

As of June 4, 2008

Arctic 2009: Itinerary Descriptions

NORTH POLE

- 16 days
- 2 departures: June 27-July 11 and July 9-24, 2009
- Start and Finish: Helsinki, Finland
- Embarkation and Disembarkation: Murmansk, Russia
- Icebreaker expedition

Important reminder: Embracing the unexpected is part of the legacy – and excitement – of expedition travel. There are no guarantees that we can achieve everything we set out to accomplish. A measure of flexibility is something all of us must bring to a voyage.

ITINERARY

DAY 1–2

Day 1: Travel over 400 years on the first day. Your expedition starts with a stay in a hotel in Helsinki, Finland. The city was founded in 1550.

Day 2: Embarkation day.

We've included a charter flight from Helsinki to Murmansk, Russia, where you will board the icebreaker on Day 2.

DAY 3

The world's largest icebreaker.

Sailing north on the world's largest icebreaker, *50 Years of Victory*, relax and explore this icebreaker that took 20 years to build. As you cross the Barents Sea, you'll be engaged by presentations on everything Arctic, from wildlife to history to geology. And of course, you'll have opportunities to view the native seabirds and whales as we sail northward.

DAY 4–7

Crushing ice on top of the world.

Watching *Victory* break through the formidable pack ice is a sight you'll never forget. Crashing through ice meters thick with a force reminiscent of a 9.0 earthquake, *Victory* can sail in conditions that would defeat most other ships. It's awe-inspiring. As you travel, take one of the included flights on our helicopters for a fascinating aerial view of the icebreaker's progress.

DAY 8

90° North

This is it. For the rest of your life, you'll remember this moment as clearly as you're standing here today. You've joined a rare and select group: those that can truly say they've stood at the top of the world. Reflect on the many adventurers that came before you, giving their lives for the moment you are now experiencing. You'll have time for a hike on the expansive ice; you can literally walk around the world in under a minute.

DAY 9–10

Now it's just you and the polar bears. As *Victory* sails southward, stand on the deck and survey the expanse of brilliant blue and white ice that stretches hundreds of kilometers in all directions. Keep an eye out for rare Arctic wildlife, particularly near Franz Josef Land, where polar bear sightings are possible.

DAY 11–12

A virtually unexplored archipelago.

Franz Josef Land is one of the most recently discovered archipelagos in the world. It was only in the late 1800s that this remote and stunning world of flat-topped islands and ice was found, and even today it remains mostly unexplored. There are 191 islands in this naturalist's paradise. Polar bears, walrus, arctic fox, seals and belugas inhabit the region. Vast colonies of seabirds abound in the surrounding waters.

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DAY 13-16

The journey ends. But the stories have just begun.

You'll cross the Barents Sea to Murmansk, where you'll board the included charter flight to Helsinki. At last you can cross the North Pole off your "things to do in my lifetime" list. You'll be glad you did.

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SPITSBERGEN EXPLORER

- 11 days
- Multiple departures
- Start and Finish: Longyearbyen

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ITINERARY

Day 1: Embarkation: Longyearbyen.

This small community of 2,075 is the largest community in the Svalbard Islands. We look forward to welcoming you aboard our afternoon departure.

Day 2: Around Svalbard.

The goal of this expedition is to circumnavigate Spitsbergen, the largest island in the archipelago, but we may visit some smaller islands if conditions permit.

DAY 3–4

14th of July Glacier.

On the west coast of Spitsbergen, we'll cruise in Zodiacs, near a magnificent ice cliff with the unusual name. We'll explore the base in Zodiacs. We'll also visit Ny Alesund, an international Arctic research station. Birders should add to their life list, as this is a known habitat for Arctic Terns, Arctic Skua, Purple Sandpipers, Common Eiders, Barnacle Geese and Snow Buntings.

DAY 5–8

Smeerenburg.

At Smeerenburg, we'll visit relics of the whaling industry, blubber ovens and whalebones. A tour of the former whaling station recounts the Dutch and Basque influences on the local community, which relied on the harvesting of bowhead whales for survival.

Moffen Island.

The temperature drops as we continue northward, crossing 80N, 965 km (600 miles) from the North Pole. Moffen Island is a walrus sanctuary that we plan to visit on this expedition. On previous visits, we have spotted polar bears and Sabine Gulls in addition to walrus!

Thousand Islands.

Norway's Arctic Islands of Svalbard are so numerous that certain areas within the archipelago have names that reflect the profusion. Tusenoyane (Thousand Islands) is one such area. We'll go ashore on Aekongen to seek Red-throated Divers and a whale skeleton.

DAY 9–10

Bourbonhamna.

The narrow sound near Bourbonhamna is a favored route of beluga whales. The population of belugas inhabiting the waters of Svalbard is estimated to be a few thousand. We'll search for the white whales before going ashore, where we'll learn about hunting and whaling.

DAY 11

Disembarkation: Longyearbyen.

Upon disembarkation in Longyearbyen, we'll transfer you to the airport for your flight home. Those who wish to extend their stay will be dropped at the Radisson Hotel on the way.

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SPITSBERGEN, EASTERN GREENLAND, ICELAND

- 14 days
- 1 departures: August 31 to September 13, 2009
- Start: Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen
- Finish: Reykjavik, Iceland

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ITINERARY

Day 1: Embarkation: Longyearbyen.

Embarkation is in the late afternoon at Longyearbyen on the Arctic island of Spitsbergen.

Day 2– 4: Exploring Spitsbergen.

Spitsbergen is the largest of the Svalbard Islands, an Arctic archipelago that is part of Norway. We'll spend the next three days exploring, taking advantage of local weather and ice conditions. Anticipate visits to the 14th of July Glacier, the settlement of Ny Alesund and Monaco Glacier. Be on the alert as we explore for wildlife. Sightings of Arctic Terns, Arctic Skuas, Long-tailed Ducks, Kittiwakes and Glaucous Gulls are possible. Moffen Island is a walrus sanctuary. If the conditions are right, we may see the tusked creatures hauled out on shore or swimming in the protected waters. Polar bear sightings are also possible.

DAY 5–6

Greenland Sea.

While at sea, the Expedition Team will deliver illustrated presentations about the wildlife and cultures you will encounter in Greenland. The naturalists assist with seabird identification from the deck of the ship. You may participate in as many, or as few, shipboard activities as you choose.

DAY 7–12

Eastern Greenland.

The coast of eastern Greenland is wild, rugged and often ice-bound. This area provides an excellent habitat for wildlife that requires ice floes to thrive, such as polar bear. We'll sail the ice edge our binoculars at the ready.

If conditions permit, we'll compare cultures as we visit the remains of ancient Thule settlements and a remote modern-day village. At all times, we'll be on the alert for musk oxen, because 40% of the world's population lives on the eastern coast of Greenland. Before leaving Greenland, we plan to sail into Scoresbysund, the largest fjord complex in the world, and the birthplace of many icebergs.

DAY 13

Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar).

The history of the Westman Islands is as shrouded by the mists of time as a Norse Saga. The name was used by the Norse to refer to Irishmen or west men. In the 1600s, a fleet from the Ottoman Empire that included Barbary pirates raided the islands, capturing 400 inhabitants. They were sold into slavery in Algiers. You'll learn more of the history of the islands on a walking tour of the town of Heimaey. You'll see a documentary about the 1973 eruption of Eldfell. Only the determination of the islanders saved the community from destruction. Like the rest of Iceland, the Westman Islands are volcanically active. As recently as 1973, a new island, Surtsey, was created as a result of an eruption.

DAY 14

Reykjavik.

This expedition disembarks in the bustling capital of Iceland, Reykjavik.

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HIGH ARCTIC EXPLORER

- 14 days
- 2 departures – August 2 – 15 and August 13-26, 2009
- Start and Finish: Ottawa, Canada
- Embarkation and Disembarkation: Resolute

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ITINERARY

Day 1: Embarkation: Resolute.

After the charter flight from Ottawa, you will be transferred to Akademik Ioffe from the beach in Resolute by Zodiac, a fitting beginning to your High Arctic adventure.

Day 2: Prince Leopold Island.

Leopold Island is a well-known wildlife habitat. If the pack ice is close, there may be walrus and polar bears – the two icons of the Arctic. The island's cliff faces are nesting grounds for murre, kittiwakes and gulls.

DAY 3–4

Devon and Coburg Islands.

Devon Island is a polar desert with a massive ice cap. We'll visit Dundas Harbour on the south shore, a former outpost that was manned by the Hudson's Bay Company and subsequently the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Nirjutiqavvik is Coburg Island's National Wildlife Area and home to a profusion of birds. We'll cruise in Zodiacs along the cliffs to watch thousands of murre and kittiwakes flying to and fro, if the conditions are just right.

DAY 5–6

Melville Basin.

We'll sail across Melville Basin, known to be the habitat of the bowhead whale. While at sea, our Expedition Team will deliver a series of illustrated presentations that prepare you for the shore landings in Greenland.

Qaanaaq, Greenland.

The heroine of the novel *Smilla's Sense of Snow* was said to be born in a small village in the northern portion of the municipal region of Qaanaaq. The tiny village of 600 is the municipality's commercial center.

DAY 7

Cape York.

The ice and weather conditions associated with Cape York (Kap York in Greenlandic) combine to create a friendly environment for narwhal and seals. The presence of seals and pack ice may draw hungry polar bears. Have your binoculars at the ready.

DAY 8

Baffin Bay and Pond Inlet.

Our heading will be south and west on the journey across Baffin Bay. Our destination will be Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik) on Baffin Island. While there, we plan to attend a cultural demonstration that will include drumming, throat singing and dancing. The local artisans carve stone sculptures that are collected avidly around the world.

DAY 9

Cape Hay Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

The majestic cliffs of Cape Hay, Bylot Island, are breeding grounds for murre, guillemots and kittiwakes. We'll cruise in Zodiacs along the base of the remarkable seabird colony.

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Bylot Island is situated where the waters of Baffin Bay mix with the water of the Arctic archipelago, creating a rich feeding ground for seals, whales and seabirds.

DAY 10

Devon Island.

Our return to Devon Island may include a hike across an apparently barren landscape. We'll encourage you to look more closely. A rich variety of wildflowers grow close to the ground on the tundra, an adaptation that allows even the most fragile flowers to survive.

DAY 11–12

Beechey Island.

A proper High Arctic expedition must include mention of Sir John Franklin's fatal attempt to find the Northwest Passage. The first to die were buried on Beechey Island in 1845. Their grave markers still stand. The fate of their crewmates who continued westward remains a mystery, although it is assumed that all hands were lost.

Resolute.

Disembarkation is in Resolute on Cornwallis Island in the territory of Nunavut. You will be transferred to the airport for the flight to Ottawa.

HEART OF THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

- 15 or 13 days
- Two departures – August 24 - September 7, 2009 or September 6 - 18, 2009
- Start: Either Ottawa or Edmonton
- Finish: Either Edmonton or Ottawa
- Embarkation: Either Resolute or Cambridge Bay
- Disembarkation: Either Cambridge Bay or Resolute
- Adventure Ship expedition

The second departure operates in reverse to this itinerary and is 2 days shorter in duration.

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ITINERARY

Day 1: Resolute.

You fly from Ottawa to Resolute, a small village above the Arctic Circle. Embarkation is in the late afternoon.

Day 2: Peel Sound.

During the night we sailed across Barrow Strait to enable the morning of Day 2 to begin deep in the waters of Peel Sound. We'll explore this area, which is known for rapidly-moving ice. As it is a known habit of narwhal and beluga, we will stand watch for whales.

Day 3: Lancaster Sound and Beechey Island

Many of the expeditions sent to discover the fate of the Franklin Expedition, perhaps the most infamous failure of all searches for the Northwest Passage, stopped at Beechey Island. There, as you will, they paid their respects to three of Franklin's crew who are buried on the desolate island. The site stands as a reminder of all the courageous people who died while seeking the northern route to Asia.

DAY 4: Bellot Strait.

We finally begin sailing westward through the Bellot Strait. This narrow channel separates mainland North America from Somerset Island. Halfway through the channel is the northernmost point of the continental land mass.

DAY 5: King William Island.

Here, we'll return to the saga of John Franklin. For two winters, Franklin's ships Erebus and Terror were beset in ice near the island. In 1848, the ships were abandoned. A decade passed before a cairn was discovered on Victory Point under which an officer had placed a note explaining their circumstances. About 50 years later, Amundsen was able to sail the same stretch of water with little trouble.

DAY 6-9: Coronation Gulf to the Beaufort Sea

We'll be sailing in shallow, ice dotted seas. If conditions permit, we'll follow polar bear through the ice as they track ringed seals. Keep your binoculars at your side as seabirds feed in the open stretches of water.

DAY 7-9

Holman and Smoking Hills.

You will enter the second of Canada's three Arctic territories, the Northwest Territories. We plan a visit to tiny Holman, where a print-making shop and artists' cooperative have been established.

If conditions permit, you'll witness an extraordinary natural phenomenon. Bituminous shale has been burning spontaneously for centuries, giving the Smoking Hills their apt name. The smoke has affected local vegetation and the acidity of the pools in the vicinity.

DAY 10–11

Pearce Point, Bernard Harbour.

We will have reached the end of the Northwest Passage when we enter Amundsen Gulf.

So it will be time to begin the homeward journey. En route to Cambridge Bay, we plan to visit other historic outposts and villages. On Victoria Island we seek musk oxen, prehistoric beasts with shaggy coats and massive heads.

The history of the Canadian Arctic is also the history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Hudson's Bay Company. En route to Cambridge Bay, our shipboard historian will relate stories of the redcoats, the fur trade and the merchants who governed the Canadian Arctic for nearly two centuries.

DAY 13: Cambridge Bay.

We fly you from Cambridge Bay to Edmonton, Alberta.