

Watching the Baby Seals

Expedition to the “Onezhskoye Pomorye” National Park



In the ice-covered White Sea harp seals give birth to their pups in early March. These fluffy cuties remain snow-white for no more than two weeks, and you have a unique opportunity to see them during this helicopter expedition

Experiences you'll have

Baby seals in the White sea

Seals come together for reproducing on the White Sea' floes before they leave for Spitsbergen. During the tour you will watch these lovely creatures in their natural habitat at a very close distance! A helicopter will take you to the watch spot. The snowy taiga, the ancient villages, and the sea under a thick blanket of ice — no one can resist the awesomeness of the Russian North seen through the helicopter window.

In the third week of life baby seals start molting, revealing their silvery skin. That is why you have to go there in early March to see the snow-white pups.

The advantages of this tour are:

comfortable accommodation away from civilization — there are a restaurant, a bar, a library, a fireplace room with a billiards table, Russian sauna and a varied program of health and beauty treatments using White Sea algae
newborn baby seals watching in their natural habitat in the company of a marine biologist
eco-trails in Onezhskoye Pomorye National Park — you will admire the sceneries of a virgin northern nature, as well as will get acquainted with the main ecosystems of the Onezhsky Peninsula and the features of animal wintering in the northern taiga

We accept bookings for groups of 6 or more

This tour is constructed in such a way that you can plan your free time by yourself. Upon request and for an additional fee you can go on a helicopter tour to the Solovetskye Islands, drive snowmobiles across the taiga forest or the ice of the White Sea or to enjoy "the White Sea SPA".

Itinerary

The trip begins in Arkhangelsk, where you should get to on your own. Then you may take a regular flight aboard an AN-2 airplane (the tickets are to be reserved by yourself, the departure is at 9:20 am from the Vaskovo airport) to the "Letnyaya Zolotitsa" hotel. If you choose this flight you should fly to Arkhangelsk the day before the tour starts and stay overnight in a hotel (extra charge is required for accommodation and transfer to the airport Vaskovo). For return flights to Moscow we recommend flights FV6336 or FV6994 by Rossiya Airlines, departing from Arkhangelsk at 6:40 pm or 9:35 pm.

We are ready to assist with the purchase of tickets. If necessary, leave a comment in the application. You can also choose a charter flight by an AN-2 plane or a helicopter transfer to the hotel (see the "Common question" section for more details about the cost and conditions of this transfer).

Note: the flight to the ice-floe will take place only in good weather conditions. In bad weather some excursions can be replaced by equivalent ones.

Day 1

On this day you will take a flight from Arkhangelsk to the

hotel on the White Sea shore. If you take a regular flight on board of an AN-2 airplane, you should get to Vaskovo airport by 8 am of the first day of the program (it takes 35-45 minutes by cab from the center of Arkhangelsk or from the main Talagi airport).

During your flight (1 hour) you will see panoramas of the ice covered coast of the White Sea with picturesque capes and endless expanses of snow-covered northern taiga.

You will arrive to the hotel at about middat and have lunch in a restaurant. Afterwards you will attend a lecture from a marine biologist, during which you will learn about the main aspects of life of the harp seals, and the rules of conduct when on the ice floe. Afterwards you can watch a documentary about harp seals. In the evening you will have dinner and rest.


Day 2

After breakfast at the hotel you will take a helicopter trip

Most popular

Arkhangelsk region

Watching the Baby Seals

Difficulty	
Age	from 4 y.o.
Group size	from 6 to 18
Duration	4 days

Accommodation at the trip



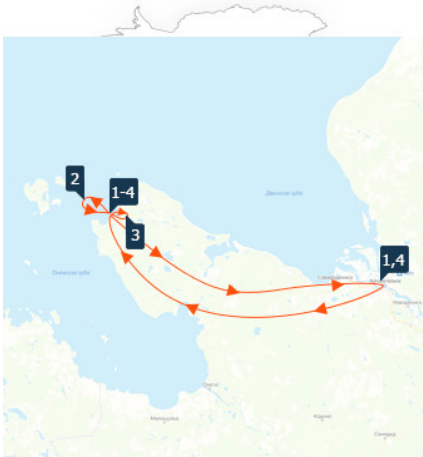
3 nights

Языки



guide

from 3 440 EUR



After breakfast at the hotel you will take a helicopter trip

to the ice of the White Sea (flight is about 1 hour, duration depending on the distance to the ice floe and the weather conditions).

You will spend 1-1,5 hours on the ice floe, watching seals

and their newborn cubs. You can take photos next to the animals if you adhere to certain requirements, and observe them, moving from one group of animals to another. Newborn seals grow very quickly, only newborns and those already 5, 7, 10 days old can be near at the same time.

You will have a small snack with sandwiches and hot

tea/coffee right on the ice. After the end of the program you will be taken back to the hotel by helicopter. In the hotel you can visit SPA, relax in the sauna and have a tea party with honey and sweets in the evening if you wish for an extra charge. Dinner will take place in the hotel restaurant.

Day 3

This day will be used as a reserve in case of bad weather

on the previous day. If the flight to the ice floe for seal watching was successful the day before, today you can go on an excursion to the Letnyaya Zolotitsa ancient northern village, which is about 600 years old. You will visit the local museum and a real fisherman’s hut.

You can also take a hike along the eco-trail of Onezhskoe

Pomorye National Park to admire the northern landscapes. In winter in the vicinity of Letnyaya Zolotitsa village several eco-trails are available: to Satansky cape for observation of wintering birds, to Paranino lake, upstream of Zolotitsa river, etc. These routes allow to get acquainted with the basic ecosystems of the Onega Peninsula and features of animals wintering in northern taiga. or the ice of the White Sea (see details in "Common question" section).

Day 4

You have some free time after breakfast. An AN-2 flight to

Arkhangelsk will take off at 1 pm (you should book the flight tickets on yor own). Then you should get to the railway station or Talagi airport for your departure (choose evening flights with departure from Arkhangelsk after 6 pm).

Accomodation at the trip

You will stay at the **"Letnyaya Zolotitsa" eco-hotel** located on the White Sea coast 40 km away from the Solovetsky islands. The hotel is included in the list of 10 best countryside hotels of Russia according to the Forbes magazine. The territory of the eco-hotel is an area of northern taiga far removed from civilization on the border with the Onezhskoye Pomorye National Park. There are a restaurant, a bar, a library, a fireplace room with billiards, a souvenir store with a museum exposition, and a bathhouse with an open-air font and a massage room with a wide choice of recreational and cosmetological procedures. Pomor patterns and Mezenskaya paintings, appliances hand-made by local masters, wooden carved and wicker furniture are used in the decoration of rooms.

You will be accommodated in standard double or twin hotel rooms with a TV, a refrigerator, a wardrobe, bedside tables and a bathroom with shower and heated floors.

FAQ

Who will be my guide

You will be accompanied by an EMERCOM (Ministry of Emergency) officer and a marine mammal biologist during your trips to the ice floe to observe

the seal cubs. The biologist will also be giving lectures at the hotel.

Meals

The price includes three meals a day in the hotel restaurant. A snack with hot tea and sandwiches will be provided for you on the ice floe.

Discount for children

Children over 4 years old can go on this trip. There is a 10% discount for children 4-12 years old for an extra bed in the room.

What will the weather be like

It is difficult to accurately predict the weather conditions: ice floes with baby seals can be located both at the mouth of the White sea and to the south birection. Definitely you should be prepared for a fairly cold wind and wet conditions, because communication with the baby seals takes place in the open space. The temperature ranges from 0°C to -25°C.

What to bring

- warm membrane hooded jacket and pants
- warm water-proof boots
- fleece jacket (thin and warm)
- thermal underwear
- 2 waterproof hats (one thin and one warmer)
- gloves
- mittens/warm gloves
- sunglasses
- ski mask (recommended for wind protection)

Items should be packed in a backpack or a duffel bag.

How a helicopter airlift and seal watching are organized

Prior to departure, an ice reconnaissance will be conducted in advance. On the ice floes, on which the seals with their pups are found, a radio beacon is set up and the coordinates are recorded. This assures maximum probability of the seals to be observed during the tou

The flight to the ice takes place under favorable weather conditions by light Eurocopter (capacity - 6 passengers) and Robinson R-44 (capacity - 3 passengers) helicopters. Two to four helicopters can be flying simultaneously. The advantages of light-engine helicopter flights on ice are an excellent view and comfort during the flight, and safety, because the helicopter stays on the ice with tourists (unlike the MI-8, which drop the passengers off on the ice, fly back to the shore, and then return to pick up the tourists). The program duration is 3-3,5 hours (2 hours of flight time +1-1,5 hours on the ice floe). During the program we provide sandwiches with hot tea or coffee (a full lunch on ice can be organized upon request).

Is the cancellation of the expedition possible

Participants should understand that, despite the clear organization of the trip, wildlife lives by its own laws. When you fly on a drifting ice floe in the middle of the White sea, seals can only begin giving birth or finish doing it. Therefore, the final decision about the expedition is taken based on ice reconnaissance two days prior to departure of the group. The probability of transferring the expedition is very small, but it can occur. Therefore, you should buy tickets to Arkhangelsk with a return rate.

Options for helicopter and AN-2 charters

We can offer the following variants of transfer from Arkhangelsk to

Letnyaya Zolotitsa for groups:

- by a Robinson (R44) helicopter for groups up to 3 persons — around 1500 EURO per group one way, departing from Severodvinsk
- by Eurocopter for groups of up to 6 persons — around 2750 EURO per group, departing from the settlement of Lajsky Dock
- by a MI-8 helicopter for groups up to 18 persons - — around 4875 EURO one way, departing from Vaskovo airport (travel time is 1 hour)
- by an AN-2 plane (charter flight for a group of up to 12 people) — around 2500 EURO per group, departing from Vaskovo airport

Note, that the transfer from Talagi airport in Arkhangelsk to the departure locations (Vaskovo airport, Severodvinsk and Lajsky Dock settlement) is paid for separately.

Helicopter pickup from Moscow and Saint-Petersburg can be organized upon request. Note: helicopter transfers and AN-2 charters require advanced booking and payment. The time of flight from Arkhangelsk and back is discussed individually.

Additional excursions

1. Helicopter trip to the Solovetsky Islands (duration - 4,5 hours)

You will take off from your hotel towards the Solovetsky Islands, where an on-foot excursion awaits you. The flight will take you above the coast of the White Sea, you will see Chesmensky and Orlovsky lighthouses from altitude. On arrival to the Solovetsky Islands, you will visit the central complex of the monastery and the active churches with a guide, learn the history of the monastery, and see the monuments included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. You will also visit the GULAG museum and Anzer Island, where the Holy Trinity and Golgotha-Raspyatsky sketes are located. The program includes lunch.

Cost of the tour:

- by a Robinson (R44) helicopter — 79 000 rubles for a group of 3 persons
- by a MI-8 helicopter — 393 500 rubles for a group of up to 18 people
- in a Eurocopter — 158 000 rubles for a group of up to 6 people.

2. Snowmobile rides

You can rent a snowmobile and ride it yourself around the hotel or go on a group snowmobile ride accompanied by an instructor guide.

The cost of snowmobile rent is 5000 rubles/hour for an adult and 2000 rubles/hour for children aged 4-12 (children's Arctic Cat snowmobiles).

Available routes for group snowmobile trip:

- along the ice of the White Sea along the coast with exploration of fishing huts
- through the taiga forest with riding on the frozen lakes

You can either drive the snowmobile yourself or be a passenger. On request, you will be provided with the necessary equipment (snowmobile overalls, shoes and helmet, 6 sets available). It is possible to take children from 4 years old on group routes, but only as passengers (i.e. the child rides the snowmobile with the parent, not on the kids' snowmobile).

Booking

Watching the Baby Seals

Most popular

Difficulty	
Age	from 4 y.o.
Group size	from 6 to 18
Duration	4 days

Accommodation at the trip



3 nights

from 3 440 EUR

What's included in the price:

- double accommodation in an eco-hotel (3 nights)
- breakfasts, lunches and dinners, snacks during the trip to the ice floe
- early ice reconnaissance to locate ice fields with white-coat seals
- one flight onto the ice by light helicopter (Robinson R44 or R66) with landing on the ice-floe
- seal watching accompanied by an EMERCOM official and a biologist
- visiting a sauna (1 time)
- permit for visiting the national park
- insurance

Extra charge:

- [flight to Arkhangelsk](#) (starting at 93 EURO for round-trip tickets)
- flight from Arkhangelsk (Vaskovo airport) to the Letnyaya Zolotitsa hotel by an AN-2 airplane (+100 EURO per person round trip)
- alternative options of helicopter transfer from Arkhangelsk to the Letnyaya Zolotitsa hotel (see details in the “Common question” section)
- additional excursions (see details in the “Common question” section)
- a visit to the Russian sauna (+63 EURO per hour for a group of up to 6 people), a font with sea water (+63 EURO per hour for a group of up to 4 people)
- SPA-complex services (starting at 25 EURO)
- service of a professional English-speaking guide (+315-440 EURO per group)



Best price guarantee



Personal tours



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