

## ☰ Topic Page: [Bering Sea](#)

Definition: **Bering Sea** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*  
Section of the Pacific Ocean north of the Aleutian Islands, between Siberia and Alaska; area 2.28 million sq km/880,000 sq mi. It connects with the Chukchi Sea, to the north, via the Bering Strait, extending for 87 km/54 mi from east–west, between the Chukchi Peninsula of Siberia and the Seward Peninsula of Alaska. It is named after the Danish explorer Vitus Bering, who explored the Bering Strait in 1728.

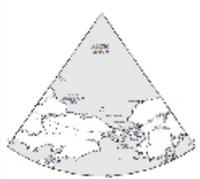


Image from: [Bering Strait and surrounding territories.... in Encyclopedia of the Arctic](#)

Summary Article: **Bering Sea**  
From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

c.878,000 sq mi (2,274,020 sq km), northward extension of the Pacific Ocean between Siberia and Alaska. It is screened from the Pacific proper by the Aleutian Islands. The Bering Strait connects it with the Arctic Ocean. The sea's largest embayments are the Gulf of Anadyr, Norton Sound, and Bristol Bay. The Anadyr River enters the sea from the west and the Yukon River from the east. The warm Japan Current has little influence on the Bering Sea, which has much ice; it can usually be traversed by ship only from June to October. The sea has many islands, notably Nunivak, St. Lawrence, Hall, St. Matthew, and the Pribilof Islands (all owned by the United States) and the Komandorski Islands (Russia).

The sea was explored by the Russian Semyon Dezhnev in the 17th cent., but not until after the voyages of Vitus Bering (1728, 1741) was the fur-seal wealth of the Bering Sea made widely known. The whole region was under the control of the Russian American Company, but it proved impossible to prevent mariners from other nations from getting the skins of the seals and the sea otters.

The question of protecting the seals became (1886) the subject of a bitter international incident called the **Bering Sea Fur-Seal Controversy**. The seal herd that summered in the Pribilof Islands wintered farther south; when returning north in the spring they could be taken in the open sea. The pelagic (open-sea) sealing, practiced by Canadian and other sealing vessels, greatly reduced the herd and threatened it with extinction. The Alaska Commercial Company, which had a U.S. monopoly on the sealing, protested to the U.S. government, and in 1886 several Canadian vessels were seized and were condemned by a court at Sitka, Alaska.

The legal basis for such action was the claim that Russia had controlled all the Bering Sea and that the control had passed to the United States with the purchase of Alaska in 1867; by claiming to exercise jurisdiction beyond the three-mile limit the United States had invoked the doctrine of *mare clausum* (closed sea) for the first time. This was not accepted by the British, and a move to settle the matter of protection by international agreement was blocked by the Canadians. The matter was referred to an international court of arbitration, which, meeting in Paris, declared in 1893 against the U.S. claim and awarded \$473,151 in damages to the owners of the seized vessels. It also imposed some restrictions on pelagic sealing, but these were ineffective.

In 1911, Great Britain, Russia, Japan, and the United States agreed to prohibit pelagic sealing; sealing in the Pribilofs was put completely under U.S. supervision. For several years sealing was stopped

completely, and then it was resumed but only under careful restrictions. In 1941, Japan withdrew from the agreement, but a new agreement was signed in 1956.

**APA**

Chicago

Harvard

**MLA**

---

Bering Sea. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering\\_sea](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering_sea)

---



*The Columbia Encyclopedia*, © Columbia University Press 2018



*The Columbia Encyclopedia*, © Columbia University Press 2018

## APA

Bering Sea. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering\\_sea](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering_sea)

## Chicago

"Bering Sea." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018. [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering\\_sea](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering_sea)

## Harvard

Bering Sea. (2018). In P. Lagasse & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia*. (8th ed.). [Online]. New York: Columbia University Press. Available from: [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering\\_sea](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering_sea) [Accessed 15 October 2019].

## MLA

"Bering Sea." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering\\_sea](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bering_sea). Accessed 15 Oct. 2019.