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Putin Praises Russian Hunting in U.S. Interview

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Prime Minister Vladimir Putin sought to lure international hunters and fishermen to Russian wilderness in an interview with U.S.-based magazine Outdoor Life published on Wednesday.

Putin, an avid wildlife enthusiast, has shot a gray whale with a crossbow to take a skin sample off the coast of Kamchatka and targeted a Siberian tiger with a tranquilizer gun to place a satellite transmitter around its neck.

"I would not exaggerate if I say that no other country can boast such versatile landscapes and such biological and climatic diversity," Putin said. "A human life would not be enough to visit all the places."

Putin, who has extensively traveled the country since becoming prime minister in 2008, said the government was working on building a tourist infrastructure and developing new tourist routes in remote areas such as Siberia and the Far East.

In the interview Putin said he was not much of a hunter himself but enjoyed fishing while his

job provided him with plenty of opportunities to be in the wild, often in the company of other statesmen.

"I love it and enjoy any opportunity — which I have very rarely, unfortunately — to sit with a fishing rod," Putin told the magazine, recalling his 2007 fishing trip with then U.S. President George W. Bush and his father.

"To tell the truth, sometimes my job even helps me. How else could I have managed to go fishing in America being accompanied by two presidents?" he said. Putin caught a striped bass during the trip but said the catch was a team effort.

Putin said a hunt for Manchurian wapitis in the Irkutsk region, bighorn sheep, elk and reindeer in the Sakha republic as well as wolves in the Taimyr Peninsula were the best hunting opportunities on offer in Russia.

"According to my personal rating, one can experience the best fishing in the world in the Murmansk region and in the Volga River delta near Astrakhan," Putin said.

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