

## **Rausu UNESCO World Heritage Site Areas**

UNESCO granted the Shiretoko Peninsula World Heritage status in 2005. The site boundary extends from the central part of the peninsula to its northernmost tip and includes the surrounding marine area. Much of Rausu is within the boundary. Visitors can join wildlife observation tours and view educational displays at visitor centers to discover why the area was deemed to be of such global importance.

The organization highlights the peninsula's importance for terrestrial and marine species. Rausu's forests and mountains support a high population density of brown bears, and the Rausu coast is a vital wintering location for endangered seabirds such as the Steller's sea eagle. The rare Blakiston's fish owl—the world's largest owl—nests in the large trees in Rausu's forests. Visitors can view the local wildlife in their natural habitats on boat tours and from observation lookouts.

UNESCO credits the seasonal ice floes as key to the peninsula's healthy ecosystem. The floes that drift into Rausu's coastal waters in winter are packed with nutrients that spark blooms of phytoplankton. Plankton form the base of Rausu's marine ecosystem. Visitors can view the drift ice from on a boat tour or an ice-diving excursion. Whales frequent the waters almost year-round and can be sighted on boat tours or from coastal observation decks.

Shiretoko World Heritage Rusa Field House has exhibits that explain the UNESCO designation. Some information is provided in English. The field house is located within the World Heritage site boundary, a 20-minute drive north of central Rausu.