing costs 45 days prior to departure
45-30 days prior to departure Fifty percent
30-day of departure No refunds
All payments have to be made either by check or wire transfer.

Visas

A visa is required for Russia. We will process your visa for you, as it requires extensive paperwork. You will receive a visa application and information as soon as we have received your deposit. Visa Fees for two week processing are \$120, not including any express handling charges.

Pre- or post itineraries

As noted in the itinerary, we will be more than happy to add additional days in Russia both pre and post to the offered itinerary.

Important Notes

This itinerary takes you to one of the most remote parts of the world. All though services have improved in the last couple of years, we will encounter problems with delays, bureaucratic conditions, bad road conditions, uneven surfaces and steps and unavailability of public bathrooms. Please also note that weather circumstances may change each day's activity as to take advantage of good weather.

This program requires flexibility and good humor. Every effort will be made to follow the itinerary; However, there is always the possibility of changes. We work only with tour operators who adhere to the following basic ecotourism principles.

Our Ecotourism Guidelines

1. Make tourism and Conservation compatible
2. Support the preservation of wilderness and biodiversity.
3. Use natural resources in a sustainable way
4. Minimize consumption, waste and pollution
5. Respect local cultures
6. Respect historic and scientific sites
7. Communities should benefit from tourism

8. Trained staff is the key to responsible tourism
9. Make your trip an opportunity to learn about the destination and its people
10. Follow safety rules

Weather

Weather during the summer season can be warm and sunny. But there might be rain and storms. Please be prepared for walks in the forest by bringing rain and sports gear and excellent hiking boots or shoes.