



# NATURE & TERROIR

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## Realm of the Siberian Tiger

Prix - **6995.00€**    Dates - 26/02 au 06/03/22    Guide - *Accompagnateur anglophone*

These are truly adventurous tours into the remote Russian taiga at three distinct times of the year, on the trail of the rare and elusive Siberian (Amur) Tiger in the birch-clad landscape of Durminskoye Forest Reserve. On all three departures we will look for tracks and other signs as we move around this wilderness by four-wheel drive, snowmobile (winter only), and on foot, and we will learn all about the ecology and conservation of these big cats from the expert local guides. In spring, flowers and breeding birds will be an additional focus, and in autumn we will hope to see the reserve's Asiatic Black Bears as they fatten up for hibernation. We will check and set up camera traps, aiming to get our own photographs, and we hope to see other wildlife, including Siberian Roe Deer, Wild Boar and Hazel Grouse. The pinnacle would be, of course, to catch sight of the endangered icon itself – always a possibility!

The Russian Far East is a remote, sparsely populated and profoundly wild place, where vast taiga forests still support some of our planet's most dramatic wildlife. The most iconic of all is the magnificent, and near-mythical, Siberian (or Amur) Tiger. Over 500 individuals roam these woods and mountains – nowhere else on Earth do so many Tigers live in the company of so few people.

Most of these striped felines inhabit the rugged and starkly beautiful mountains of the Sikhote-Alin. Nestled in their northern foothills is the Durminskoye Reserve, a 200 square kilometre expanse of rivers, rocky crags and dense birch groves. This wildlife haven is managed by renowned conservationist Alexander Batalov; for 30 years he and his team have guarded this forest, and Durminskoye now has a healthy number of Tigers. Although they remain supremely elusive, there is nowhere better to search for this majestic big cat.

On our 'Realm of the Siberian Tiger' tour, you too can travel right to the heart of big cat territory. We run departures to Durminskoye at three distinct times of year: winter, early summer and autumn, each of which will have a slightly different focus.

In winter (February departures), most of our time will be dedicated to searching for evidence of Tigers; this is the best season to look for tracks and scratch-marks, capture camera trap images, and maybe even catch a glimpse of a wild Siberian Tiger in the snow. General wildlife-watching is hard work, but we could find other mammals and birds such as Manchurian Deer, Wild Boar, Sable, Azure-winged Magpie, Siberian Jay and Ural Owl. Those wishing to maximise their chances of a Tiger sighting (or those wanting to see the critically endangered Amur Leopard) should consider extending the tour with time in the forest hides of the Land of the Leopard National Park ... although this is only for the dedicated and hardy!

By early summer (June departures) the snow will be long gone, replaced by carpets of flowers, and scenic rivers and streams will have started flowing again. The taiga, eerily quiet in winter, will be alive with birdsong; the region's breeding species include Falcated Duck, Blue-and-white Flycatcher, Siberian Rubythroat and the critically endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting. We will, of course, also search for evidence of Tigers, such as pug and scratch-marks, and regularly check camera traps. This itinerary will also visit wetlands near the Amur River, and the pine forests of the Sikhote-Alin mountains.

Autumn (August departures), when the leaves are turning, is the most beautiful time in the taiga. What's more, in this season Durminskoye becomes one of the best places in the world to see Asiatic Black Bears. Normally elusive, their activity peaks as they begin to fatten up for hibernation. As per the summer tours, we will also search for evidence of Tigers, plus look for any breeding birds that have not yet left for warmer climes.

Even if we are not lucky enough to see a Siberian Tiger, simply feeling their presence all around us should be a powerful and

rewarding experience. Furthermore, Alexander relies on tourism to fund his vital conservation work – mostly monitoring, anti-poaching patrols and education. At a time when this big cat is increasingly threatened by illegal human activity, our visit will help to ensure that Durminskoye continues to be a safe haven for the Siberian Tiger.

## Responsible destination

### Carine

Présente du lundi au vendredi de 10h à 17h





## Dates & Prix

6995.00€

Price :  
flights included from uk

What's Included?  
Accommodation:

### Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation is included in the cost of the holiday, with the exception of dinners in Khabarovsk (Days 2 and 8, allow £50). Accommodation in Khabarovsk will be in a smart modern hotel, and in the forest we will stay in cosy log cabins. Each cabin contains two single beds, and is kept warm with wood-burning stoves. Long-drop toilets are located in separate buildings near the cabins, and washing facilities are available in the form of a Russian 'banya' or steam bath. Food in the camp will be freshly prepared using ingredients from the surrounding forest. Wild Boar and Manchurian Deer are responsibly hunted to provide meat, and vegetables are grown in the camp garden during the summer. It's all very sustainable and delicious fare. Vegetarians can be catered for.

### Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of your holiday: alcoholic drinks, tips to local guides, dinners on Day 2 and Day 8 and all items of a personal nature such as souvenirs, telephone calls etc.

-Le prix de ces séjours est sous l'influence directe du taux de change de l'US Dollar et de la Livre Sterling... NATURE & TERROIR se réserve le droit, selon ses conditions générales de vente, de revoir son prix en cas de fluctuation importante des devises ou des tarifs de transport.

-Le prix affiché est majoré de 10 euros pour frais bancaires.

-En cas d'inscription à moins de 70 jours de la date de départ, la totalité du montant du bon de commande est dû dès inscription. A plus de 70 jours, un acompte de 30% est dû, le solde étant à verser dans les 70 jours précédents le départ.



## Journalier

### Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

### Day 1

In flight We depart London's Heathrow airport on an overnight Aeroflot flight to Khabarovsk, via Moscow.

Day 2 Khabarovsk We will arrive in Khabarovsk, the penultimate stop on the great Trans-Siberian Railway, and transfer to a comfortable tourist hotel in the city centre. Khabarovsk is a surprisingly attractive city on the banks of the mighty Amur River, which will be frozen solid at the time of our visit. Urban wildlife will not be much in evidence, but we may pick up Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Japanese Tit and Large-billed Crow. The afternoon will be at leisure, with an opportunity for those who wish to do so to visit the cultural highlights of Khabarovsk, including the natural history museum and Russian Orthodox cathedral. It will have been a long journey to the Russian Far East, however, and members of the group may prefer to rest. In the evening, we will have dinner either in our hotel or in a local restaurant, where a variety of Western and traditional Russian food will be on offer.

### Day 3

Base Camp, Durminskoye Forest Reserve After a leisurely breakfast (and hopefully a good night's sleep) we will be picked up by four-wheel-drive vehicles for the 200 kilometres journey to Durminskoye Forest Reserve. We will be travelling into an extremely remote area, and the drive can take between three and eight hours to complete, depending on snow conditions. As our journey progresses, the flat agricultural land around Khabarovsk will give way first to open taiga bogs, and then to rolling hills clothed in dense birch forest. Significant gatherings of White-tailed Eagles can often be seen along our route, along with attendant Northern Ravens. The deeper into the wilderness we go, the more evidence we will find of the forest's hidden wildlife; abundant tracks and trails will start to crisscross the snowy road, preserving the past activity of Siberian Roe and Manchurian Deer, Wild Boar, Sable and others. We'll keep our eyes peeled for the creatures themselves, as well as for smaller mammals such as Eurasian Red Squirrel, which here sport an unfamiliar slate-grey coat! Leopard Eurasian Tree Sparrow On the Trail of the Siberian Tiger Tour Itinerary We will aim to stop for a picnic lunch somewhere, before arriving at Durminskoye sometime in the afternoon. For the last third of our journey we will very much be in tiger country, and our senses will be on high alert as we scan the snowy landscape for a glimpse of striped orange fur. At base camp we will be greeted by Alexander Batalov, a legendary conservationist who manages the 200 kilometre square Durminskoye Reserve. No-one knows more about Siberian Tigers, or has done more to protect them, than Alexander. We could not wish for a better guide to show us around the winter forests. The camp itself is a pretty, picture-postcard collection of snow-covered log cabins, set in a small woodland clearing. Common birds around the camp are sure to remind us of home – Eurasian Nuthatch, Marsh Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker in particular – although slightly more exotic visitors can include Azure-winged Magpie and Siberian Jay. After the welcome party, we will settle into our simple but cosy accommodation, before warming ourselves up with a freshly prepared bowl of soup or broth. If our journey from Khabarovsk hasn't taken too long, we may go out on a short excursion in the evening. Then, after a hearty local dinner, we will retire for our first night in the taiga.

### Days 4 - 7

Base Camp, Durminskoye Forest Reserve For the next four full days we will explore Durminskoye in depth, by snowmobile, on foot and in 4x4 vehicles. We will typically set off into the forest after breakfast, and if the weather is good (i.e. not too cold!) we may spend the whole day in the field, enjoying a packed lunch at a scenic spot. Where we go will depend on recent Tiger activity, and we will be on the lookout for fresh Tiger tracks – great dinner-plate-sized imprints in the snow – as well as the deep gouges in tree bark that Tigers use to mark their territories. We will also check and set camera traps on well-used trails, in the hope of capturing our very own images of the world's largest feline. The Siberian Tiger is one of the world's most elusive animals, and while signs of their presence will be all around us, we will need a considerable amount of good fortune to see the big cat in the flesh. One thing it is important to note is that we will be limited in our ability to pursue Tigers actively by following their footprints. Even fresh tracks could be several hours old, by which time these wide-ranging animals could already be several miles away. Off the established trails, the terrain in Durminskoye is challenging, and trekking cross-country for an undetermined time and distance is not a realistic option. Even if we were able to approach Tigers in this fashion, it would be impossible to control the circumstances of an encounter, potentially putting us, and the Tiger, in danger. Where conditions allow, we will be able to follow tracks for a short distance, which will Eurasian Red Squirrel Tiger scratch marks On the Trail of the Siberian Tiger Tour Itinerary provide an opportunity for Alexander to impart fascinating insights into the individual's behaviour. Tigers are fond of using the relatively snow-free roads to patrol their territories, and our best chance of a sighting will consequently be from the vehicles. Alexander and his team have unparalleled knowledge of Siberian Tiger ecology and conservation, and we will be sure to learn a great deal about this remarkable feline. Their passion is infectious, and their stories about life in the forest are thrilling; for example, they once had a Tiger stroll nonchalantly past the kitchen window during dinner! There is plenty of other life here too, including birds such as Hazel Grouse, Black Woodpecker and Ural Owl, although only the hardiest of species are here year-round. If desired, there will be the opportunity on one of the days to visit a nearby rehabilitation centre, where injured Tigers are looked after before being released back into the wild. We may also wish to visit the Udege, the indigenous people of the area whose animist culture reveres the Tiger as a god. At the end of the day we will return to camp where, before dinner, we will have the chance to relax in a Russian 'banya' or steam sauna. The typical post-dinner routine will be to check the camera trap memory cards collected that day – images will hopefully include Tigers in the snow, as well as other mammals like Raccoon Dog and Red Fox. If we are very lucky, we may get pictures of something really unusual such as Grey Wolf or Eurasian Lynx. After a long day, our log cabins – kept wonderfully warm by wood-burning stoves – will provide a

welcome home for the night.

#### Day 8

**Khabarovsk** We should have time for one more trip into the forest this morning, before we sadly have to depart Durminkoye and return to the bright lights of Khabarovsk. Even if we have not been lucky enough to see a Siberian Tiger with our own eyes, one will almost certainly have seen us, and everyone will hopefully agree that it has been a rare privilege to share the forest with this most iconic of wild animals. In contrast to so many areas across their range, Tigers are thriving in Durminkoye, largely thanks to nearly three decades of dedicated work by Alexander and his team. Alexander relies on tourism to fund his conservation activities, and our visit will have directly supported his efforts to ensure that Siberian Tigers continue to survive in the Russian Far East. The long drive back to the city will give us one last chance for an encounter. Tigers often use the roads leading into the reserve to patrol their territories, and we may well find that jeep tracks from the previous day are overlaid with fresh pugmarks! Unfortunately, the great birch forests will gradually start to recede, and we should arrive back at our Khabarovsk hotel by late afternoon. In the evening, we will all go out for an end-of-tour dinner at one of Khabarovsk's finest eateries. Anyone particularly keen to get into the local spirit may wish to mark the occasion with one or two glasses of vodka! On the Trail of the Siberian Tiger Tour Itinerary

#### Day 9

**London** Today we will catch our flight back to Moscow, and then on to London, arriving at our final destination in the late evening.



## Quelques photos...



### Envie d'en voir plus ?

Visitez la fiche voyage sur notre site web [www.nature-terroir.com](http://www.nature-terroir.com)



## Infos pratiques !

### Tour grading

Grade B. Easy to moderately strenuous. Please be aware that conditions will be very cold and it will be snowy and icy underfoot. The accommodation is also quite basic. Although we will use 4x4s and snowmobiles for much of our exploration of the reserve, the tour will include plenty of short walks which will be over snowy and icy terrain.

### Weather

Siberian winters can be extremely cold, with record temperatures as low as -40°C. However, at the time of our visit in early March we expect temperatures to vary between -15°C and 0°C, which will be manageable with proper winter clothing. It should mostly be clear and sunny, with the possibility of occasional snowfall. In fact, we will hope for fresh snow during our visit, as it makes tracking tigers easier!

### Entry requirements

Belgians require a visa to enter Russia. These can be arranged through the Russian National Tourist Office

([www.visitrussia.org.uk](http://www.visitrussia.org.uk)). There is a standard service which takes 20 working days to process, and an express service which takes three working days. A letter of invitation is required, which we are able to provide through our local agents in Russia. You will be required to visit a Visa Application Centre in person to provide biometric data (fingerprints etc.). In the UK, these are located in Manchester, Edinburgh and London. We will be able to provide assistance throughout the visa application process.

### Your safety & security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – [www.gov.uk/foreign-traveladvice/russia](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-traveladvice/russia) or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.



## Formalités

### Comment s'inscrire ?

- 1° Remplissez notre formulaire en ligne [www.nature-terroir.com/inscription](http://www.nature-terroir.com/inscription)
- 2° Attendez votre confirmation d'inscription et versez l'acompte
- Ou remplissez notre formulaire papier (demandez notre formulaire papier par mail ou en nous téléphonant)

### Besoin d'infos ?

Contactez la responsable destination par mail ou par téléphone.

## Responsable destination

### **Carine**

Présente du lundi au vendredi de 10h à 17h

